



“Think of the Box” a cool never ending adventure story

I could start to talk about “cats in a box” or “cats out of the box” or if, there was even a cat or in some thoughts even a box. I am sure Mr Schrödinger can help explain further.

But I want to head towards the thoughts of “thinking outside of the box” a common phrase used time and time again in many boardrooms and presentations. The term is thought to derive from management consultants in the 1970s and 1980s and was used to challenge their clients to solve the "nine dots" puzzle, whose solution required some lateral thinking.

I am sure in many occasions this phrase has led to some great business innovation and leadership stories across the globe.

But in the wonderful cool world of the refrigeration sector, I am a firm believer of taking the “Norm” and making him think differently.

It’s not that the phrase of “thinking outside of the box” is not relevant it certainly still has its place. However, I want you to start to **“think of the box”**.

I want to challenge the ideas of why we need to include powered refrigeration systems in sectors where we actually are only fitting them to comply, or to be seen to comply, or just to be seen, or even because it is the “Norm”.

Many people will have seen my push to enhance the thought that the Cold Chain needs a reset, to stop and take stock of the good, the bad, the great innovations and the great innovators.

I want people to focus on the “**think of the box**” and the goods that are carried in the boxes.

The box could be the e-cargobike - van – truck – trailer body. The box could be the packaging containing perishable foodstuffs or medicines. The box could be the cold store or the blast freezer or blast chiller.

Our whole Cold Chain industry is dominated by **boxes**, so why do we not give it the focus it deserves.

We seem to spend lots of talk and time thinking about how to protect things inside the box, when in some cases the box holds the answer.

For example we use lots of energy to get goods to a temperature that will protect it and reduce deterioration to stop food waste to extend food life ready for the supermarket shelves. We gather and chill goods in the fields, in (1)refrigerated boxes , ready for transfer to factories that are (2)refrigerated, and then transfer the packaged goods in (3)refrigerated transport, to distribution centres that are (4) refrigerated, to then transport again to supermarkets in (5) refrigerated transport, to be (6) refrigerated in store, and then potentially if selected for home delivery, sent out again in a (7) refrigerated van to the end user who then puts it in a (8) domestic fridge.

This is one example of the legs and nodes of the Cold Chain boxed in one simple paragraph.

I count 8 times we apply mechanical refrigeration in this simple chain, if you start thinking about goods coming in from all parts of the world then this chain extends even further.

There must be a more effective way.

Now let me be clear I don't have the answers, but what I want to do is to drive the debate for people to “Think of the Box”.

I want people to think at the first point of refrigeration, how can we hold that energy we have invested into chilling or freezing the goods and how can I monitor the actual goods with my box.

I want people to think at each point of transfer how can I see if I need to refrigerate or can I see that I have a thermal leak that is releasing the energy I have invested.

I want people to look to plug each hole and look to piggyback on areas where you still have energy requirements like a Cold store. Think about the energy used in the cold store to help other parts of the legs and nodes chain.

I have seen many innovations around the world for the Cold Chain, some so simple that have been used for thousands of years and have been updated using modern technologies.

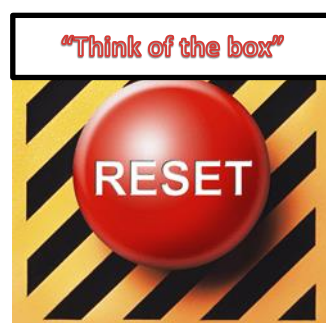
However, I have also seen big machines coming in to provide massive amounts of energy to produce cooling power, to compensate for areas suffering from poor insulation of the box.

This is not just a cold chain issue, if you think back, we have seen the mini car voted the second most influential car of the 20th century, almost doubling in size since being invented by the late Alec Issigonis in 1959. Where did the true thought of the mini being a mini go?

I feel that we need to think about the true thought of the Cold Chain and I hope these few words about “Think of the Box” will drive conversation with your supplier, your transport and warehousing companies, your packaging and telematic linked monitoring companies.

Together the industry has the answer to reduce energy, reduce the use of synthetic refrigerants and eliminate the need for diesel fuels.

It is time to press the Reset Button and do not be afraid, as friends of the Cold Chain are there to help you on your adventure journey to change the cold chain.



About Norman Highnam MinstR

A leadership awarding winning and published transport refrigeration consultant having spent over 35 years in the industry at all levels from engineering to senior board level appointments.

I look to help people understand the industry and I actively lobby for engineer safety including the removal and control of emissions in the transport refrigeration sector.

[About \(highnamassist.co.uk\)](http://highnamassist.co.uk)



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- Cold Chain advisor
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