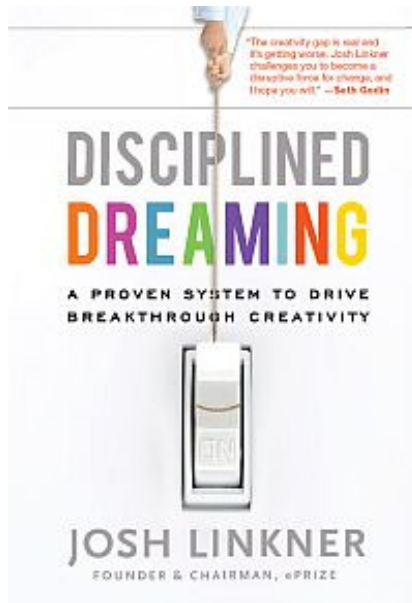


Catalyst Ranch featured in Chapter 6 of



Preparing Your Environment to Promote Creative Passion

If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my axe.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Eva Niewiadomski discovered something special while working as a marketing executive at Quaker Oats, a division of PepsiCo. In the early days of her career, she decided to decorate her cubicle with fun colors, toys, and images. She wanted to have a creative workspace. When she was promoted and received her own office, she decorated the office with the same playful creativity. Vibrant colors, rich textures, games, toys and art supplies became her trademark. When she was away on business trips, others would sneak in to her office to check out what a cool, creative space Eva had created.

Eva took over an unused wall in her department and transformed it into a wall of competitive insight – for example, by using it to display a striking and visceral collage comparing Quaker's product packaging with its competitors'. As Eva's career progressed inside Quaker, she continued to create inspiring spaces with every move and promotion, and she saw the impact these spaces had on people's creativity. By being surrounded with colors and fun, she and her colleagues had better ideas. This insight led her to leave her job and launch one of the coolest businesses I've seen: Catalyst Ranch (www.CatalystRanch.com).

In an old building in downtown Chicago, Catalyst Ranch offers a playground that companies can rent for meetings, off-sites, brainstorming sessions, and presentations. The space is filled with color, texture, and fun. Funky retro furniture, art supplies, toys, fabrics and even materials for prototype design are displayed in a stimulating array of possibilities. In the same way a sparkling lab filled with all the latest equipment appeals to a chemical engineer, Catalyst Ranch is a haven for people engaged in creative processes – the ideal place to stimulate creativity. Business has boomed for Eva, and she has since added a second floor and is constantly asked to open similar facilities in other cities. She is clearly onto an important trend- the need to have inspiring physical spaces to ignite creativity.

In this chapter, we're going to look at some simple ways you can transform your physical environment to help build and sustain creativity. As you'll learn, you don't have to rent new space or build an environment from the ground up to stoke your creative fires. You just have to keep your eyes and your mind open to the possibilities around you.