



Ignite Business Coaching Whitepaper

Know Box Thinking



We hear it all the time. “I need someone to give me an outside the box idea.” Outside the Box Thinking is generally viewed as something groundbreaking. It is recognized by your peers or leader as a unique idea that will increase customer or employee satisfaction to new levels, and in return, generate more market share, revenue and profits.

Let’s put a different spin on this and look at it from a leadership perspective. We have four generations in the workplace that all have different characteristics and motivations. *The Traditionalist* values hard work and expects to pay his dues to move forward in the organization. On the other end of the demographic spectrum, *The Generation Y team member* tends to be technologically savvy, needs frequent feedback and expects constant momentum toward his or her career goals. Throw in the *Baby Boomers* and *Generation Xers* and you can see why leaders are often left scratching their heads on how to get the most from their team members.

What might happen if we replace the adage of “Outside the Box Thinking” with “Know Box Thinking?” Let’s remove the idea of the four walls around us and use some other techniques. Listed below are three ideas on how to get the most from the multigenerational workforce using Know Box Thinking.

Reverse Mentoring – Take advantage of the *Gen Y’s* technological aptitude and knowledge through mentoring. *Gen Y* team members can help a *Boomer* or *Traditionalist* learn to use new technology applications like LinkedIn or a software package. In return, the *Gen Y* team member spends quality time with someone who can share their insight and experience about working in the organization and the business world. This is a quick way to build team rapport and transfer knowledge about customers, marketing strategies and institutional knowledge that would otherwise take years for the *Gen Y* team member to master.

Intrapreneurship – This is a way for employees of all generations to work within a company in an entrepreneurial capacity, creating new products and ideas that will generate a positive return for the company. The best example is Apple Computer’s Macintosh team, who went back to the garage to develop a product that is now recognized as one of the finest in its class. Employees who are encouraged to be internal entrepreneurs feel they are part of an exciting small business or startup. They become more committed and engaged, and customers benefit.

Pod Work – What’s a pod you ask? Recently, I was in a continuing education program, and the instructor told us we were going to work in pods. Am I that out of touch that I didn’t know the definition of a pod? Well, I wasn’t the only one. In the most literal sense, pod work is grouping team members together in a specific location. However, it’s much more than that. Yes, pods focus on teamwork, but pods work in a way where the individuals are trained to judge themselves on what they should do in the best interests of the team. They connect the team members, partners and networks of each member to ensure they have strong ties to get the work done well. Pods focus on cooperation and learning. The members focus on positivity, and ensuring there are a basic core set of team member behaviors that can be employed consistently.

As a leader, how do you think this kind of thinking will be received? It recognizes the differences among the multigenerational workforce and takes advantage of the respective skill sets of each group. Employees become engaged and feel they are setting their own course all the while engaging their colleagues along the way.

Yes, there are other tools that can be part of your “Know Box Thinking” approach. These three will get you headed in the right direction. You are going to be more successful in recruiting and retaining the best talent with Know Box Thinking. Don’t be surprised when increased productivity and improved financial results follow. Just do one thing! Don’t confuse Know Box Thinking with No Box Thinking. Don’t settle. The best leaders enable and encourage people to set their own dates and deliverables through a balance of independent and *interdependent* thinking. Isn’t this what all employees from all generations want from the leadership team?

About Ignite Business Coaching

Ignite Business Coaching provides leadership development coaching and business consulting services. Coaching clients include financial professionals and teams looking to improve their competitive advantage to provide more value to clients and employees while achieving personal goals. Consulting clients engage Ignite to develop strategic plans, analyze business models, and design or optimize business processes.



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