

## Changed thinking

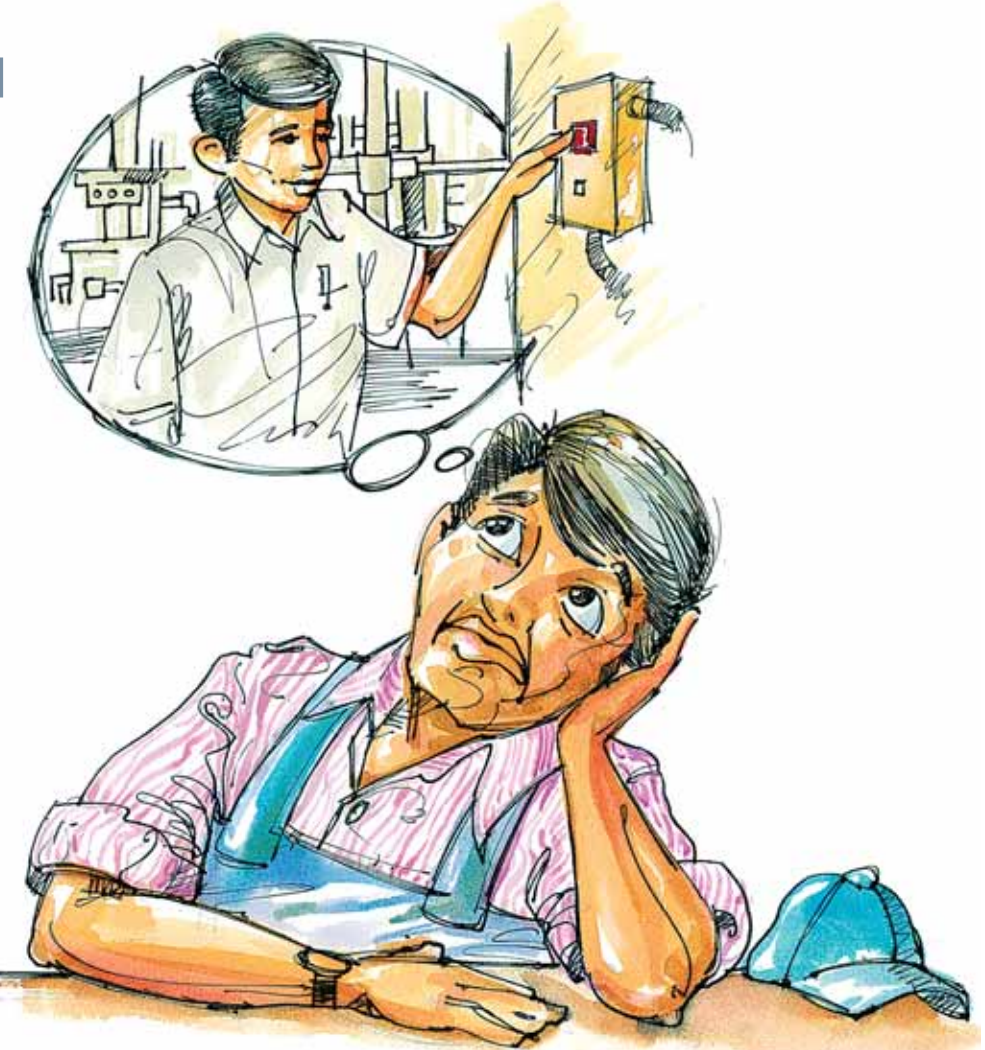
# A Eureka moment!

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Every individual reaches a point where he feels stagnated. Suddenly he feels drained of all good ideas. It begins to affect his performance drastically. This is when he realises that he needs to change his thinking to bring in a breath of fresh air into his life. A change in thinking is required at every stage of life, in every field, to remain creative, maintain efficiency, and enhance overall performance. It is essential for the personal and professional growth of an individual. This article talks of some simple tips to help you change your thinking, and adopt a whole new outlook towards life.

It is easy to believe that unsuccessful people need to change their thinking. But, how about the people who have achieved some degree of success? Can an individual keep on achieving more without changing the way they think?

Almost every success story I have read tells a similar story. They all failed in the beginning, some of them many times. They tried to change everything and everyone around them, but to no avail. They finally realised that to change it all, they needed to first change themselves. They did this by changing their thinking, and things automatically fell into place. Gradually everything around them changed.



### **Why should you change your thinking?**

It is hard to state the exact value of changing your thinking. But, good thinking can do many things for you: generate revenue, solve problems, and create opportunities. It can take you to a whole new level - personally and professionally. It really can change your life. A few things that everyone should know about changed thinking:

#### **Changed thinking is not automatic:**

A change in thinking does not happen on its own. Good ideas rarely go out and find some one. If you want to find a good idea you must search for it. If you want to become a better thinker you need to work

at it. And once you become a better thinker, good ideas will keep flowing. The first step is to get to the core of the issue. For example, you need to first find out whether your business is bloated, clumsy, rigid, sluggish, non-competitive, uncreative, inefficient, disdainful of customer needs, and not making enough money? If yes, you obviously need to reverse the situation as soon as possible to stop your business from dying out. The only way to improve the situation is to first chart out a well thought-out plan. And planning requires a good amount of thinking. The amount of productive thinking that you are capable of at any point of time, depends on your present level of useful thinking.

**Changed thinking is difficult:** The only people who believe that thinking is easy are those who don't habitually engage in it. "Thinking is hard work, that's why so few do it" - Albert Einstein. Because thinking is difficult, you must use anything that will help you improve the process and master the process of intentional thinking.

One of the factories I visited recently (say ABC) has set itself an ambitious target of 50 per cent growth in sales volume. This is backed up by their present demand. Walking in there, I remembered William Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' - "ten thousand saw I at a glance" - there is material lying around everywhere and you cannot walk without tripping. Such a disorganised situation is the result of the absence of an agenda on 'excellence in manufacturing'. Here, pushing the numbers is of highest priority. Do they ever think about reducing WIP, lead times, cycle times, suppliers, search times, through-put times, flow distance and space, set up and change over times, or improving existing systems? Even if such an intention exists, it is not visible. The 'thinking' philosophy of this company is implausible. The focus seems to be on increasing the sales without enhancing the manufacturing capability. If thoughts are not invested in thinking, how can we grow by using methods and practices that yield higher efficiency, lower costs and better results? The company's resources will soon cross the elastic limit, and the organisation will rebound by many years. Chaos can be sorted out by thinking of better systems and methods from the foundation level, and not by complicating the entire process. Sometimes organisations just give up thinking in the hope that things will somehow work out.

**Changed thinking is worth the investment:** "More gold has been mined from the thoughts of man than has ever been taken from the earth" - Napoleon Hill. When you take the time to learn how to change your thinking and become a better thinker, you are investing in yourself. Gold mines tap out. Stock markets crash. Businesses shut down. Real estate investments go sour. But a human mind with the ability to think well is like a diamond mine that never runs out. It is priceless.

Quite the opposite to the above case is a SME (say XYZ) that decided to graduate and become a large scale contract manufacturer, from its present profile of a component & tier-two level assemblies.

The management of the company judiciously decided to invest in a different kind of 'thinking' that would challenge the present and secure the future. Although they have a long way to go, they are already realising the benefits of this changed thinking. What makes the difference between the earlier company and this one? It is their 'thinking'; success begins with thinking.

Looking back at MKL, it can be said that while the Hubli factory was adaptable in its thinking to change, the Harihar factory was dormant, and therefore these two units of a great organisation produced entirely different results. The investment that they made at Hubli in 'thinking' yielded results that exceeded expectation.

**Changed thinking is the best gift you can give others:** "My guess is that well over 80 per cent of the human race goes through life without a single original thought" - author H L Mencken. When



people change the way they think, they not only improve their own life but also the lives of all those people whom they interact with on a daily basis (in their organisation, family, social circles, etc). Learning to think better is a great investment in yourself - but it is also the greatest present you can give someone else, because it represents the gift of unlimited potential. I have been asked quite often, 'What happened to MKL?' Perhaps the best answer that can be given is that they changed their thinking. When you are growing as an organisation, you need to take your thinking to the next level, and not climb down. The 'right' form of changed thinking is the best gift you can give others.

### Impact of changed thinking

Most people, who do not feel content with their lives, rarely know the reason why. They suspect the circumstances or blame others. Even individuals who are honest and self-aware, and who know that the problem lies within them, may have

trouble getting to the root of the issue. They ask themselves, 'Why am I this way?' They want to change, but don't do anything differently so that they can change. They merely hope for things to turn out all right - and then they become frustrated when they see that things are the same as before. You have to realise that only when you make the right changes to your thinking, do other things turn out right in your life.

One person cannot change another even if there is a good intention backing the effort. We are responsible to people but not for them. As a leader you need to teach the value of changed thinking and how to make those necessary changes; but the people themselves should take the responsibility for those changes.

Let us have a look at some simple steps by which you can easily take on the task of changing your thinking:

**Step 1: Changing your thinking changes your beliefs** - "In our pressurised society, people who are out of shape mentally usually fall victim to ideas and systems that are destructive to the human spirit and to human relationships. They are victimised because they have not been taught how to think, nor have they set themselves to the life long pursuit of the growth of the mind. Not having the facility of a strong mind, they grow dependent upon the thoughts and opinions of others. Rather than deal with ideas and issues, they reduce themselves to live full of rules, regulations, and programmes" - author Gordon MacDonald. Or they will simply give up. Here is the good news: even if you lack 'a strong mind' there is no reason to give up or live an unfulfilling life. The human mind can change. In fact that is one of the things it does best - if you are willing to put in the effort to change your thinking. As you strive to change tell yourself three things:

- Change is personal - I need to change / we need to change
- Change is possible - I am able to change / we are able to change
- Change is profitable - I will be rewarded by the change / we will be rewarded by the change

Remember, no matter how old you are or what the circumstances may be, you can change your thinking. And when you change your thinking, you change your beliefs.

**Step 2: Changing your beliefs changes your expectation** - 'The only thing that stands between a man and what

he wants from life is often merely the will to try it and the faith to believe that it is possible.' A belief is not just an idea that you possess, it is the idea that possesses you. A belief holds great power, because it changes an individual's expectations. "The first and the most important step towards success is the expectation that we can succeed" - Nelson Boswell.

**Step 3: Changing your expectation changes your attitude** - A man walked into the tent of a fortuneteller in a carnival, and paid the fee to have his palm read. "You will be poor until the age of 45", said the fortuneteller. The man was dejected. Then he had a thought, "What will happen after I am 45?" he asked. "You will get used to it," she said. Our expectations have a tremendous impact on our attitudes. "Blessed are those who expect nothing, for he shall receive it" - Ben Franklin. Negative expectations are a quick route to a dead end in thinking. How many successful people do you know who are apathetic or negative? Positive expectations bring in a positive attitude. They induce excitement, conviction, desire, confidence, commitment, and energy - all characteristics that help a person to achieve success. If you would like to possess these qualities in great abundance, then raise your expectations.

**Step 4: Changing your attitude changes your behavior** - Have you ever observed how your mood affects the way you act? When you feel particularly happy, are you more energised? Are you more likely to be kind to others? Do you take on tasks more readily and complete them with competence and confidence? How about when you are having a really bad day? Do you get less work done? Are you less patient with your family and friends? Does everything seem like a chore? "Our emotions are the driving powers of our lives" - clergyman Earl Riney.

What is an attitude? Writes John Maxwell...

It is the advance man of our true selves.

Its roots are inward but its fruits are outward.

It is our best friend or our worst enemy. It is more honest and more consistent than our words.

It is an outward look based on past experiences.

It is a thing that draws people to us or repels them.

It is never content until it is expressed.

It is the librarian of our past.  
It is the speaker of our present time.  
It is the prophet of our future.

An attitude is little more than a mood or predominant emotion sustained over time. "That which holds our attention, determines our action" - said psychologist William James. In other words, your behaviour follows your attitude. The two cannot be separated. "How can you know what is in your heart? Look at your behaviour" - writes Leroy Elms.

**Step 5: Changing your behaviour changes your performance** - A golfer's game was suffering from many reasons, mostly his grip (the way he held the golf club). He went to a pro for help. "You are using a baseball grip," said the pro. "You're



never going to improve until you change it". The golfer tried the new grip and said, "This feels terrible; is this right?" "That's it," said the pro. The golfer complained, "I will never be able to do it this way," complained the golfer. "It is up to you, you can do it the old way but you'll never get any better," the pro said. The golfer's performance depends on the change in his behaviour.

Don't ever be too impressed with goal getting. The goals set should not seem far-fetched, and should be practically sound. Reaching new goals and moving to a higher level of performance always requires change, and change feels awkward. But, take comfort in the knowledge that if a change doesn't feel uncomfortable, then it is probably not really a change.

**Step 6: Changing your performance changes your life** - When you change your performance - something that you do on a consistent basis - you have the power to change your life. In all my personal successes, to achieve a change in my performance, I first had to change my thinking. I knew that I could not approach success in the same way mentally as I was doing before and still perform differently. I began by studying those I wanted to emulate. I also read hundreds of books that would help me change my thinking. I began to copy and duplicate the success attitudes. I have got better, but have a long way to go. I continued to explore more widely. I began studying people on a level of skill beyond anyone in my circle. This may sound odd, but it took me many years to learn how to be myself. The whole process challenged me and at times I felt terribly lonely. I felt that I was the only person in the world who had to suffer through all these changes, even though intellectually I knew that I was not. Becoming better required a whole new way of thinking, and it felt uncomfortable. I did it anyway. I continue to work on honing my skills and competence. I consider myself still a student of all the great teachers I have - whose books I read, whose counsel I seek and whom I would like to emulate. I learn from people better than I am. My thinking continues to evolve. I am not perfect. I know that if I continue to improve my thinking, it will impact my beliefs, which change my expectations, which affect my attitude, which changes my behaviour, which improves my performance. And this finally will change my life.

If company ABC changes their thinking, and begin to think of 'adaptable manufacturing' it will change their beliefs about how efficient an operation they are capable of running. These beliefs will change their expectations about the enhanced performance results. It will then change their attitude towards manufacturing leading to a behavioural change. Then, with a changed culture they will revel in their performance. This is what company XYZ has done, and their belief is even more strongly reinforced today. At BMT (in South East Asia) they had not produced a single machine in five years (read 'Ethics in Business is about who YOU are' in Indian Management July 2004). They changed their thinking on the



issues that had held them down, and it changed their beliefs. They further looked forward to a global market share and it changed their behaviour. The way they implemented things ultimately changed their performance from zero machines built in five years to rampant production flow on the pull concept, and order books filled for two years with LC's in hand.

### The next level

Progress always requires change. Climbing to a new level always requires changing your mind. You may know that

intuitively, but you need to make that idea a foundation to the way you 'live' life. If you want to live on a new level, you have to think on a new level. Bob Taylor, the success story behind Taylor Guitars, once observed, "In the end, clear and inspired thinking is the only way to change things for the better. Someone once asked me: 'What did you change?' when I succeeded at a project that I had failed at before, and I told them that I had changed my thinking."

When MKL turned around from a situation of closure a decade ago, the fundamental change was in their thinking. They addressed change with an open mind, had strong beliefs and great expectations about success. It helped them change their attitudes and behavioural patterns that brought in performance, which exceeded all expectations. At every stage they lifted their own bar and moved to the next level.

The bottom line is that organisations might succeed during boom times very easily. But are they maximising their potential to achieve results, profitability, etc? Many do not, as they get lost in comparative results. And comparative results blind your vision. It makes you

think of what more could have been done if only you had paid attention to those unnecessary factors. In times of success, you must more consciously take your thinking to the next level.

Do you want to succeed where you have failed before? Do you want to go to a level you never even dreamed possible? Do you want to become the person you always hoped to be? If you do, don't start by trying to change your actions. Start by changing your thoughts. Nothing else you do will have as great an impact. Realise the impact of changed thinking. ♦



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