What's the best style: Rule based performance or Unleashing Creativity?

"I wish you would let us do this; it makes so much sense!"

"This is such a textbook way of doing this, can't we explore something else?"

"Do I really have to sign off this way?"

"Is there always one way of doing things?"

"Is the previous way of working, the best way to work?"

"Can we experiment and try to do something differently?"

Are these somethings that you have heard from your direct reports at any point of time? This conundrum about sticking by the rule book or trying something different is widely spoken about. With many pros and cons of each it can be really difficult to navigate what truly would fit in your specific organizational context. Depending on what you may choose, your reportees will perceive you in a certain way and at times lead to a loss of morale.

If a team member views a certain direction as archaic, they are less likely to think out-of - the-box or really volunteer for tasks. There are also very obvious dangers of letting your team members take charge. For example, what would you measure their performance on? Or what if a deal really falls through because of a different style that they adopt? Here are simple pointers to reflect upon for the next time that you grapple with deciding which way to go:

- *Logistics & Accuracy*. Is this task to be completed in a certain timeline? Are the returns of this task negotiable? Would a clearly defined role be important for assigning credit? Is there already a well-established understanding and research behind this work? Would this task have any benefit or would we be reinventing the wheel? If most of the answers are yes, then perhaps sticking to the book would be best.
- *First timer*. For anyone starting off in a well-placed role, structure is key. Think of it in terms of scaffolding for a new building - you would need a strong foundation before a fancy interior decoration. In such a case you know that setting expectations and goals would be the very key in helping the employee flourish.
- *Trusting the expertise of the talent you hired*. Something that managers miss the mark with when it comes to the talent hired is utilizing them for their expertise.

What makes this talent you hired different from 10 other people you rejected? Perhaps their ideas, their understanding? Are you truly giving them the freedom to utilize their learnings to the situation at hand? Or are you expecting them to just follow a set direction constantly- How are you then contributing to their growth?

Now that you have gone through these points take a moment to think about your current team situation. Maybe the answer lies in structure or freedom or both? The irony is that even set rules come from experimentation. So, remembering to create a blend of both would really work in your favor. Lastly, communicate with your team. Consultants all across the globe will tell you that this is the secret to really appreciating each other's perspective. No matter what you decide as the best course of action, unless you are talking to your team, it will not translate well.