

LEDGEROCK

CONSULTING



Imagine that you own a business that produces a product loved by the consumer; a product easy to produce and relatively easy to sell. Your market is wide open and your product should be in great demand ... except for one small detail, its shape simply doesn't work for your major retailer who has sadly canceled all orders. What do you do?

Several years ago, the Japanese people who loved the taste of watermelon found the shelves bare of the tasty fruit. Japanese retailers had cut off the supply because of available space. Apparently the large round delicacy took up way too much space in a country where space is at a minimum; orders were canceled and growers lost their rich market. What to do?

For years, Detroit's automobile industry continued to focus on larger more luxurious products with streamlined, beautiful cars. Then along came the Volkswagen. The Beetle was anything but beautiful or streamlined; it was the exact opposite. "Think Small", was their message; a message born from thinking differently.

While the American watermelon growers scratched their heads perplexed by the seemingly unsolvable challenge; they did not simply say, the market has changed, we are not competitive or place blame on the available space in Japan. What did they do?

The solution to the problem of round watermelons wasn't nearly as difficult to solve for those who didn't assume the problem was impossible to begin with and simply asked how it could be done. It turns out that all you need to do is place them into a square box when they are growing and the watermelon will take on the shape of the box.

Did the Volkswagen people ask different questions? Perhaps. Had the watermelon growers assumed that square watermelons were impossible before even thinking about the question, they would have never found the solution.

Here is a quote from the recent published story on square watermelons. "If you begin with the notion that something is impossible, then it obviously will be for you. If, on the other hand, you decide to see if something is possible or not, you will find out through trial and error."

If you are exasperated hearing, "We've tried that before" or "That won't work here in our company". If the responses to problems in the sales department are explained away with "statements such as, "The market has changed" or "We aren't competitive anymore", perhaps a discussion about square watermelons will generate fresh thinking and innovative ideas.