

# YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 121

*Can creative climate apply to a country too?*

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## Create Creative Climate...

*"As bad as we think they are, these will become the good old days for our children."*

*Gladys Knight in the introduction to the song, "The Way We Were / Try to Remember."*



**"Gladys Knight"**

*Does the creative climate in your country need to improve?*

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I was having breakfast in a hotel in Dublin when the Gladys Knight song referenced above started to play. The song was released in 1975 but the spoken introduction (click [here](#) to watch if you are a soul music fan like me) could have been written today. So how is that relevant to creative leaders?

I was having breakfast in a hotel in Dublin when the Gladys Knight song referenced above started to play. The song was released in 1975 but the spoken introduction (click [here](#) to watch if you are a soul music fan like me) could have been written today. So how is that relevant to creative leaders?

I had been preparing slides on creative climate the night before. Climate can be viewed as those factors that help an organisation to create and innovate. Dr. Goran Ekvall in his influential research on innovative and less innovative companies, identified 9 factors that built the creative climate and differentiated the companies.

Dr. Teresa Amabile built on Ekvall's research, adding positive and negative environmental factors such as the availability of sufficient resources, e.g. information, funds, materials, and

facilities. Both have produced instruments to assess creative climates, available now as [SOQ](#) and [KEYS](#) (please click on the link for more details on the instruments and the factors). By assessing and understanding the organisational climate, you can begin to improve it.

### SO

Rather than discuss organisational climate further, what I really want to do here is to ask a question. Which is where Gladys Knight comes in... Whilst glancing at the rather gloomy headlines in the Irish Independent newspaper and thinking about the legacy we are leaving the next generation, I wondered if we could extend the analysis of organisational climate to a national level?

I ask the question because many developed nations face a difficult future, one in which creativity and innovation is going to have to be at the forefront. Governments (I have found four so far) have been quick to put the word "innovation" in to the name of their relevant business departments, however, I ask what are the political leaders and influencers (I include union, business and media organizations here), doing about building the right climate for it to happen, so that these become the good old days for our children?

On one level, material support for innovation, there does seem to be a lot of support. See this [UK Government site](#) for example, or take a look at the Innovation Ireland review [here](#).

However, when it comes to building the climate in Ekvall's terms, there is little evidence that our political leaders and influencers, are doing enough. As you read Ekvall's factors below, replace the word "people" with "political leaders" in the descriptors (if based outside of the UK, consider your own leaders) and rate

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them from 1 – 5 where 5 is “there is much evidence of this”:

- Challenge: How much challenge people have in their work and how committed they are to it
- Freedom: How much freedom people have to make decisions, find information and show initiative
- Idea Time: How much time people have and use to explore challenges and generate ideas before having to act
- Idea Support: How much people are encouraged to propose ideas and suggestions and how well they are considered and supported
- Trust and Openness: How much people are happy to say what they think and offer conflicting ideas
- Debate: How much people share their different perspectives and opposing opinion in a constructive way
- Playful and fun: How much the workplace is relaxed and fun for people
- Risk Taking: How much we accept failure when people try new things (the area found lowest in the non innovative companies)
- Conflict (Negative): How much interpersonal conflict there is

Apart from “Conflict” how many 5’s did you award? This may seem a trite measure, but if we consider the amount of media attention political leaders receive, it would be a very positive step if they (and the media influencers) set an example to organisations, the people and our children by building the right creative climate.

## ACTION

Discuss the ideas above with colleagues and friends? How does your country rate on the scale.

If you want something more operational, rate your team. What might you do as a creative leader to improve the creative climate on your team if not your organisation?

## TO CLOSE

Riding through the woods this week (high on Play and Fun) with my 12 year old son, he rode in

to a deep puddle (high Risk Taking) and slipped, ending up with his feet and hands in the mud. I laughed (lack of Idea Support). Upset, he started riding again, but very slowly (lack of Challenge). I called out to him to hurry up (pressure on Idea Time), just as a man passed by. As I waited I heard the man call out to my son, “Come on, your granddad is waiting!” (too much Openness!). THAT made my son laugh (high on potential Conflict) and I muttered under my breath (poor on Debate).

Hopefully, in the future, my son will consider that episode a happy memory of the way we were.

Have an innovative week.

*John Brooker | Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.*

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