

NOTES FROM THE UPCOMING BOOK & KEYNOTE

Throw Away the Box

*10 do-or-die steps for changing — and
maybe saving — your organization.*

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These are working notes from the book and keynote, not the finished chapters. Built from Terry's own firsthand interviews with the people who actually did the reinventing — at NASA, Tesla, The North Face, E! Entertainment, and FANUC America — not from case studies pulled off the internet.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The box has gravity. And it pulls hardest on the winners.

In 1958, a company that made the S&P 500 could expect to stay on that list for 61 years. By 1980, twenty-five. Today it's about 15 — and of the original Fortune 500, roughly 90% are gone from the list.

Sears wrote the book on retail. Kodak invented the digital camera — and was still the #1 U.S. digital camera seller in 2005 — but couldn't walk away from film's margins. Blockbuster turned down the chance to buy Netflix for fifty million dollars. RadioShack. Toys "R" Us. None of them died because they were lazy or stupid. They died doing exactly what had made them great — running the same playbook, in the same box, while the world moved.

For thirty years the advice was "think outside the box." That's not enough anymore. You can stand outside the box and stare at it all day, but the box still has gravity. Every new idea you come up with curves right back toward the way you've always done it. Small, careful, incremental change feels like progress. Usually it's just a slower way to stagnate.

**Don't think outside the box.
Throw it away.
Then throw away the table.**

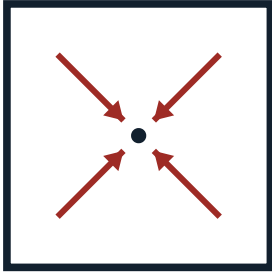
Sweep every process, every assumption, every "this is how we've always done it" off the table and onto the floor. Then get rid of the table itself. What's left is an empty space — an idea vacuum. And a vacuum has to be filled. That's where the genuinely new ideas come from, the ones that can carry an organization into a future that doesn't look like its past.

The 10 steps that follow are how you do that without blowing up the place. Terry developed them in the field, then pressure-tested them against leaders who'd run reinventions most of us only read about. They walk in order. Here they are.

THE WHOLE IDEA ON ONE NAPKIN

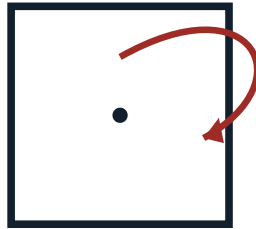
Outside the box isn't far enough.

If you can draw these three pictures, you understand the entire premise.



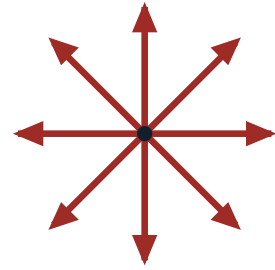
The Box

Every idea points back to the center.



Outside the Box

The gravity pulls it right back.



Throw Away the Box

Now the ideas can go anywhere.

Frame three is the only one that frees you. No box, no table, no walls quietly pulling everything home. The rest of these notes is the playbook for getting there on purpose — and for making sure the box doesn't grow back the minute you look away.

THE 10 DO-OR-DIE STEPS

How you actually throw it away

Step 1. Help others internalize the need.

People don't change because you handed them a good reason. They change when the need becomes *theirs* — when standing still feels more dangerous than moving. Your job isn't to win the argument. It's to make the cost of the old way impossible to un-see.

You can't order this into existence. You build it, person by person, until the room owns the problem the way you do.

Step 2. Communicate enthusiasm.

Build a fire under someone and they'll stomp it out the second you turn your back. Build a fire *within* them and it burns on its own, long after you've left the room. Enthusiasm isn't volume and it isn't a pep rally. It's belief the people around you can feel — and belief is contagious in a way fear never is.

Step 3. Identify those ready for change — and focus on them.

You will never convert the whole organization at once, and trying to is how good change initiatives die exhausted. Find the people already leaning in. Give them room, give them air, let them produce something. The naysayers will either come around when they see it working, or they'll get left in the dust. Spend your energy on the leaners, not the anchors.

Step 4. Take everything off the table.

Every process, every method, every "truth" about how this works — sweep it all onto the floor. Then throw away the table. Sacred cows make great steaks. You cannot brainstorm something genuinely new while the old box is still sitting in the corner; its gravity drags every idea back into orbit before it has a chance. Clear the space completely and you create a vacuum — an emptiness that demands to be filled.

Step 5. Brainstorm into the vacuum.

Now, and only now, the new ideas come — because there's nowhere for them to fall back to. No idea is too outlandish at this stage; the wild ones are where the breakthroughs hide. You'll pick a few of the old things back up off the floor later, on purpose, because they earned it. But you start from empty, not from "how we've always done it."

Step 6. Create an environment where it's okay to fail.

If failure gets you punished, your best people will stop trying anything that might fail — which is to say, anything new. But "okay to fail" is not soft. At Tesla it's fast.

From the inside: *Russell Varone, a former Director of General Assembly at Tesla, described running at "65% knowledge" — you move before you're certain, you fail quickly, you fix it quicker. He calls the discipline that holds it together "vicious accountability." Okay to fail, never okay to hide it.*

Step 7. Identify and focus on the low-hanging fruit.

Momentum is oxygen. Find the change that shows a visible result in thirty days, not eighteen months, and lead with it. An early, obvious win does more to convince the skeptics than any presentation you could build — and it gives the believers proof they were right to follow you.

Step 8. Reevaluate every step of the way.

The plan you started with is already out of date. Check your assumptions constantly, and watch for the box coming back — because it will. The walls go back up quietly, by default, the moment everyone stops paying attention. Atrophy is the natural state. Vigilance is the work.

From the inside: *Paul Hill, former Director of Mission Operations at NASA, put it this way: **always fight the last battle first.** Go back to what already bit you before it bites you again.*

Step 9. Celebrate successes.

Out loud. Specifically. By name. A win nobody marked is a win nobody remembers — and people will not keep pouring themselves into change that disappears into silence. Stop and say what happened and who made it happen.

Step 10. Recognize people personally.

Recognition isn't a plaque you order from a catalog. It has to mean something to the person receiving it. The best recognition I ever got in my life was a letter Colonel Stephen D. Harper wrote to my mother. A certificate would have ended up in a drawer. That letter I'll remember until the day I die. Find out what would land like that for your people — then do that.

DO THIS BEFORE YOU DO ANYTHING ELSE

The Box Audit

You can't throw away a box you can't see. This is the five-minute exercise that makes yours visible. Don't think about it too long — fast answers are the honest ones.

Write the name of an organization you care about

Your company, your team, a department — or your own career.

1. "Around here, nobody has permission to question..."

Name three things.

2. "The smartest people here spend most of their time optimizing..."

Name the activity.

3. "If we started this organization from scratch today, the first thing we would NOT build is..."

Those three answers, in order, are your box.

Now you can see it. The 10 steps are how you throw it away — and the book and the keynote are where the whole thing comes alive, with the people who did it telling you exactly how.

ABOUT TERRY · BRING THIS TO YOUR STAGE

Most speakers cite Kodak from Wikipedia. Terry interviewed the people who did the reinventing.

Terry L. Fossum is a #1 *Wall Street Journal*, Amazon & Barnes & Noble bestselling author and a *USA Today* bestselling author (*The Oxcart Technique*), a keynote speaker with a lifetime of stages behind him, and a former U.S. Air Force Captain and Executive Officer of a Group of nuclear B-52 bombers. The 10 steps in these notes aren't theory — they're field-tested, then sharpened against leaders who ran reinventions at a scale most of us only read about.

Original, firsthand interviews behind the book:

NASA (Paul Hill, former Director of Mission Operations) · Tesla (Russell Varone, former Director of General Assembly) · The North Face · E! Entertainment Television · FANUC America.

The full *Throw Away the Box* keynote takes an audience through the failures, the survivors, these 10 steps, and a live version of the Box Audit they can run on their own organization Monday morning. They leave with a tool, not just a feeling.

To bring Terry to your conference or company, or to order books in bulk:

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