

Corn Nuts, Fig Newtons And Billy Elliot

Posted by admin

I am in Atlanta as I write. I just went for a walk and bought a bag of Corn Nuts. I am inspired. Inspired by a bag of Corn Nuts? YES! Let me explain before you stop reading and think I have just become a Corn Nut.

As I walked along popping those delicious morsels in my mouth, I turned the bag over and read, "CORN NUTS crunchy corn snack comes in eight mouthwatering varieties packed with flavor—Original, Ranch, Chile Picante, Barbecue, Nacho Cheese, Sour Cream & Onion, Red Hot and Taco. Try them all." I just might do that. What inspired me? When I was younger, I had a love affair with Corn Nuts (still do) I had a bag almost everyday during my teen years. Then there was only one flavor; now there are eight. What took them so long to realize you could do it a bit differently; think outside the box? I would have loved to be in the meeting with the company execs when this radical idea was presented. I wonder how long it took them to consider the idea before they began?

And what about "Fig Newton's?" We now have strawberry kiwi, apple, strawberry, raspberry, apple cinnamon, and peach apricot. For years there was just figs. Somebody, somewhere suggested we could put something other than figs in them. Wow! Something different, never been done before! My goodness, what will they think of next!

I mentor Jared who is 23. He works with Microsoft and tells me he is working on some stuff that nobody has even thought about, let alone done, before. I don't understand what he does exactly, even after he explains it to me, but he sure gets excited about it. What would happen in faith-based not-for-profit organizations and churches if we did that? What keeps that from happening? Fear of failure, fear of being out there by yourself with your crazy, never-been-done-before idea blowing in the wind? Laziness, lack of motivation due to a system that punishes failure and rewards sameness? What keeps *you* from thinking creatively? Leaders should think outside the box. Managers paint by numbers, stay within the lines. Leaders use a different math, ignore acceptable lines, create new lines.

Sometime back, my wife and I saw the film Billy Elliot. This is a film about a boy in England, son of a coal miner. He had a love for dancing. While his father thought he was sending him for boxing lessons, he was at the other end of the gym practicing with the young ladies taking ballet. The teacher of the young girls saw potential in Billy and took him under her wing, mentoring and opening doors for Billy. You can imagine the day when his father discovered what he was doing instead of boxing, Not a pretty sight. After the initial blow up, there were frequent run-ins with the father over the appropriateness of a coal miner's son taking dance lessons. His brothers joined in the "blast Billy" ritual. Billy would not be deterred. He was often discouraged, but the ballet teacher continues on and succeeds by getting him enrolled in a prestigious ballet school. The father, at this point, finally gives in and gives up, realizing how much it means to

Billy. A high point of the film (for me) was when he goes for an audition at the school. After dancing (and not all that well) they put one last question to him. "Tell us Billy, what does it feel like when you dance?" His answer reveals his deep passion and commitment. As he shares what he feels, his eyes dance with joy, his voice has a sense of excitement, he becomes truly alive. A part of me thinks he should have stuck with boxing. It would have been a lot easier, and more acceptable. But another part of me applauds him for swimming against the current of the opinions of family and friends. His response to the question convinces the school to accept him. Even his Father is glad at this point.

Billy eventually becomes a premier ballet dancer and, at the film's end, his father and older brother attend one of his performances. Passion wins out over tradition, over other people's expectations, over the tendency to quit and give up. Billy (by thinking outside the box), takes us on a mind-expanding journey into the unconventional. Billy is not afraid to march to the beat of a different drummer. He is willing to put up with ridicule from family and classmates in order to be true to what's inside him.

Corn Nuts, Fig Newtons, and Billy Elliot inspire me to try the untried, to venture outside the box and ignore the pre-set lines I am supposed to stay within.

In C.S. Lewis' book "*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*" The question is asked about Aslan, (a prototype of Christ): "Is he quite safe?" The answer: "Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King I tell you." God is not safe in the traditional sense. He does the wild, unexpected and unconventional things confounding the traditionalist. So should His leaders be safety driven? No, I say. Let's get out on the edge, multiplying the possibilities of turning Corn Nuts and Fig Newton's into something no one ever thought of before. When's the last time you tried something for the first time? Let's be more like Billy Elliot instead of, you know, safe!