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Jim Boomer • Dec. 05, 2014



Whether its technology, processes or new service lines, we, as a profession, have the tendency to follow the herd. We watch a handful of progressive firms test new or different ideas and only when they've had success do we jump on board and try to replicate that success.

This strategy makes sense in some respects (safe, easy, proven) but does it really set us apart from our competition? I'd challenge you to think differently about the challenges your firm is facing. After all, the problem itself is never really the challenge, but rather how you think about the problem.

10X Thinking

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So what is 10X thinking? Well, it isn't just about growing revenue or profitability by 10X (although those are nice targets). It is a mindset that your entire organization will strive to be 10X better in everything they do – from providing 10X better client service when picking up the phones to delivering services 10X more efficiently. While you might not hit the goal of 10X in all areas, multiple incremental improvements occurring simultaneously will result in major overall improvement in your firm.

Rethink Everything

Our CIO Advantage groups recently met in Atlanta and one of the members challenged the group to avoid limiting their thinking and simply following the masses. Sure, we have some great, proven technology tools that specialize in helping accountants but there are a lot more options if you expand your focus to include other industries. And the challenge went beyond the analysis of software tools and rethinking everything we've done for years in a CPA firm. For example, do we need backups if we employ cloud solutions? Do we have to dictate the hardware and software that our employees will utilize or should we embrace the consumerization of IT?

“Mobile First” – Not “And Mobile”

Another interesting discussion that came out of that CIO Advantage meeting was about how we analyze the mobile capabilities of the technologies we use in our firms. Rather than simply asking if the solution has a mobile offering or has plans to develop one, we should be looking for companies that have built their solutions with mobility at the core. Or, as one CIO put it, a “Mobile First” mentality rather than “And Mobile.”

We already live in a connected, mobile world that will most certainly expand over

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from the easy solution of throwing down some stone and macadam on the winding paths that cows and horses had already created as they meandered across the farms and fields. This approach requires us to look beyond the safest and easiest solution to explore new ways of doing things. Sometimes this will result in confirmation that we should have stuck to the cowpath but often it will result in a new, innovative solution that is better than anything that has been tried in our profession to date.

Merriam-Webster defines differentiate as “to make (someone or something) different in some way.” This means you can't differentiate yourself if you don't abandon the strategy of following the herd and doing the same thing when it comes to making technology decisions. After all, how can technology be a strategic advantage for your firm if you use the same tools as your competition? I challenge you to elevate your thinking and, in turn, elevate your performance.

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