

Alpha Business Coaching Newsletter

"Poking the Box"

Dear Small Business Owner:

Seth Godin has a new book out called *Poke the Box*. He's the same guy who wrote *Purple Cow*, *The Dip* and others. He really likes to get people to think differently about life and their situation. In this book, he pushes us to not think like cogs in a wheel, but to be the person who is willing to "boldly go where no one has gone before." This doesn't just apply to entrepreneurs. It applies to everyone who is tired of doing the same thing without results.

Godin says we need to have curiosity. Opportunities turn up when you pursue your curiosity. Yes, it's easier just to follow a map, but there aren't many big rewards for people who can just follow a map. The challenge of being the initiator is that you could be wrong. You may pick the wrong thing, you may waste time, and you may be blamed. But learning lessons when that happens are invaluable.



Smart leaders understand that a thriving organization needs more than one person creating change. What would happen if people across departments went to lunch regularly to solve a problem? What would happen if employees were rewarded for trying ideas that could improve their job? Think about how this could be encourage for more creative customer service, keeping a project on track, imaginative business development, and boosting productivity.



Godin tells the story of his dog that has one of those invisible fence collars. The dog quickly learned how close it could get to the fence until it buzzed him and then stayed very clear of the edge. But, the funny thing was, the charged wire broke recently, but the dog doesn't know it and still won't leave the yard. As people, we can be like this if we tried something once and failed. We then interpret this as something we should never try again. The boundaries are in our heads, not in the system.

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Did you know the first Starbucks store in Seattle was not successful? It originally opened just selling coffee beans and tea leaves. No one came. After a trip to Italy, Howard Schultz got the idea of selling coffee already made and we know the current status of Starbucks. It's hard to imagine a time before coffee shops were on every street corner, but somebody had to take the first step to see if something previously unimagined would work.



Here's an idea to use with your team to help them start their day thinking about being brave. Start the morning by having everyone check in. Let people update and contribute what they're afraid of. Share 2 kinds of afraid---things that might fail and things that might work. This way you hear what they think might take them down and what might create new possibilities. Encourage sharing of both. Check in the next day about what worked. This may be uncomfortable at first, but as it becomes a habit, people will look forward to sharing---both for solving problems and about their successes!

I hope this has provided a new way to think about being ready to try something new. Being a coaching manager can help you "poke the box!"

Sincerely,
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