

Thinking Inside or Outside the Box... Where are You?

By Terry H. Hill

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Interestingly enough, as a small business owner, "thinking outside the box" is precisely the behavior that inspired you to set off on the entrepreneurial path in the first place. The tough challenge is sustaining your original visionary mindset.

Once the company is up and running, most of us spend a great deal of time "inside the box" immersed in the daily activities of running a business, conventional thinking, and accepted practices. The trouble with thinking and living "inside the box" is that it is counterproductive to jumpstarting your business, motivating your employees, and delighting your customers.

The term "thinking outside the box" is frequently used in today's rapidly changing business environment, and for good reason. Thinking "outside the box" is a metaphor for creative thinking. Creative thinking is a mental process that involves the generation of new ideas or concepts, or the generation of new associations between existing ideas or concepts. "Outside the box" thinking is the ability to step back and shrug off the confines of the traditional modes of thinking. It is viewing things from broader perspective.

Why step outside of the box? To better position yourself to create, to renew, to solve, and to change. When you think "outside the box," you call upon your sense of vision, and imagine the best possible outcome. You must think "outside of the box" so you can place your business into more favorable positions. Ultimately, by thinking "outside of the box," you gain a greater competitive advantage.

How do you step outside the box? It starts by shaking off preexisting notions, opening your eyes to all of the problems and possibilities from an unbiased perspective. It requires you to open up and to reach out to your employees and [advisors](#). Use brainstorming sessions to help to stimulate new ideas and concepts. Utilize a team approach to implement the new ideas and concepts into the day-to-day activities. Empower your employees to make decisions in their areas of responsibility.

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