

illuminate



VANDERBILT
People, Culture and Belonging

Vol 2.3

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EDITOR'S REFLECTION

I grew up on a farm in Virginia, where innovation wasn't a strategy session — it moved with the rhythm of life. Between harvesting endless rows of vegetables, feeding squawking chickens, and cleaning out horse stables, there wasn't much time to sit around waiting for a better idea to fall from the sky. Creativity quickly became my best friend. I was always dreaming up ways to make the work a little easier, or inventing new adventures between chores. Books fueled my imagination. Curiosity kept me moving.

That early lesson — that innovation starts wherever you are, with whatever you have — has stayed with me ever since. And it feels more important now than ever. In a time when higher education is navigating new demands and growing complexity, innovation isn't optional. It's essential.

Research has found that innovation doesn't belong to one department or one title. The best ideas often come from the people closest to the work — the ones who notice new possibilities hidden in everyday moments. When we create a culture where it's safe to think differently, question assumptions, and offer up bold ideas, we invite everyone to help build what's next.

At Vanderbilt, we're weaving innovation into the fabric of how we work, how we learn, and how we lead. We're nurturing a culture where big thinking and belonging go hand in hand, and where innovation shows up in the moments that matter most. Because when people feel seen and valued — not just for who they are, but for the ideas they bring — we don't just move faster; we enhance quality and make meaningful impact.

Building a future-ready Vanderbilt means staying curious, taking thoughtful risks, and growing new skills that keep us sharp for whatever comes next. I encourage you to explore the [Futures Learning Hub](#) — it's packed with opportunities to spark fresh thinking and fuel your growth.

Let's keep imagining, building, and daring to grow — together.
It's Our Moment.

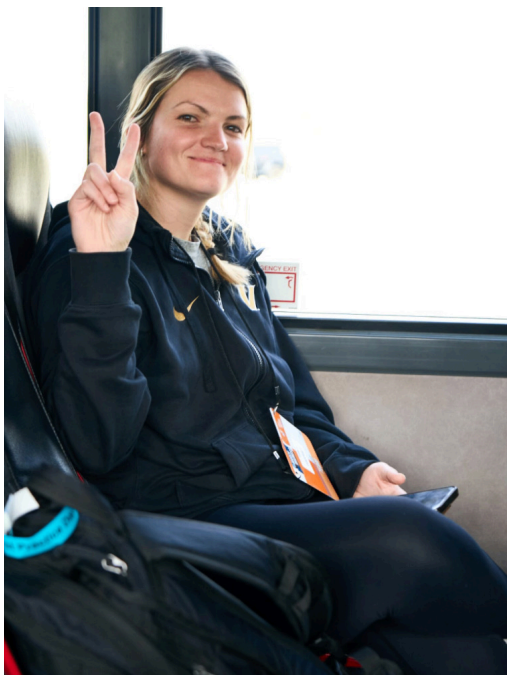
Sydney Savion

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Celebrating the excellence of Vanderbilt staff.

Laura Topp, Athletic Communications

Laura has excelled during a year of welcome challenges for Athletic Communications, with on-field success creating ever more opportunities to tell our story. She manages communications for the soccer and lacrosse teams with immense care and attention. These are two of the larger rosters in Athletics, but she takes time to understand each student-athlete and staff member and has the creative instincts and multimedia skills to help them tell stories that shine a light on what's possible at Vanderbilt. From hectic football Saturdays to men's and women's basketball and beyond, she's always ready to pitch in and assist her colleagues with other teams and events. Athletic communications can be a stressful work environment. This spotlight seems like a wonderful opportunity to celebrate someone still early in her career and could be an amazing asset for Vanderbilt for years to come if supported and encouraged.



Submit a nomination for a staff member or team for our Staff Spotlight



Did You Know?

Abenity

Abenity, the Vanderbilt University Perks Program gives employees access to over 302,000 local and national discounts, which can add up to more than \$4,500 in savings per employee. Exclusive discounts available to staff and faculty include savings at Costco, Jiffy Lube, SeaWorld and more, plus thousands of hotels, restaurants, movie theaters, theme parks, museums and other attractions nationwide. [Click here to sign up.](#)

Abenity®

ADMIN PROFESSIONALS DAY LUNCHEON

On April 23rd, PCB hosted a luncheon on Administrative Professionals Day to recognize the hard work of administrative staff across the university. With 165 people in attendance, the luncheon provided an opportunity for staff from executive assistants to administrative specialists and coordinators to connect with colleagues in a relaxed atmosphere.

Staff across the university also shared their appreciation on Kudos throughout the month of April. Read below for some messages shared by staff.



Happy Administrative Professionals Day! The campus community and in particular E. Bronson Ingram College residents are so fortunate to have you as part of our team. You do so much for everyone and you bring such a positive attitude to our campus community. We are so grateful for everything you do!

Happy Professional Admin Day!!! Thank you for making sure that every event, program, meeting, and workshop goes smoothly by ensuring that the rooms are booked, supplies ordered, and food and drinks are available. We couldn't do it without you. The Center for Student Wellbeing is so grateful for all you do.

Happy Administrative Professionals Day! Thanks for being a positive and caring part of The Acorn School Team. It is always a pleasure to work with you; I know that your warm smile bring joy to families, co-workers and children. Hope you have a fantastic day!

Nat & Ella, huge thanks for your professionalism & dedication at the People Solutions Desk! You bring so much care to your work. Happy Admin Professionals Day!

FIDELITY FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Vanderbilt University and Fidelity are thrilled to empower you with tools to take control of your financial journey! Explore these exciting new [resources](#) on NetBenefits® that are designed to enhance your financial wellness and boost your confidence in managing your life and finances. Dive in and start your journey to financial well-being today!

Caregiving for You and Your Loved Ones

[Attainable® Savings Plan](#)—Invest and save for disability expenses with Attainable® Savings Plan managed by Fidelity for individuals with disabilities, their families, and guardians to save and invest while keeping public benefits such as supplemental security income and Medicaid.

Supporting Charities You Care About

[Fidelity Charitable Giving](#)—Connect personal goals to your charitable interests and tax considerations with a Giving Account. Maximize your impact with tax-smart ways to support your favorite charities.

Protect Yourself and Your Family Financially

[Help with estate planning legal documents](#)—Ensure that your family is protected with the Fidelity Estate Planner®, a free online tool that simplifies the estate planning process.

[Easily find an attorney online](#)—Find a local, experienced attorney when you need one through Avvo, an online directory with independent attorney reviews.

Manage Your Personal Finances

[Fidelity Youth™](#)—A free app designed for your 13- to 17-year-old to help them develop lifelong financial skills and habits by empowering them to make, manage and invest their own money.

[Help managing debt](#)—Lower your debt with Money Management International, a not-for-profit credit counseling agency offering a free counseling session and 60% off debt management plan setup costs.

[Save on tax preparation](#)—Get the most out of your tax preparation with 25% off TurboTax®.

FIDELITY FINANCIAL WELLNESS

[Get started with emergency or short-term savings](#)—Fidelity Goal Booster, SM, combined with a Fidelity Cash Management Account, can help you set up an account, save toward your fund, track progress, and stay motivated.

[Help managing your saving & investing goals](#)—Plan saving goals with Fidelity Goal Booster, SM offering affordable saving and investing options through an easy, guided experience.

Preparing For College

[Help navigating the college admissions process](#)—Work with CollegeWise, the nation's largest college counseling organization, to navigate the college admissions process—with a special discount on services.

Get More of the Financial Help You Need

[Take a financial wellness checkup](#)—Take the pulse of your personal finances with a financial wellness checkup from Fidelity.

[Get answers to what's on your mind](#)—Visit Fidelity's NetBenefits learning hub to get top tools and resources.

[Help navigating the moments that matter most](#)—Fidelity's Life Events can help you navigate major life events, like starting a family, planning for college, buying a home, and more.

Learn more about all the resources available to you and make the most of them today.

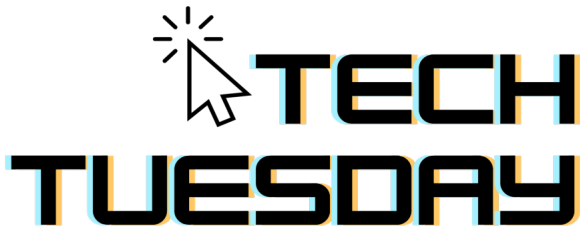


FUTURES LEARNING HUB UPDATES

Futures Learning Hub May Tech Tuesday and Thrive Thursday Events

The Futures Learning Hub is back with fresh sessions designed to energize your skills, spark new ideas, and support your professional growth. Whether you're looking to sharpen your tech toolkit or fuel your personal development, we have something for everyone this month!

Each Tech Tuesday and Thrive Thursday sessions are **live, virtual, and interactive** — perfect for a quick boost of inspiration!



Register

AI Tools at Work: Use AI for Everyday Productivity

When: 5/6/25 @ 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

About: Facilitated by VUIT - Discover powerful AI tools to simplify daily tasks, streamline your workflow, and boost productivity. Join us to learn practical ways AI can help you do more with less stress!

Managing My Money: Budget, Emergency Savings, Debt, and Retirement Basics

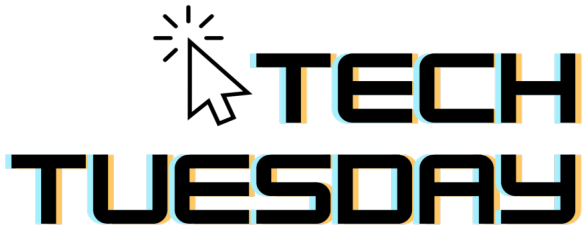
When: 5/8/25 @ 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

About: In this session, we will equip you with practical strategies, tools, and tips to take control of your financial future. Our goal is to help you manage your money effectively, reduce financial stress, and build a secure financial foundation. By the end of this workshop, you will have a clear understanding of how to manage your money, build a safety net, and plan for a secure financial future.



Register

FUTURES LEARNING HUB UPDATES



Register

Practical Tech Hacks for Increased Efficiency

When: 5/20/25 @ 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

About: Boost your productivity with practical tech tips and software shortcuts for both Mac and PC users. This live session will cover easy-to-use tools and hidden hacks that help streamline your workflow—no matter your role or tech skill level.

Mental Health Awareness and Lyra Health

When: 5/22/25 @ 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

About: Join us for an insightful session on mental health awareness and the support available through Lyra Health. Learn how to access confidential resources, navigate challenges, and prioritize well-being with tools designed to support both your personal and professional life.



Register

Why Join

Skill Building: Gain valuable skills to help you excel in your current role or unlock new opportunities.

Community: Connect with colleagues across the university who share a passion for growth and learning.

Accessibility: Each session is designed for a wide range of experience levels and interests.

Mark Your Calendar

Don't miss the chance to spark new ideas and elevate your personal and professional journey this March. Keep an eye on the Futures Learning Hubs schedule and join us for the next round of Tech Tuesday and Thrive Thursday events. If you need assistance registering, [please review our job aid](#).

FUTURES LEARNING HUB UPDATES

Complete a learning course through Futures Learning Hub

At Vanderbilt University, we value professional growth and continuous learning. We want to reward you for your hard work of expanding your skills through Digital Learning Marketplace.

You don't need to **take a specific course** to be eligible for the swag box drawing. Feel free to choose any Digital Learning Marketplace course that aligns with your professional goals! Winners will be announced at Curious Bar the last Wednesday of March, April and May.

Here's How You Can Enter:

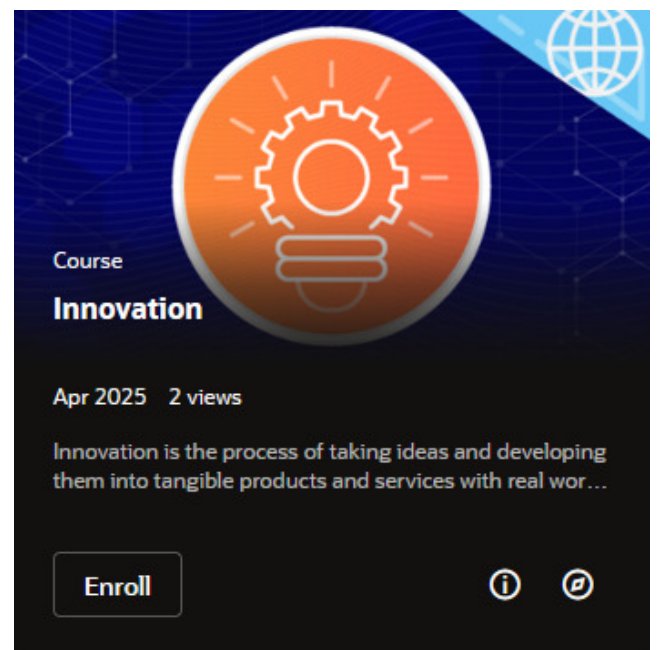
1. **Log In:** Access the Learning Hub.
2. **Learn:** Complete at least one course of your choice.
3. **Win:** You are automatically entered to our drawing to receive a Vanderbilt Swag Box valued up to \$75!

Course of the Month - May 2025

Innovation

What you'll learn

Innovation is the process of taking ideas and developing them into tangible products and services with real world value. But the question is how do we innovate? Well, luckily this course is designed to show you.



Register for the Course of the Month

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Whether you're going through a tough time, or simply navigating daily stress, your Lyra benefit is here to support you. Take 30 seconds to set up your [account](#).



As part of your benefits, you and your eligible dependents each have access to 12 therapy or coaching sessions per year, plus self-care resources you can use any time – **all at no cost to you.**

How care with Lyra is different:

Fast, easy access – Connect with a provider for a confidential, in-person or virtual session, with appointments available as soon as the next day. You can also access a library of articles, videos and meditations anytime.

Specialized care for you and your family – From one-on-one support to couples counseling, to coaching for parents and tailored care for struggling children and teens, Lyra's mental health providers are ready to guide you and your loved ones.

A diverse network of top providers – Lyra's team of licensed therapists and certified coaches encompasses all cultures, identities, and specialties so you can get matched with someone who can understand you.

Financial Offerings

Taking control of your finances empowers you to make informed decisions, reduce stress, and achieve your goals. By budgeting, saving, and investing wisely, you can build a secure and prosperous future. You can start by enrolling in a Fidelity workshop.

Retirement Basics

Wednesday, May 7, 2025, at 1PM CT

In this workshop, you will learn about the power of saving and the different types of accounts, including your workplace savings plan that you can take advantage of to save for your future.

[Register here.](#)

Fundamentals of

Retirement Income Planning

Thursday, May 29, 2025, at 11AM CT

This workshop is for individuals who are starting to plan for retirement and want to learn about the key considerations for building an income plan.

[Register here.](#)

To register to attend a financial education webinar, log into your [Fidelity NetBenefits®](#) account. If you encounter any issues, please call Fidelity's service center at 800-343-0860 for assistance. If you need to register for the first time, select "Register as a new user".

Step Up for Mental Health – Join the Personify Health Step Challenge in May

Rally your colleagues and get ready to move in the next university-wide team step challenge celebrating Mental Health Awareness Month! Energize your body, recharge your mind, and build stronger connections with your team. Meaningful connection and shared movement can make a big impact on mental health, so let's lace up, step out, and make every stride count together!

About the Challenge: Relax, Renew, Refresh

We all need to refresh and restore ourselves from time to time. New research shows that when people don't get the maintenance they need, everything suffers—their work, their relationships, and especially their mental, physical, and emotional health. In this challenge we will explore the value of allowing your mind, body, and soul to have some meaningful, restorative downtime.

Dates:

May 19 – June 1

Registration Opens May 12

How to sign up and earn points:

1. Log in to Personify Health
2. Go to Social > Challenges.
3. Review the challenge rules.
4. Create your five-player team or join one that already exists.
5. Explore the value of allowing yourself some meaningful, restorative downtime by unlocking stages with your team's step count and earn 500 1,000 Personify Health Points.

Personify Health is available to all benefits-eligible employees regardless of their enrollment in Vanderbilt benefits. Don't have a Personify Health Account? Sign up today at <https://join.personifyhealth.com/VU> or call 888-671-9395.

Kickball is Back on Campus!

Calling all Faculty and Staff! Get ready for the return of the campus-wide kickball games! This nostalgic fan favorite is back by popular demand, giving everyone a chance to relive those childhood memories and enjoy some friendly competition.

The Kickball season **will run from May 14th through May 30th**. You will need at least 8 players for a team. This limited series will be held on Curry Field, in front of Wilson Hall, with games starting at 4:15 pm. The schedule will be determined by the number of registered teams. Games will be primarily played on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and may include Tuesdays depending on the number of teams participating.

This event is open to all faculty, staff, and postdocs, so gather your colleagues and get ready for an exciting time. Registration is now open, but slots are limited. Click on the link below to register your team. Or sign-up solo, and you will be placed on a team.

Don't miss out on this campus tradition! Join the Staff-Letics Kickball League and experience the thrill of kickball once again. [Sign up online.](#)



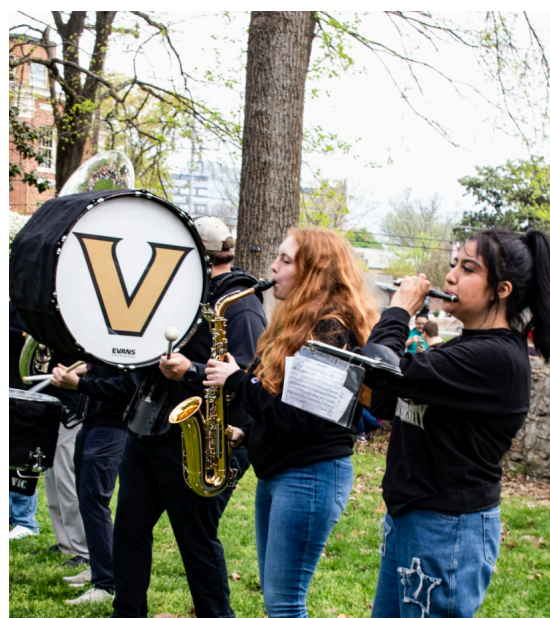
CHILD AND FAMILY CENTER

Dalia Roman announced as Early Childhood Educator of the Year Honoree

CORE Network Nashville announced The Acorn School's Dalila Roman as an honoree in the category of Early Childhood Educator of the Year for the annual Ignite Awards for Davidson County Early Childhood Champion. Honorees will be celebrated on Tuesday, July 22, 2025 at a special event.

Acorn School: The Week of The Young Child Parade

On April 11, 2025, The Acorn School with over 600 participants (some three months old) paraded around Magnolia Lawn thereby joining the hundreds of activities taking place across the nation for the annual event Week of the Young Child, a celebration of young children and early learning meant to shine a spotlight on the importance of childcare to working parents. VCFC is so grateful for our wonderful staff and parents, and partners like Doug Morin and the student musicians from the Spirit of Gold Marching Band.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND LAUNCHES

Bike to Work Day

Wednesday, May 14

7:30-9:00a.m.

Curry Field behind Wilson Hall

Stop by for a celebration of biking to work. Learn about campus bike initiatives, pick up helmets or bike lights, and enjoy donuts and coffee.



More information about biking to and around campus can be found at vu.edu/bike. This event is a partnership with the Nashville Department of Transportation, which will be administering multiple surveys about projects to improve bicycle infrastructure around campus. The Athenas Bikeway survey can also be accessed online.

VUIT Learning Collective

In this month's session of M365 Knowledge Network we will be diving in to the experience of [Team's Webinars](#). This feature in Microsoft Teams is completely FREE to you as a Vanderbilt user. [Join the public teams channel](#) for future webinars.

Register now for May 15 Spring Staff Assembly

All Vanderbilt University staff are invited to attend the fifth Annual Spring Staff Assembly, either at Vanderbilt's Langford Auditorium or virtually, on Thursday, May 15. The event will celebrate university staff and their many contributions to the university's mission.

[Register for the Spring Staff Assembly.](#)

The official program, starting at 3 p.m. in Langford Auditorium, will feature remarks from Chancellor Daniel Diermeier, Vice Chancellor of People, Culture and Belonging Sydney Savion and University Staff Advisory Council President Sara Putnam. The [spring awards for staff excellence](#) will be presented at the event.

In-person seating will be on a first come, first served basis. Doors will open at 2:30 p.m.

The program will be livestreamed on the [Vanderbilt Employee Appreciation webpage](#) and recorded for later viewing.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND LAUNCHES

Join PCB for the Staff Assembly Pre-Show for the Chance to Win Prizes

Come early, starting at 2 p.m., for resource tables and exciting giveaways, available on a first come, first served basis. At 2:15 p.m., there will be a 15-minute live demonstration of **Kudos** from People, Culture and Belonging in the auditorium. Kudos is a digital platform where staff members can recognize and celebrate each other's efforts. Attendees will explore key features and learn how to navigate the platform. There will be a door prize giveaway after the presentation for two lucky attendees.



Join us for Campus Tours!

In May and June, PCB is excited to host four different campus tours. Each tour can host up to 50 people. Come learn about the history of Vanderbilt's campus. In May, come learn about the history of Vanderbilt as you travel across campus learning the history associated with our buildings.

May 13th 10:00 a.m.

[Sign Up](#)

May 19th 10:00 a.m.

[Sign Up](#)

In June, come learn about the history of Vanderbilt's arboretum, learning about the different trees that grow on campus.

June 10th 9:00 a.m.

[Sign Up](#)

June 17th 9:00 a.m.

[Sign Up](#)





Campus Connections Spring Event

Wednesday, May 14, 2025 in Sarratt 325/327

9am-10am

Refreshments Served!

Please join the Vanderbilt Staff Women's Advancement Council for our Spring Campus Connections event to mingle and connect with colleagues from all over campus. It's a great way to make connections and build your campus network of friends!

Please RSVP: <https://forms.office.com/r/ixfPK394A4>

7 STEPS FOR BECOMING MORE INNOVATIVE AT WORK

Originally Published on Indeed.com

Innovative technology, business ideas and social solutions shape the world we live in. Every new idea there has been has come from a creative individual or team of innovators. If you're inspired by new and original designs and concepts, then you may be wondering how to become more innovative. In this article, we explain what it means to innovate at work and describe seven steps to take to develop your professional creativity and problem-solving skills.

What Does Being Innovative At Work Mean?

Innovation refers to the development of new ideas or the improvement of existing ideas. Being innovative at work means that you contribute ideas and solutions to workplace challenges or problems. Innovators recognize when there's a need for improvement, and they use logic, reason and creativity to come up with ways to meet those needs. They often structure systems, collaborate and build tools or products that add value to their environment or culture. They may work to improve productivity, increase revenue or develop collaboration—and the effects are often memorable and impact change.

Benefits of Innovative Thinking

Here are four ways that innovative thinking benefits people and improves the workplace:

Improves Motivation

Being an innovative thinker requires people to be proactive in their careers. People with this quality are excited by challenges, and they seek solutions instead of focusing on problems. Having a positive attitude and maintaining proactive habits helps people to be more engaged at work, which is likely to increase their productivity and motivation.

Contributes to Your Personal Brand

Working to become an innovator in your job place adds to your professional persona and brand. Your personal brand is an expression of your overall workplace strengths and abilities in combination with your professional attitude and demeanor. Developing a memorable and consistent personal brand is a powerful tool for networking and career development.

Encourages Collaboration

Brainstorming ideas and having confidence in your problem-solving skills play significant roles in having success as an innovator in your career. Speaking with your superiors or colleagues about your ideas often sparks incitement or creativity in other people. It's likely to lead to in-depth conversations, professional partnerships and collaborative efforts on projects or initiatives. Also, when problem-solving and innovative thinking become a part of your personal brand, people are more likely to come to you for help or advice when they are assigned creative projects or assignments.

7 STEPS FOR BECOMING MORE INNOVATIVE AT WORK

Originally Published on Indeed.com

Increases Professional Recognition

Thinking creatively at work and seeking out innovative solutions for workplace challenges—not only helps people develop their personal brand—but it also helps define a person's professional reputation. Resolving problems using strategy and creativity and maintaining a proactive and positive mindset is likely to help you gain recognition from your peers and superiors as a skilled and inventive person. It may even improve your professional standing or help you be considered for a promotion or leadership position.

How to be innovative at work in 7 steps

1. Be Open To Change

The first step in becoming innovative in your career is to develop a mindset that is open to change. Innovation involves coming up with new ideas or new systems for completing tasks. Being overly connected to the way things are done presently may limit your creativity. You can practice being open to change by participating in newly implemented processes or by attending a new work event or professional outing. You can also improve your mindset by telling yourself that change is good and that you can adjust to new circumstances.

2. Seek Out Positivity

After developing an open mindset, you should work to establish a sense of positivity in your personal and professional life. Having a positive outlook allows you to maintain your openness to change, and it can help you be more confident about your ideas or decisions. This outlook can also help you be more receptive to budding ideas that your colleagues or co-workers may have, and is likely to encourage collaboration and team brainstorming. You can find this positivity internally and externally by connecting with colleagues or a mentor who has a cheerful or hopeful disposition, and making positive affirmations at the start of each day.

3. Study Other Innovative Thinkers

The next step in learning how to think like an innovator is to study the lives and work of innovative thinkers. Make a list of five to 10 influential people who inspire you. Think of people who have designed tools or systems that make your life easier, or inventions that change the way people live. You can read biographies and autobiographies or watch documentaries to learn about how each of those people lived their lives. You may find inspiration, behaviors or character traits to emulate or information about how influential innovators face challenges in their careers or lives.

4. Attend a Workshop

An innovation workshop is a dedicated learning and professional development session. They can range from hours long to days long and facilitate creative growth and encourage innovative thinking. Many employers, schools and private organizations offer these types of training sessions and workshops, and attendees often use these events to gain exposure to new ideas, brainstorming strategies, technological advances and like-minded professionals.

5. Broaden Your Professional Network

Your professional network is a group of social and work-related contacts who you can reach out to concerning jobs, industry questions, learning opportunities or advice. You can broaden your professional network by using social media, attending workshops or events, enrolling in classes or educational programs and connecting with coworkers or colleagues. Expanding your professional network can provide you with access to new ideas, innovative technology and activities or programs to expand your creativity, positivity innovation in the workplace.

6. Bring Your Skills To The Office

After committing to a positive and open mindset, connecting with like-minded professionals and studying the work and behavior of influential innovators, it's time to bring the skills and ideas you have picked up to your office or workplace. Consider hosting a brainstorming session or reaching out to your boss or colleagues about developing a cohort or team to address and solve workplace problems.

7. Have Confidence In Your Ideas

The final step in being more innovative at work is to develop confidence in your ideas. Emulate the characteristics and traits of innovative thinkers that you learned during your research, and brainstorm ideas for change. If you notice room for improvement, reach out to the appropriate person and let them know how you feel. If you believe you have a good idea, express your thoughts and take action to make a positive change.

connect with us



vanderbilt.edu/pcb



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Curious Bar
Check website for location



Virtual Curious Bar
2nd and 4th Wednesdays

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