

Thinking out of the Box? Or in-the box?? Or no- Box?

Robert Alan Black (Creativityforlife.com) had used the terms 'in-the-box', 'new-box' 'other-box' and even a 'no-box' thinking as compared to the commonly known term 'out-of-the box' thinking. Are they very different or are they just the same body in new clothes?

"Going out of the box" implies a breakaway from the usual paradigms and mindsets. This can be really challenging and begs the question whether it is really necessary to go out of the box. Can creative thinking be found within the box or in the box? And what does the "box" refer to??

But what do these other terms mean?

"Thinking in the box" - Would there not be advantages of thinking in the box? Can we not capitalize on what we already know that can work and which might just need improving? Thinking in the box could be a less challenging way to start off – particularly when you have a team who is adverse to an outright change. Instead of moving out of their box, they can dig deeper into it to find new things from it.

"New box thinking" is a controlled form of "out of the box thinking". It is looking for solutions in new areas and these new areas need not be something that is totally out of the box but rather looking at them with different coloured lenses or from a different angle or direction.

"Other box thinking" is one where you get out of your box and go into someone else's box to look for solutions. In real life, it would mean going to another department eg finance going to manufacturing to learn what and how they work. This will create better understanding of the other boxes, finding and working on synergies between the boxes. Surprising outcomes could come from this experience.

A "no box thinking" is more challenging as there will be no boundaries. It implies an open thinking with no limits or parameters and where anything goes. It could be a step away from out of the box thinking.

You may ask "Is my team ready for this?" Look at your team and consider different approaches based on their readiness for creativity. Consider

- within the box thinking –
 - re look at the box and see what you could change within
 - are there options you have not considered before or tried before?
- try an other box thinking – look and learn from other departments or organisations. Look at their boxes and look from their boxes.
- Start to experiment slowly with a no-box thinking. You never know what you might come up with.

Are you prepared for it?

All these are different expressions of an "out of the box thinking". The first box is in your mind. Are you yourself ready to move that box or get out of that box. Unless we are ready to throw away that box, we cannot start to try to move the boxes in our team.

"Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun."

Mary Lou Cook