

# Ditch the box

 By [Jane Stevenson](#)

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You've heard it before, "think outside the box." But what if we scrap the box?

The ability to think without a preconceived end result – to "free fall" – is amazing and rare in the busy-ness of today's world. It's like your mind goes skydiving, there's a tangible thrill and you never know how it will end.

Whether it's problem solving, strategising, developing a business or coming up with your next marketing campaign, making time to think is critical. It's not always about new ways but often about switching the current way into a new style. Doing it differently.



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Don't be fooled though, it's not easy and makes many entrepreneurs uncomfortable. The reason being, it's too easy to go to our frame of reference, it's our default. But when managed well, time spent thinking (without a box) results in growth.

## Keep an open mind

Maintain a liberal approach with a thirst to be different. Look beyond the expected. Try and discover a new strategy to be more productive. There is always a better way to do something; you just need to find time to explore alternatives and have fun along the way.

## Challenge yourself

Every day should be a school day. Not only will you learn something new, what you learn will give you a new way of viewing the world, and making sense of various aspects of your life, society, and your business.

## Find a new door

When was the last time you addressed the conventional and approached problems in an innovative way? Start questioning and considering everything. Go through every possibility until you have proof something can or cannot be done.

## Zip it and listen

All entrepreneurs need to be good listeners. We have to be capable of listening, supporting, nurturing and respecting others' ideas. We should be open to new ideas; and we need to give these ideas a chance to be explored before we count them out.

## Change up your routine

How dull is it doing the same thing every day? If you're in a rut, review your routine and make changes. Start with something simple – change your route to work. Change the routine of your day, the way you run meetings, etc. Continue until you no longer have a routine, and then enjoy the growth and new ideas you will be ready to implement.

## Ditch habits that inhibit your ability to change

Negative attitude, fear of failure, perfectionism, and following convention without question all hinder creativity. Review your processes to ensure they give you the best results.

## Change your environment

Get out of your four walls. You may not be able to change your office, but once in a while work from a different location. I sometimes take my laptop and move to a different office or brainstorm or bounce ideas with colleagues in a different department. You will be surprised by the outcomes.

Making time to think may sound insane. But the alternative is crisis management. And remember,  $2+2 = 4$ , but so does  $3+1$ .

## ABOUT JANE STEVENSON

Named by CEO publication as SA's most influential government businesswoman in the SME sector in 2012, she's big on vision, strategy and effective communication. Start with a successful business strategy and executive coaching consultancy to leading national brands... add the experience of being a Board and EXCO member of the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber; and stir in some fearless Scottish roots and a dedication to building organisational vision. The result? A motivating, passionate team player.

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