

OUTSIDE THE BOX

by Tom Field

Great Quests Arise from Query

Leaders rarely have all the 'right' answers at their fingertips.

Great leaders are wary of making big decisions based solely on their own experience, perspective and knowledge. However, it is not surprising that many leaders up and down an organizational structure operate from the assumption that to be a credible leader they must know the 'correct' answer. The belief that the leader must be all knowing is a dysfunctional assumption that constrains the success, growth and impact of organizations.

Though leaders across the spectrum of society ranging from business to theology collectively challenge this assumption by exploring the 'tyranny of knowledge.' This concept suggests that when leaders focus on their own knowledge and accept their own perspective as flawless they are anchored solidly to the status quo reducing their capacity to be proactive in the face of uncertainty, volatility and change.

Most of us were educated in the traditional manner where the teacher held the wisdom and our role as a student was to absorb, memorize, regurgitate and leave all the questioning to someone else.

Increasingly, research is clearly demonstrating that while excellence in learning established answers, techniques and protocols contributes to competence; personal and

professional excellence is more often attained by those who have developed the capacity to ask the right question and pursue inquiry as the pathway to solutions. Certainly value can be found in the realm of the known but the breakthroughs originate from wandering into the unknown.

So in the spirit of embracing questions, a short list to begin the process is listed to the right.

Each of these takes us to a place where our comfort begins to fade away and we have to muster the courage to step into new territory. Take a deep breath and go after these questions one by one or develop your own list to better fit your situation.

Remember that you are not alone – bring your team, family, and trusted advisors into the process of putting the right questions on the table. Solutions are a team effort and when you flip the leadership model to embrace hard questions and engage others in the search for answers; your organization will benefit and you will be strengthened. **A**

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The Query

- ▶ Does my business have a clearly established vision and mission? Do we have the end in mind?
- ▶ Are there underutilized resources in our business? Are we missing opportunities because of infrastructure, equipment, or talent spending too much time on the sidelines?
- ▶ Is the next generation being prepared to lead the business and family wealth? Are we actively training and developing people or just hoping for the best?
- ▶ What assumptions underpin our business? Which of those assumptions put our longevity and performance at risk?
- ▶ Do we know our customers and their emerging needs? Are we cultivating relationships that will lead us to new or increased business?
- ▶ Are we taking care of the relationships in our lives? Are we aligned with spouses, kids, extended family, employees, neighbors, customers and suppliers? If not, what's the plan to resolve the issues?
- ▶ Are we a healthy organization? Does our organization have strong financial performance, culture, and resilience? Are our people in a state of wellbeing relative to their physical, emotional and mental health?
- ▶ What's the most significant problem or issue that stands between us and our objectives? How do we plan to tackle the challenge?
- ▶ What scares us most about the future? Have we made a date with that fear and put it to bed by developing an active strategy?
- ▶ What's my impact as a leader, the impact of my team collectively and individually, and the impact of my organization?