



You Don't Know What You Don't Know

Just because you don't know how to do it doesn't mean it can't be done. Once you accept this, your possibilities become endless.

All too often we miss opportunities because we convince ourselves that things are impossible. But impossible is just a box that we've wrapped around ourselves based on our current knowledge. What if you open your mind to new ideas? All of sudden, the impossible may become possible.

I remember facilitating a leadership workshop several years ago for a group of nuclear power plant leaders. I designed an exercise where they envisioned themselves in the future on the cover of FORTUNE magazine. Their assignment was to write the tag line. One team nailed it. At that time, refueling outages were very costly and took an average of 55 days to complete. This team envisioned that in the future, they would achieve notoriety by completing the task in 30 days. When they presented their tagline, the room was filled with hysterical laughter. No one could possibly imagine how to accomplish the task so in their eyes, the whole idea was ludicrous. Fast forward 10 years, and they accomplished the task in 24 days saving millions of dollars. Not so ridiculous now huh?

The same story can be told over and over. For example, 15 years ago emergency room wait times were an average of 1 to 2 hours. Can you imagine the look on people's faces if you told them that they should cut that by 75%? Today, many wait times are under 15 minutes.

As a VP of Customer Service, I frequently gave out "impossible goals" accompanied with one of my favorite sayings "*Just because you don't know how to do it doesn't mean it can't be done.*" After all the whining and crying stopped, we got to work. We benchmarked, brainstormed, researched and looked for innovative ways to get things done. Within 5 years, we reduced complaints by more than 50%, reduced cost of service by 15%, doubled our ebill enrollment and significantly improved customer satisfaction ratings (all things thought impossible!)

There are still many products and services that have not seen this transformation. Why? Because **you don't know what you don't know**. And unless you are willing to step outside your box at the risk of being laughed at or hailed as a nut-case, you may never know what it feels like to achieve the impossible.

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