

Out of the Box? Who's Box?

Innovative solutions are in demand, lateral thinkers officially welcome (they're often not that popular once they are here, but that's a different story), and time and again „thinking out of the box“ is adjured: that capacity to break the limits of the intellectual corset that you are forced or lured into by a given problem – to „think in totally new ways“.

As if there was such a thing as „the box“.

What box? And, first of all, who's box? And what's the message?

Am I supposed to think out of the box that is containing the problem? All right, I could make this, as long as my box is larger than the one I am supposed to think out of. And with this I not only mean the physical box containing my brain (I could get very silly with this now, but I won't).

No, I am talking about my very personal box as a symbol for the inner accessible space of thought and experience. From that point of view thinking „out of the box“, or, to be precise, „out of my box“ is in fact impossible. At the most I could think „out of your box“, whether it is because mine is bigger (typical male assumption), or because it is shifted in relation to yours.

So to be innovative you should make sure that your box is as big as possible, and I am being serious now.

The second possibility: work with a team with very diverse team members. This may sound like an old story, but it gets very interesting if you look at the obstacles. They are still huge, because very diverse people can potentially be a pain in the neck for each other. Developing the ability to cope with this not trivial.

So how can you broaden your mind, your inner thinking space, given the fact that you are, as it happens, „in the box“?

There is only one way: you will achieve this only with someone who stands at least partially outside your inner space of thought and experience (he or she shouldn't stand completely outside of it, or else you won't have a subject). That person can connect you with perspectives you never knew or you have lost or forgotten. If you can take and integrate this input, you will broaden your horizon. In other words: you develop your personality, you grow in a humanistic sense and can bring new things into the world.

No wonder artists, with a way of experiencing that feels often strange for „normal“ people can help us on in such a comprehensive way and often in short time. In magic moments they can touch us so deeply that we are not the same any more. However, these people often don't find subjects with managers in the business context, indeed...in these situations a coach is still a good choice – at best one who as an artistic consciousness, at least partially. The importance of this dimension was pointed out early by Edgar Schein (for leading and consulting) and Joseph Zinker (for Gestalt Therapy), two greats of their respective fields.

And sometimes it not the coaches at all who help you on: sometimes it's just your colleagues at work, your friends, or the love of your life who will not shy away from telling you the truth.

„Out of the Box“ – works only in company.