

LIVE 2>> LEAD

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We live in the land of the “new.” Innovate or be left behind. It’s a pressure-cooker world for sure. But, for me, innovation energizes. Here’s how.

I believe in leaning into the future by always remembering the past. Every six weeks, or so, I lead the “Chick-fil-A Vision and Values Tour.” We pile operators, corporate employees, and vendors into an executive coach and take a stroll down memory lane.

We visit the original Chick-fil-A restaurant, “The Chick-fil-A Dwarf House,” our friends at Coca-Cola, and the good folks at City of Refuge, among other stops. I get to tell the story of how my dad worked so hard flipping burgers and eggs at The Dwarf House to get us where we are today.

But it’s not only the hard work, it’s the principles that guided my dad throughout his life. He loved to serve people. It doesn’t matter how well you make a chicken sandwich, if you’re not serving your customers well, they won’t come back.

Who we were in the past built us into who we are as a company right now, in the present. But what about tomorrow? What keeps us at Chick-fil-A innovative, while we remain true to the values that shaped us?

Chasing Cool

To help me stay fresh, I tell myself “Think Cool.” What in the world do I mean?

I love chasing cool. Not looking cool, or “being” cool. Rather, I love chasing people who are creating cool things. I love discovering cool places. I can’t get enough of the cool ideas out there that make the world a better place.

But what makes something cool?

My Book of Cool

Think about your smartphone. It's a communication device. That's it, right? No, it's become an indispensable tool of cool. Can you imagine working without your iPhone, Android or whatever smart phone you use?

But it's not just its *utility* that matters to us. It's the whole package. We can't wait for the new upgraded version. What do the folks at Apple have planned for this little device next? What will they improve upon? What will they edit out? What new apps will be available?

The iPhone is cool because Apple has created a product we get excited about. We anticipate it. We can't live without it.

I believe the essential thing about a cool product or person or idea is its *magnetism*.

Magnetism is the ability to attract or charm a person.

This is what we at Chick-fil-A lean into: ***the art of magnetic thinking or what I like to call "Thinking Cool."***

When you **Think Cool** you are, in essence, considering how to make your product or brand magnetic--attractive, charming, indispensable.

When we **Think Cool** we're considering what we can do to attract and charm our customers in an effort to serve them better. ***Thinking Cool*** falls right in line with our mission, which is to **"Be 'REMARK'able."**

Thinking Cool won't win you any fashion awards, but it will put you in a position to attract those you wish to serve. What could be cooler than that?

For more information on this topic, be sure to check out my favorite book on the subject: Chasing Cool: Standing Out in Today's Cluttered Marketplace by Noah Kerner and Gene Pressman.