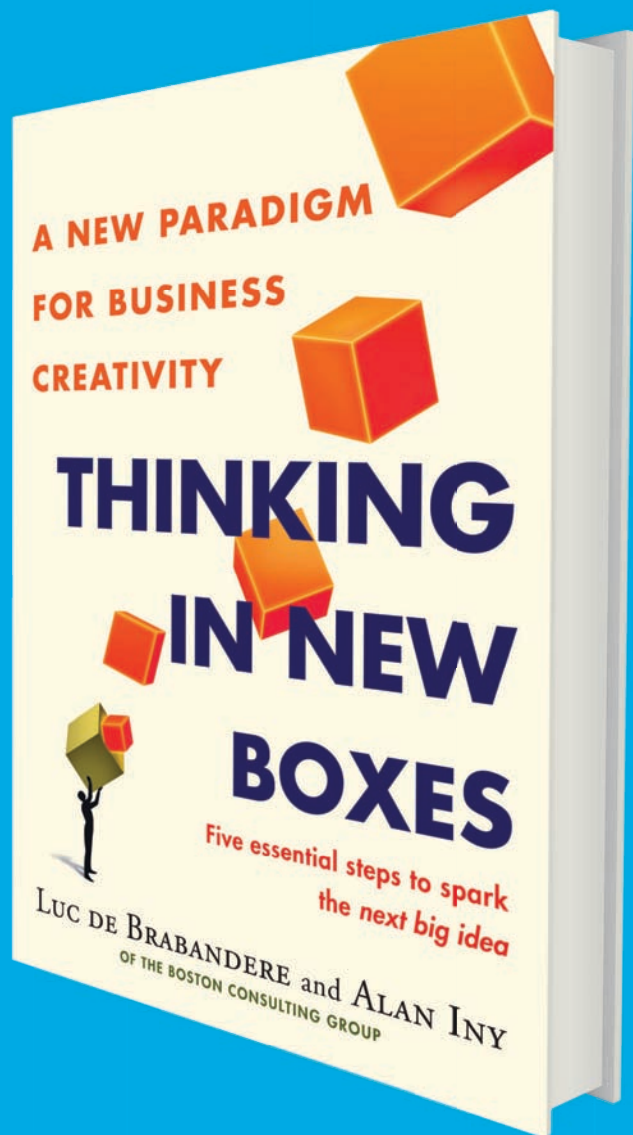


Introducing a new book about challenging assumptions  
and creating fresh business opportunities





**The choice is yours.**

**Will your future be . . .**

# Eureka!

You break with convention. See and grasp new opportunities that others miss. Grow. Lead. Succeed.

**or . . .**

# Caramba!

You are stuck in the past and overtaken by events.  
Miss opportunity. Cede new markets. Fall behind.



**In a rapidly changing world**, you can either drive change or become a victim of it, depending on how good you are at harnessing your own and others' creativity. Those who can do it well end up changing their industries—or even the world. Those who can't end up being overtaken by other people's creative tidal waves.

What's the number one block to creativity? People's tendency to get stuck in outdated beliefs and assumptions—what we call mental “boxes.” Getting stuck in an outdated mental box is easy because it's comfortable; it lulls you into a false sense of confidence, believing that what has worked in the past will continue to work in the future. But it won't, because change is inevitable.

The goal of this book is to help you break those patterns, and in the process challenge everything you think you know—about creativity, about your organization, maybe even about yourself. What assumptions do you have that you're not even aware of? How might those hidden beliefs be holding you back? How can you break free to discover entirely new ways of seeing the world and take advantage of the opportunities you might find?

Come along and we'll show you how . . .  
by *Thinking in New Boxes*.

**To jump-start growth,  
BIC challenged its old mindset.**

**Old mindset, ca. 1972**

**“We make affordable plastic pens.”**



**Do we grow by making different kinds of pens (such as felt markers and tricolor pens)? Or are we really a different kind of company altogether . . . ?**

# Eureka!

**We're really a CONSUMER GOODS company!**

**New mindset, ca. 1973**

**"We make affordable lightweight-plastic consumer goods."**





**Brick-and-mortar video stores got stuck  
in an outdated mindset of  
“retail video rental” . . .**



**as the world changed around them  
to “online,” “streaming,”  
and “subscription.”**



**Caramba!**

**Getting to**  
**Eureka!**

**demands that we look past old ideas,  
break out of old mindsets,  
and find new vistas of opportunity . . .**



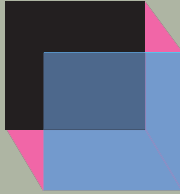


Think of a mindset as a  
**mental box.**

We *need* these boxes to

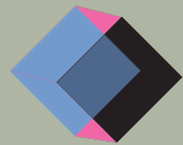
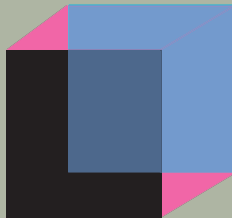
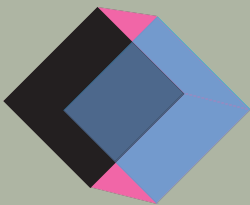
**organize**  
**classify**  
**categorize**  
**assign labels**

**and make sense of a chaotic world.**



# Mental boxes

define how you interpret what you see  
in the world in front of you.



If you believe that you are simply a pen company, then the only thing that fits into your box is more pens . . .



But if you replace that old box with a brand new one . . . then you have a lot more room . . . for all kinds of new products and ideas.



**Sometimes your box is missing  
a meaningful focus.**

Groupe Danone built a global food company  
with a wide range of products.

**Old mindset, ca. 2000**  
**"We make good food."**





**Should we grow by making *more* kinds  
of foods? Or are we really a different  
kind of company altogether . . . ?**

# **Eureka!**

**We make food that's *good* for you!**

**New mindset, ca. 2007**

**"Bringing health through food to  
as many people as possible."**



**The old mindset for access to cars  
was failing many customers.**



**Old mindset, ca. 1999**  
**"Own or rent."**

New mindset, ca. 2000



# Eureka!

**Why not *share*, for convenient,  
anytime access to cars.**

**New boxes can open the door to huge new  
opportunities and unexpected possibilities.**

car sharing | game sharing | home sharing | bike sharing



## Rethinking the supermarket concept shattered old assumptions.



**Old mindset, ca. 1985**

**“We have a huge variety of products.”**

(traditional supermarket)



**New mindset, ca. 1990**

**“We have 80 percent fewer products in one-third the space, with drastically more private-label goods.”**

(Trader Joe's)

## **Rethinking the airline business required creating a range of new boxes.**



### **Old mindset, ca. 1970**

**"Many types of planes, major airports, reserved seats,  
travel agents, all-inclusive pricing."**

(traditional airline)



### **New mindset, ca. 1995**

**"One type of plane, secondary airports,  
open seating, no travel agents, unbundled pricing."**

(low-cost airline)



Cutler

**Outdated mental models**  
**box you in,**  
**leaving you unable to spot**  
**opportunities and risks.**

**"The Americans have need of the telephone,  
but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys."**

Sir William Preece, chief engineer of the British post office (1876)

**"Guitar groups are on the way out."**

Decca Records, justifying their refusal to sign the Beatles (1962)

**"I don't think there will be a woman  
prime minister in my lifetime."**

Margaret Thatcher (1973)

**Caramba!**

**Identify opportunities,  
seize them, and change the world? . . .  
Or . . . be overtaken by change?**

It all depends on how good you are  
at challenging your existing boxes  
and mental models.





**The first step to creativity is to challenge  
your assumptions!**

**BE CREATIVE**



**RF GPFATJVF**

**And to do that, the first step is to  
*identify your current boxes.***

# Reader Challenge

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## PART I

What are some of the boxes you use to look at the world  
in front of you?

What assumptions and constraints are inherent in the way  
you do things?

How do you define your customers?

Your competitors?

Your own company?

Take a moment to write down some of the existing boxes you use.



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_



# Reader Challenge

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## PART II

### **Don't be led astray by preconceptions and assumptions.**

#### Review your boxes:

- When did you last question each of these boxes?
- How might you do so now?
- What are some extreme or opposite possibilities for each of them?
- Can you describe your company without using the top five words that most people would associate with your organization?



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**Outdated mental models  
and assumptions  
keep us stuck in old patterns.**

Often we don't even realize it . . .  
until it's too late.





**Thinking outside the box  
is not sufficient. It tells you that your  
current boxes are not good enough  
but gives you no guidance on where,  
or how, to find new ones.**





# You need a systematic way to identify and question old boxes . . . and then create new ones.

## Doubt

### **All our ideas are only working hypotheses**

- We create new boxes with inductive thinking, and we use them with deductive thinking
- We see the world not as it is, but as we are
- We need to identify our models and try to explore ways in which they might be adapted

## Explore

### **All our ideas come from the world**

- Research can help us understand the world in front of us, using tools including megatrends, customer insight, competitive intelligence, and more
- However, research alone is insufficient; we cannot arrive at new boxes using only deduction

## Diverge

### **No idea is born good—and the best way to have a good idea is to have a lot of ideas**

- This is classic brainstorming—necessary but insufficient
- Numerous tools and techniques are available
- The key is to shift perspective, reframe the problem, and try analogies or new combinations

## Converge

### **Any idea, to be useful, must be frozen, at least for a time**

- To take action, we need to make decisions. Again, a range of tools are available, though most people are better at converging than diverging
- Divergence and convergence are both critical—but not at the same time

## Reevaluate

### **No idea is good forever**

- We should always be vigilant, watching out for weak signals or paradoxes
- There are numerous business examples of companies failing to survive their own success

**In a fast-changing world  
with an uncertain future . . .**

Will you be in command of your destiny?  
Will you reshape your world?





## Are you boxed in by the past and unable to change?

- Is your strategy no longer workable?
- Do you need to shake up your operations?
  - Are you looking to jump-start R&D?
- Is your organizational setup and people model feeling uncompetitive and worn out?
  - Are you . . .
    - > An NGO stuck for new approaches?
    - > A policymaker mired in conventional thinking?
- > Having a midlife crisis and need of a vision for change?
  - > A middle manager searching for the next big thing?

# Break free!

**At any level of any organization . . .**

# Thinking in new boxes

- **frees** your executives to see extraordinary new futures
- **frees** your managers to innovate and rethink old practices
- **frees** you and your teams to try radical new approaches that might change your world





## About the authors

**Luc de Brabandere** is a fellow and a senior advisor in the Brussels office of The Boston Consulting Group. He leads strategic seminars with boards, senior executives, and managers from a wide range of companies looking to develop new visions, products, and services, as well as long-term scenarios to prepare for the future. He is the author or coauthor of nine books, including *The Forgotten Half of Change: Achieving Greater Creativity Through Changes in Perception*, and a regular columnist for various newspapers in France and Belgium. He also teaches in the management programs at the Université Catholique de Louvain and Ecole Centrale Paris. Prior to joining BCG, he was the general manager of the Brussels Stock Exchange.

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## To learn more

For additional insights and materials, please visit [bcgperspectives.com/ThinkingInNewBoxes](http://bcgperspectives.com/ThinkingInNewBoxes) and [ThinkingInNewBoxes.com](http://ThinkingInNewBoxes.com). Luc and Alan are available to talk with the press and organizations.

To join the conversation on Thinking in New Boxes, please use the Twitter hashtag #NewBoxes. You can follow Alan at [https://twitter.com/Alan\\_Iny](https://twitter.com/Alan_Iny).

*Thinking in New Boxes* is published by Random House and is available everywhere.

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