

Remodels and Rollouts

When it comes to process innovation, there is no box

By Mark Davis

There is an old adage used every day that is much outdated: "Think outside the box." I'm sure you have heard this before. In today's marketplace, you can't afford to be near the box nor even recognize that there is a box. What I'm saying is, "There is no box."

Why should we believe there is no box? When it comes to collecting information, we know a fact: The sum total of all knowledge available to humans from the beginning of man will increase more than tenfold by the year 2020 compared to what was learned through the year 2000. Through the evolution of information collection, we have evolved from word of mouth to written word to Morse code and telegraphs, mail, telephone, faxes and, of course, the e-mail world of today. In order to truly believe that there is no box, one must also hold the belief

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that you cannot afford to not have all information accessible to you when you need it, and where you need it.

What we have to understand is, in today's world, by sheer volume, voicemail and e-mail have been diluted toward the point of ineffectiveness. Enter the World Wide Web, a.k.a. the Internet. The Internet brings a central repository of information for all stakeholders involved in a project process to view all pertinent information related to their piece of the pie. In order to render the box invisible, you cannot depend on a repository of information that is static. By allowing the participants dynamic real-time sharing of information, we can positively effect the movement of the process through response to the stimulus that the information provokes.

If you are depending on a static piece of information for reviewing then you have to refer to the old ways of communicating your responses. Think back

to all the e-mails and voicemails you've left without receiving a response for hours, sometimes days, maybe even weeks. Do these traditional in-the-box methods support effective communication?

The box also refers to process thinking in the field. Think back over the last 10 years and look at how remodels and rollouts have changed or, for many, haven't changed. During the ordering process, a retailer would send information to its vendors and have product shipped direct to stores by many different carriers out to the marketplace. With this process, many different companies can have possession of a retailer's assets. Does it comfort you to know that over the next 48 hours your product will switch hands from the point of manufacture, to a transportation company, to a warehouse, to another transportation company, to be received by the store and installed by a local or regional installation company, then merchandised by another company, who is interpreting planograms and floor plans created by your internal staff?

Where is the chain of command here? It's a series of disconnected links. What would happen if someone not constrained by "the box" took ownership of the process and handled all of the aforementioned services for you? Less risk of dropped handoffs, missing and broken product, late product, inaccurate inventory counts, unneeded stress and sleepless nights. Linking all of these processes makes for a smoother process and stronger execution of a project.

Add to this an information repository, where stakeholders can view real-time updated information, status reports and pictures of what has taken place? Now you have power; the power of knowledge and the power to move ahead in your marketplace. By aligning your processes with your strategies, you gain a competitive edge and increase your return on investment. That's what it's all about, getting the greatest return on your investment.

With today's ability to have "on demand" information and collaborating service companies, there is no reason to be bound by the 1990s box. There is no box.



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