



OFFICE HANDBOOK

Chapter 51: Office Design

The Company has long appreciated the connection between a well-designed workplace and exemplary productivity. To that end, we are pleased to announce highlights of a new Design for Efficiency program to be phased in over the next year (as funding and local permitting allow):

THE DOUBLE DESKER: Careful study of our current floor plan reveals a vast amount of unused space between the tops of existing cubicles and the ceiling. So that this real estate no longer lies fallow, a second layer of cubicles will be built atop existing work spaces in the next few months. Construction logistics are to be determined.

WALL DECOR: In an effort to add a splash of color to employees' workdays, the Company is selling wall space to local and national advertisers. To date, deals have been closed with Campbell's Soup for their single-servings line and for Eli Lilly's "feel good" family of products, Prozac and Cialis.

FOOD SERVICE: Break rooms—which, incidentally, are not used to full capacity at all hours—foster an unhealthy environment where employees can gather and speak candidly out of supervisors' earshot. To address this problem, break rooms will be adapted to accommodate additional double-desker configurations. In their place, pushcart food vendors will travel the corridors twice each day. (The executive dining room will, for the time being, remain open.)

INCENTIVE OFFICES: To foster ambition among junior employees, offices for top managers will be outfitted with state-of-the-art amenities that include private bathrooms, full wet bars, and panoramic views of the executive pitch-and-putt golf course.

"GREEN ME": The Company takes conservation seriously. In an effort to spur energy savings, heating and cooling systems will operate only between the peak work hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Lights will be dimmed to 50% of capacity and, to prevent heat loss, windows not located in incentive offices will be plastered over.

—Ryan Underwood



Consultant Debunking Unit

Outside the Box *By Martin Kihn*

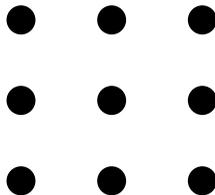
SOME SPECIMENS of consultant-speak are so clichéd that they have long lost any real meaning and have turned into the conversational equivalent of an "Ummmm." The most common of these may be the hoary exhortation to "think outside the box."

Examples abound. To name but a few: In *The Art of Innovation* (Currency, 2001) author Tom Kelley encourages "thinking outside the box." *Variety* publishes a blog called "Outside the Box," and a *USA Today* headline intoned: "Muzak Thinks Outside the Box."

"It is," says Jesse Sheidlower, editor-at-large of the Oxford English Dictionary, "about as clichéd as it gets."

The phrase means something like "think creatively" or "be original," and its origin is generally attributed to consultants in the 1970s and 1980s who tried to make clients feel inadequate by drawing nine dots on a piece of paper and asking them to connect the dots without lifting their pen, using only four lines:

(Hint: You have to think outside



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the—oh, you know.)

Since then, books have been committed on topics from *Kids Who Think Outside the Box* to *Evangelism Outside the Box*. And this box isn't closing: In past year, the phrase has appeared an average of once every nine or so days in *The New York Times* alone.

We wondered whether thinking outside the box really does enhance creativity. To find out, we checked in with Dr. Peter Suedfeld, a psychology professor at the University of British Columbia and an expert in human cognition. He told us that creativity is a "very mysterious thing" that "exists in pretty much everyone"—but that there are indeed ways to improve it.

One method he has studied extensively is what he calls Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy (REST)—putting people into places with little light or outside stimuli. "What I've found," he said, "is that far from making people crazy, moderate deprivation lowers blood pressure, improves mood, and makes people more creative."

Does that mean a person wanting to be creative is better off thinking, say, inside a box?

Dr. Suedfeld considered this a moment, and then said: "To the extent the box keeps the outside world away—then, yes, it is better to think inside the box."

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open the kimono (*v. phr.*) to reveal something new and bold, usually to a client