URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/creative-projects-on-company-time
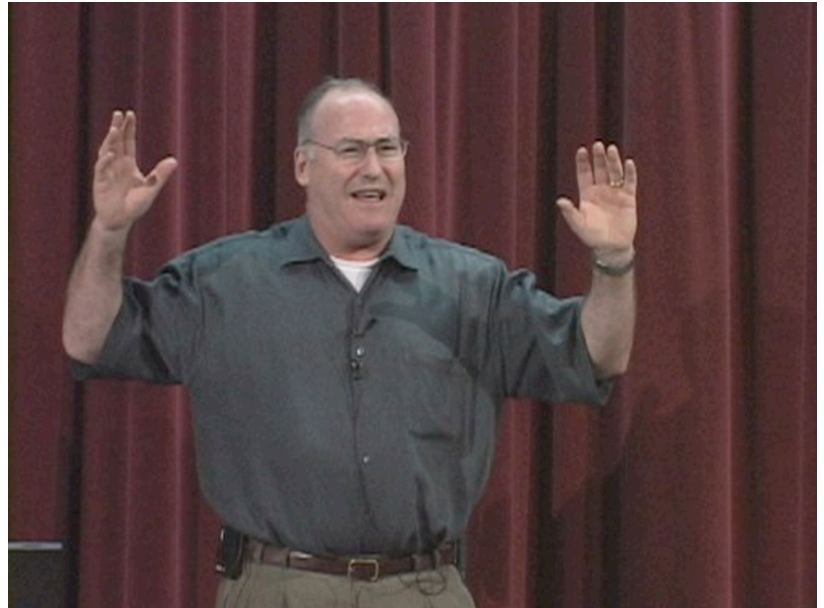
Some companies like Google allocate a certain amount of time to employees for creative projects outside of daily tasks. Sutton explains how this can work most effectively.

Transcript

The goal is to that have somewhat a variation management kind of doesn't know about.. Because I don't believe that management necessarily has superior knowledge and there are lots of companies that actually do it.. But we're talking about situations where people are doing creative work.... anything that's doing routine, I don't really understand the value of allowing somebody who, like an engineer who is trying to..... A quality engineer to do that, there might be some value.. But we're talking about more sort of like extreme creative work.. The other thing is that that's the kind of thing that may not fit into some company cultures.. And some other things are necessary and in fact, I think the argument that a lot of creativity happens despite rather than because of management in organizations, they sort of like an underground culture.. That's one of those things that keeps many organizations going.. And I'll give you an example..

Some years ago, we had this huge German company called Siemens, spent a lot of money on executive education here.. I think they probably wasted the money.. That's a whole other story.. But they told me, when I was talking about these sort of things that Siemens, something there in their culture is a submarine project.. And the way that many innovations happen at Siemens was that you get an idea, you find a senior manager to support it or get it some resources and you go underground and tell nobody that you're actually working on it.. You're actually beneath the surface.. If you came up with nothing, you will die beneath the surface and not tell anybody.. But if you came up with something that worked, you would fine either your original supporter or another one and they will take credit for it.. So it will look like it was really high success right, when they actually didn't.. So that's one of the things that happens and I think that makes engineering another technical companies' greats..

Sometimes they do great things despite rather than because of management.. And when management wants to support it, they spin out and do a start-up of course.. That's how many start-ups have happened around here.. As people work on company time, either they don't tell their manager or hopefully they tell them because they're supposed to and they say no and they go and start a company...