

## Living Dangerously — Thinking for Yourself

Today I received a batch of emails offering yet another new business opportunity, all pre-packaged and ready for me to “make a fortune.” Some of the messages boasted: “We’ve already done the planning and thinking for you.” Made my skin crawl. Growing up, I observed that being thoughtless was not a particularly good thing.

Don’t you also feel strangely stifled when you look around at a life of shrink-wrapped paradigms, of businesses in a box; where nearly everyone is “conditioned” by professionals who feed the public everything in mini-packs, modules and sound bites? Especially their thoughts.

It has been said that the thinking person is a dangerous person. Well, maybe it’s time to start living a little more dangerously.

### Thinking about thinking at work

Human beings are the only species that thinks, reflects, questions, wonders, daydreams, imagines, and allows for curiosity. We can reflect on the past and ponder the future. However, in an age of 15-second sound bites, 24-hour in-your-face news and the constant bombardment by, and engagement in, electronic devices, many folks are spending less and less time actually “thinking.” The relevant questions are: “Why in our times do we seem to be doing less and less thinking? And, “What are we allowing to get in the way of thinking?”

When so many seem to be living life at 90 miles an hour, we seem to have less and less time (really, make time!) to think, really think, as opposed to react (doing, doing, doing, without thinking). In your workplace, how often do you take time to think, how often are you encouraged to reflect, and how often do you encourage your direct reports to be curious about something and take time pursue their wonderment? To think.

### The Source Of All That Hurry

Our over-emphasis (really, an obsession in our Western culture) on efficiency and productivity unfortunately has not consistently resulted in wiser choices, better solutions, greater insights, more improved relationships and deeper and greater passion and engagement in our work. What we often experience is simply doing what we do in less time. Drone-like. Just faster robots.

So, what are we losing, what are we sacrificing at the expense of speed and efficiency? What are you giving up as a result of “not thinking” and only reacting throughout most of your workday? All species react. What of your human-ness are you jettisoning in your “live-reactively” approach to life at work? And, what if you did spend more time “thinking” at work? Would that be a “plus” in your workplace? Or, do you work in a “not-invented-here” type of work culture where thinking creatively, reflecting and imagining upset the apple cart, threaten a “business as usual” culture, and challenge the status-quo? Would others see you as “dangerous” as a thinker, in some way, shape or form? Have you stopped thinking, as it’s dangerous to your workplace health?

So, for many folks, “act, don’t think” has become the ubiquitous workplace mantra. Not unlike oil and water, ideas and action don’t mix.

### Can You Go Against the Flow?

Do we have the determination, fortitude, energy, courage and strength to “think,” really think, at work? To consciously take time out to reflect, delve below the surface, explore and allow our curiosity? Do we

even “risk” thinking at work? As Bob Dylan wrote, “He not busy being born Is busy dying.” ( It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)).

Thinking equates to continuously being born, being alive, growing, and self actualizing. Simply “doing” equates to withering on the vine. Something to think about.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- How are my relationships with my colleagues at work (my spouse, my children and others)? Are they improving, worsening, matter-of-fact, evaporating? How often do I really, really “think about” my relationships?
- Do I allow my curiosity? Do I take the time to explore, or do I live life on the “surface” of things? Do I ever “drill down” to find out more, engage through real discovery and exploration? What upsets me, frustrates me, angers me? Have I “thought” deeply about what’s really underneath my reactivity (doing without thinking)?
- Am I encouraged to think at work? Do I foster a “thinking” climate and culture on my team, in my unit or department at work? If not, why not?
- Do I spend a plurality or majority of my waking hours attached to an “electronic leash”? Plugged into everything...but myself?
- Do I take time out for myself....to walk, be still, reflect, muse, wonder, and breathe deeply into my experiences...? If not, why not? What one baby step could I take next week to allow for more “thinking” and reflective time?
- What do I think about thinking? Do I have (can I make) the time to even think about that?

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