

# Power of possibility thinking

An open mind is your doorway to success, a closed one spells doom. Have you noticed how easily people give up? Why do they not see the possibility of success even when they are so close to it? Strive to reach your potential, expand your possibilities, and make every moment count. Remember when you think you have exhausted all possibilities - you haven't...

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*"You have powers you never dreamed of. You can do things you never thought you could do. There are no limitations in what you can do except the limitations of your own mind."*

- Darwin P Kingsley

The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance but the illusion of knowledge. When do you come to the end of your possibilities? It's the moment you believe that you've learned everything you need to know. It isn't what we don't know that stops us from succeeding but what we think we do know. Become a lifelong learner, and you will never run out of possibilities.

thoughts are those that hold undeveloped potential for good. There are two kinds of thinkers: the possibility thinker and the impossibility thinker. How do you identify which one are you?

Nothing will have a greater impact on your future than the choices you make today – neither the state or condition of the government or society, the health of the economy, nor the people or circumstances around you. All these things are outside your control. What is under your control is what you choose to do – or not to do. Each time you make a choice, you move a little farther in a particular direction, for better or for worse. Choose wisely, and the bridge you build will take you to the future you desire. One of the most important choices you will ever make is how you will approach life on a day-to-day basis. You can sit back and wait for things to happen, or you can go out and make them happen. The choice is yours.

To share the commandments of possibility thinking with you, I have few experiences from my professional life to share with you.

## Rules of possibility thinking

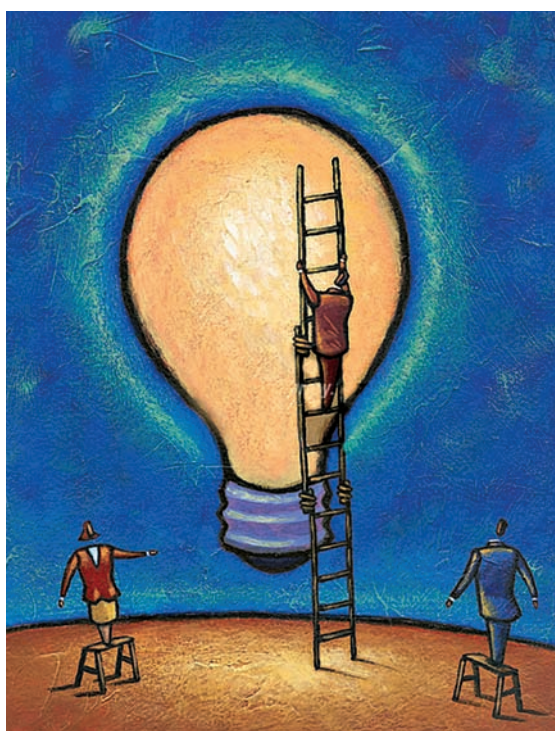
There are few rules of possibility thinking, as:

**Never reject a possibility because you see something wrong with it:** "Become a possibilitarian. No matter how dark things

Psychologists tell us that about ten thousand ideas go through an average human mind everyday. Unfortunately most of them are negative. The absence of positive thoughts is what makes possibility thinking so hard to most.

## Energy of possibility thinking

Possibility thinking is the management of ideas. Management is control of resources to minimise wastes and maximise productivity or develop latent possibilities. Possibility thinking is the disciplined separation of negative ideas from the positive thoughts. Positive





seem to be or actually are, raise your sights and see possibilities - always see them, for they're always there," writes the well-known author Norman Vincent Peale. About two-dozen senior management personnel huddled into a conference at the Ashraya International during '94. This group included my peers and colleagues, upon whom rested the hopes of Mysore Kirloskar (MKL) for a revival and turnaround. The group included people from MKL's Harihar and Hubli factories, the two foundries, corporate office and Precision Tooling Systems.

Among the subjects that were discussed was one that concerned 'profits' or profitability. We desperately needed to churn out profits to overcome the accumulated losses. As I thought of it, I felt that my managing director wasn't asking for a lot - "Can't we generate Rs 5 crore profit every year?"

There is always something wrong with every great idea. But remember that when God gives you a great idea, he also gives you the means to execute it. The room was silent. Obviously he was seeing the possibilities, while the others were not. The marketing guys were non-committal. The production guys were not sure how they would achieve such results and the bean canner was having fun as he had nothing to do.

Having put together the turnaround strategy following the closure of the Hubli factory, I was only seeing the positive possibilities. And what I saw then was - opening new segments in the market space, erecting barriers to competition. This could take us back to the leadership position, numero uno in the market space,

a whole set of new products, new markets and revival of lost markets, a quantum leap in our market share, one billion sales revenue and huge profits. My faith, belief and confidence were very strong that this would be achieved. And so I broke that eerie silence and said, "Sure! We can make Rs 5 crore profits, and why not?" I thought that between the machine tool strategic business unit (SBU) and the foundry SBU's, this was attainable. The conference continued and closed.

It's amazing how people sit in a meeting and respond to an opportunity by finding faults. What followed thereafter was something amazingly different. I was criticised by all my peers for voicing an affirmation. I was mocked at by each one of them. This mockery was even extended to some written memos. In short I had to listen to and deal with a bunch of impossibility thinkers. I had a choice. I could either have believed those who were saying, 'this is not possible,' or listen to my gut that was saying, 'this is a piece of cake.' Insulated by my self talk and thinking, protected myself from being sucked into that herd and didn't behave like another sheep. Instead, I let the negative criticism fuel my achievements. Today, as history has it, we went on to achieve that goal and more at the MKL Hubli factory itself, leaving the rest behind.

Almost every great idea looks impossible in the beginning. You will never know what you can get done until you make an attempt. What may seem impossible may actually be exceeded if you sort out the negative thoughts and leave them behind for the positive ones. Don't throw away a suggestion when you see a problem. Isolate the negative from the

Identification of the type of thinker	
<p><b>Impossibility thinker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ They instinctively react negatively to a possibility laden idea.</li> <li>■ They impulsively look for reasons why it can't be done.</li> <li>■ They quickly abort an idea and forget about it.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Possibility thinker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Looks at every idea to see if it has possibilities.</li> <li>■ If it does, he takes an option out on the idea.</li> <li>■ Does not let the idea slip by.</li> </ul>

positive or the possibility. Don't let the negatives kill the positive potential that's within an opportunity.

Remember - 'Nothing is impossible, if you will hold on to the idea that it might become possible somehow, some way, with some one's help.' Tell yourself, 'When faced with a mountain, I will not quit! I will keep on striving until I climb over, find a pass through, tunnel underneath – or simply stay and turn the mountain into a gold mine, with God's help!'

**Never reject the possibility because you won't get the credit for it:** My grandfather once told me that there are two kinds of people - those who do the work and those who take the credit. He told me to try to be in the first group; there was much less competition there, wrote Indira Gandhi. It does not only have the less competition, but also greater rewards.

Our scriptures makes us learn – “God can do tremendous things through the person who doesn't care who gets the credit.” Don't worry about getting the credit, as that will bring ego in the decision-making moments of life. Decisions must not be based on ego needs but on human needs and market pressures that transcend your own desires. Decide; would you rather satisfy your ego, or

enjoy the fruits of success? When you enjoy your work and make it a positive experience, it inspires you to excellence. Remember that not only for yourself but also for the people you lead. “Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work,” said Aristotle.

**Never reject an idea because it is impossible:** “Ordinary people believe only in the possible. Extraordinary people visualise not what is possible or probable, but rather what is impossible. And by visualising the impossible, they begin to see it as possible,” said Cherie Carter-Scott. After the opening up of Indian economy in the early 90's, there was an onslaught of CNC machines being

imported from Taiwan. During that time, a small CNC lathe produced in India used to cost about Rs 25 lakh or more, while a similar one from Taiwan was sold for half the price. The machine tool industry was busy running to the ministries for protection. They wanted the duties on the imported machines to be hiked, and that on the components to be reduced. They believed that the gap was too big to cut costs by 50 per cent. I could have toed that line too, but I thought that it was not a winner's attitude. The Taiwanese machines cost less because those who made them were far more productive than us. I believed that we could beat the Taiwanese if we did the basics correctly. The idea was to build 'operational excellence' as our strategic weapon.

The work we had been doing in putting the lean manufacturing practices together had made us more productive, we had cut lot of costs. To address the issues of loss of markets to the lower cost machines from Taiwan, and an alternate product for us, we quickly put together a concept (again coming out of a market survey); use 70 per cent common parts from the existing, keep it simple, make it answer to basic industry needs, keep the frills out, address the lathe user who wants to upgrade to CNC and make it user friendly and easy to maintain. The result was that we had a product with bigger specifications at lesser price than the Taiwanese machines. We had achieved what was then perceived to be impossible. The possibility was first conceived in the mind, the physical entity came later.

You always have to believe it to see it, and not the other way around. The result - a roaring success that became the largest selling CNC machine (CNC 500) in India at that time. And so the rest of the machine tool industry in India had a module of success they could emulate. There is a thin line that divides success from failure. And often you draw that line with your possibility thinking. Be careful where you pencil that partition.

Remember that almost every great idea is impossible when it is first born. The



greatest ideas today are yet impossible! Possibility thinkers take great ideas and turn the impossibilities into possibilities. That's progress! Always think, is the idea a good one? Would it help people who are hurting? Would it be a great thing for our country & the world? If yes, develop a way to achieve the impossible!

**Never reject a possibility because your mind is already made up:** People who never change their mind are either perfect or stubborn. I am not perfect. Neither are you. So let's not be stubborn. I'd rather change plans while my ship is still at port, rather than set sail and sink at sea. If your organisation is a discrete manufacturing one and if you know that by applying some lean thinking principles you can get outstanding results such as:

- Cutting down 60–90 per cent of present order to delivery times
- Reduction in lead times by 50–90 per cent
- Cutting down inventory by 50–75 per cent
- Performing at above 99 per cent on-time delivery
- Quality improvement above 90 per cent of current levels
- Reducing floor space usage by 40 per cent or more
- Overall cost reduction 20–40 per cent
- Increase the profitability by many times
- No significant addition in manpower, perhaps reduction.



What would you do and how would you think? Would you reject the possibility or would you think differently? Would you live in your existing comfort zones with your current processes, or would you embrace change and embark on the journey of excellence? Would you allow the present to fog your vision, or would you see the scenery beyond? Would you talk about it, or take action? Remember that your actions mirror your thoughts.

**Never reject an idea because you don't have the money, manpower, muscle or time to achieve it:** When we decided to develop products in Taiwan complimenting our range of machines, marketing them in India and our other world markets as Kirloskar brand, at the SBU, we had no means of funding the imports. Our goal was to sell large number of such machines. We did not allow the money to be a hindrance. We put together a plan whereby the product would reach us and be sold before the payment became due to the supplier. All it takes to achieve the impossible is mind power. If you don't have it, you can develop it. Spend enough time, use enough energy, develop enough human resource, acquire enough help and you can do almost anything. Make a commitment to do what's great, and then solve the problems. A successful person has very few resources, except the capacity to take an idea and marshal stronger and smarter people around him to pull it off.

**Never reject an idea because it will create conflict:** You can never develop a possibility without creating problems. You can never establish a goal without generating a new set of tensions. You can never make a commitment without producing some conflict. Every worthwhile idea is bound to be rejected by people who don't go along with it. To reject an idea because it may generate conflict is to surrender leadership.

**Never reject an idea because it is your way of doing things:** "It's more important to succeed than it is to snobbishly adhere to my private tastes." Learn to accommodate, compromise and adjust. Different strategies or styles, a new policy, a change in tradition, are all the opportunities to grow. Maintain a balance between the tension of an opportunity that needs exploitation and the limitations of the resources available at the moment.

**Never reject an idea because it might fail:** Many discrete manufacturing companies fear the possibility of failure if they attempt to imbibe the 'lean thinking culture'. They often reject the idea fearing it might fail, because they cannot imagine



what lucrative results may be lying in store for them. They simply don't visualise the scenery on the other side of the woods. Like Dag Hammarskjöld once said, "Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was." Every idea worth anything has failure potential. There is risk in everything. Don't stand on the sidelines of life criticising the performance of others. Get into the game. You never reject an idea because there's some risk involved. You isolate the risk, insulate it, and eventually eliminate it.

"It is neither the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or whether the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood: who strives valiantly; errs and comes short again and again; knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause; at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and at the worst if he fails, at least fails while doing greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat," said Theodore Roosevelt.

**Never reject an idea because it is sure to succeed:** "What great thing would you attempt if you knew you couldn't fail?" asks Dr Schuler. There are people today who back off if they are sure the idea will succeed. Just after the conference that I talked about earlier, we had to put together a long-range plan. The SBU had just come out of closure because of no orders. The markets were showing signs of recession and the customers were asking for a whole new range of product

to be developed. To most of them it was a difficult situation to predict the future.

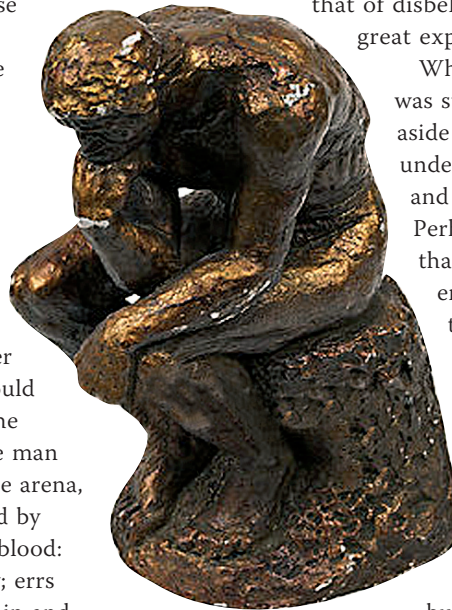
I sat down with my senior managers and started by casting a vision. The vision was of Rs 1 billion sales revenue at the end of the eighth year. At that time such revenue was not generated even by all the SBU's put together and for a SBU starting from closure, it was like starting from zero. You should have seen the expressions on their faces; one that of disbelief the other with great expectation.

When this projection was submitted, it was put aside without discussions or understanding the thoughts and strategies behind it. Perhaps it was in anticipation that we would succeed and end up very high compared to our sister SBU's or there could have been other reasons. But, three years later when I left the organisation, we were on course with our stated goals. Yes, we were five per cent short of the projection, but when you consider

that we had grown 500 per cent in three years with recession lingering, our performance was stupendous to most and yet an eyesore to some.

**Never reject an idea because it is illegal:** It is not about violating the law. One must never do that. Some great ideas may be illegal today, but the laws may change tomorrow.

Nothing is impossible to a willing heart. The impossible is often the untried. Its kind of fun to do the impossible! Impossible situations can become possible miracles; so, let your imaginations release your imprisoned possibilities. Limitations live only in our minds, but if we use our imaginations, our possibilities become limitless. We don't know who we are until we see what we can do. As Les Brown puts it, "Life has no limitations, except the ones you make." **MMT**



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