

Outside The Box

For those in the industry who are adamant things will never change, it's time to start thinking 'outside the box' ...

It's a pleasure to get the opportunity of a regular column in *Truck Australia*. Many readers will have never heard of Darren Nolan; although more would be aware of Nolan's Interstate Transport. I'll attempt to give you a little bit of background.

As the Quality Manager with Nolans, my role – like in most family businesses – is multi-faceted. I am everything to everyone; Workplace Health & Safety Officer, Workplace Rehabilitation Officer, counsellor, program establisher, internal auditor and legislative adviser ... Oh and I'm also the "one who knows about computers" if a PC goes down or does something "funny".

As a young bloke I remember

"stand back for a moment and ask: what do I want to achieve out of this?"

sitting in my parents house trying to hold a dinner conversation while the loud squeal of the long distance radio crackled in the background. Drivers were part of our extended family; regularly dropping into the house to speak with mum and dad on a range of issues.

In those days, there were no mobile telephones and the closest thing to a computer was paper and a pen. Working out of our family's home-based office, my father was a driver and my mother the accountant, docket writer, cheque signer, complaints handler and overall harmoniser.

Looking back, many people outside the industry might ask, "what sort of life is that?" Let me say it was a great life, where unity, a fair-go and doing the right thing was instilled in us at a very young age.

Thanks to my parents I went over to Norway on a youth exchange pro-

gram for 12 months; attending school there and learning a whole different culture. It was one of the best years of my life. The Norwegians have a strong sense of togetherness and love to have a party (a feature in which I readily engaged).

The reason I tell this story is to get us all thinking about change (without necessarily moving to Norway). I am forever told by long-time industry professionals, "Darren, there is absolutely no way the transport industry will be ever any different."

My response is quite simple. Who ever thought that Bill Gates would become one of the richest and most powerful men in the world. A few years ago, he was just a young

computer geek with a bright idea?

For those in the industry – from ceos to owner-drivers – who believe it will never change, I challenge you to step outside of the environment or "box" we live in, day in day out. To stand back for a moment and ask: what do I want to achieve out of this, what are my goals and aspirations and how can I achieve them? And there's no time like the present to start.

Just to illustrate my point, here is an excellent quote I found once in a book:

"Most employees are pretty much the same in their approach to their work. But, as every person knows, a few in each group will be originals. Their approach will be unconventional and sometimes extremely valuable. They are apt to have a unique, fresh even naive way of looking at things.

One such character used to spend

a great deal of time just sitting at his desk staring out the window. A new employee finally complained to the boss: "why is it that Jones just sits there and stares out of the window all day? Why isn't he made to work like the rest of us?"

The boss put his fingers to his lips SHHHHH", he whispered, Jones is working. One day when he was staring out that window he thought of an idea that made this company \$2.5 million."

(Author - Unknown)

Maybe the change process is currently going a little slower than I and many others hungry for reform would like, but I believe the process is inevitable.

But change causes fear of the unknown. To help it along, it's important to be open and honest with other people, particularly staff – who are the most important asset to any organisation. Honesty always receives a much warmer response than scheming in the backroom.

Making up policies and procedures, with no clear understanding of who or what is going to be effected by them, will backfire.

Instead, find out what drivers and administration personnel go through on a daily basis. Even small changes, such as answering the phone in a positive manner portrays you and your business in a better light. Remember you use more muscles in your face to frown than to smile.

The same goes for the whole of the transport industry. If we can listen to all messages and views from groups and individuals, no matter how trivial, work together on a common theme and try some new ideas, there is a better chance of improving the industry for us all.

Darren Nolan