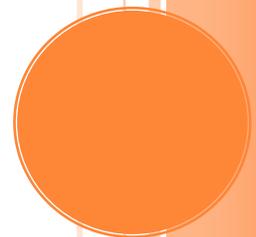


CREATING A NEW REALITY

“Steps to Making a Significant Change”

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As a business consultant and executive coach, people often share with me about how they are stuck in certain patterns or situations in their lives or businesses, without knowing what to do, or what to change. In many cases, as we begin to discuss their situation, I notice their energy is focused on all of the things they don't want or have *tried* to do, but without real success. And usually, as I explain the steps to making a significant change, their eyes widen as though I have given them the sacred secret to riches. Possibly, so let's go through these same steps so that you can begin creating what you truly want in your life or your business.

VISION

Any new reality or change begins with a picture or idea that grows into a vivid and compelling vision. Vision starts with imagination. In terms of your situation let's begin by imagining that you have unlimited resources and access to all of the necessary competencies you will need in order to implement your vision. Instead of focusing on what you no longer want, or what's not working about your situation, we will focus on creating a picture of what could be.

Use paper, crayons, a computer, music, whatever works best for you, but focus on forming a picture of your ideal situation. Don't edit your thoughts. Once you have a general picture, shape it into a specific, tangible, doable, and inspiring picture.

With your vision in mind, begin to think about how to articulate it to yourself and others. Keep it simple. Check the emotional context with others. Keep working until you can communicate your vision to others in a way that's easily understood and emotionally evocative. A compelling vision always has a strong emotional context and affirms your deepest values.

A BELIEF THAT YOU WILL BE SUCCESSFUL

Having a compelling vision is a start, but a compelling vision must be achievable within your own mind or it will lead to obvious sabotage. The key is to transform the vision from an idea that is possible to an idea and picture in your mind that is *likely probable*. This requires a belief in yourself that you have what it takes, and that you have access to what you need in order to manifest the vision.

There are various ways to gain belief. The easiest and most common is to watch or listen to someone else who has had success with the same or similar. Mentors, teachers, coaches are examples of people who can fulfill this role. Another way to build belief is to participate in challenges, pilots, and/or experiments that lead to gaining confidence through reaffirming experiences and progressive wins.

DETERMINE THE PRICES

With a vision of the future firmly in mind, the next step is to consider all the prices you will need to pay as you set out to manifest your vision. Consider for example the prices of being a parent—lack of sleep, worry, loss of some intimate moments with your spouse, money, etc. There are always prices to pay for progress. Or, think about the game of baseball. In baseball, getting a single would have you standing on first base. In terms of competency, getting to first base in baseball is a big deal—but secondary to getting all the way around the bases back to home plate. So, while getting to first base is important—getting to home plate is more important. However, getting to second base requires paying the price of letting go of first base.

With any change the same dynamics are in play. Manifesting your vision will require letting go of all or some of what you have. In other words, there are always prices to pay if you want to create something new.

Once you have determined the prices—**resolve to pay them all**. If you are not willing to pay all of the prices, chances are you will end up stuck with the very situation you don't want. Students of metaphysical laws know this well—what you resist you evoke.

Therefore, my coaching is always to abandon your vision if you are not willing to pay the prices. In my experience, all that will happen is you will somehow sabotage the manifestation of the vision and reinforce that you were “not enough” to have it turn out. The best course of action is to go back to the first step and create a vision in which you *are willing* to pay **all of the necessary prices**.

INTENTION

Now that you have resolved to pay the necessary prices, it's time to authentically commit. Image yourself on one side of a river. We'll call this territory your present situation. Now imagine in front of you is a bridge that spans across the river to the other side. Let's assume the other side represents a clear and compelling vision of what could be. Why is it that some easily cross-over, while others get stuck half-way or worse—never step onto the bridge? I have often listened to people share about how much work they have put into their vision but have never tasted the fruits of their labor. Look at your own situation; where in your life or business are you stuck somewhere between where you have been and where you want to be?

It's important to see that what's missing with “bridge walkers” is intention. Let me explain. Intention is when one decides an outcome in the future and eliminates the option of failure or going back. While it is possible that you may never get to the other side—with intention that option no longer exists in your mind. So the real question for you is “what's in the way of you deciding that your vision wins no matter what?” If you look closer, you might see that you are holding on to some underlying personal beliefs and benefits that undermine the change. As an exercise, take some time to list any hidden benefits you have been unwilling to give up or put at risk in regard to altering your present situation.

After finishing this exercise, you might notice these benefits and beliefs are related more to surviving than winning. If so, let me offer a new perspective; think of crossing the bridge as an exchange—where you exchange something of value for something of even more value. You can now put yourself in the position of authentically deciding that success is imminent.

Committing to one's vision is really about exchanging what you have for what you want combined with the willingness to do whatever it takes to produce

that vision. Again, notice your own situation. Write down anything that you are unwilling to do that might be required in order to fulfill your vision. Until you can authentically cross out everything on your list, you are still operating from a state of unwillingness. What you will notice is that people who can support you will pick up on your underlying hesitancy and unconsciously withdraw their full help or support.

Take the plunge. Cross the bridge and burn the bridge behind you. To finally make a decision without creating backdoors and possible excuses for failing is liberating. Once you have decided—you put the problem behind you. Now you're armed with the clear intention “to find a way to make this work,” and you have moved from a paradigm of playing not to lose to a paradigm of playing to win.

PLAN BACKWARDS

For most people the planning process appears to them as a series of “next steps.” The problem with this thinking—is the plan starts with where you are, and moves toward where you want to be. That's logical, however we are committed to breakthrough results—not results that are a more or linear version of what already exists. In effect, we need to plan for new behaviors and new outcomes, which requires “new” thinking.

My suggestion is to start with “a happy ending....” A happy ending is the intention about the outcome; a metaphor for a strategy that is based on winning versus a strategy that is based on not losing. Operating from a paradigm of “playing not to lose,” the planning process becomes contaminated, as the old assumptions that have been preventing a breakthrough creep into the plan. When the planning process is complete, inevitably you will have planned in failure.

So starting with a happy ending, we plan backwards. The process involves asking yourself or your business “what possible events or actions would immediately precede this vision? A list of all possible events and actions can now be generated which begins to open up a very new possibility. With each event or action the same question can be asked again and again. The question and answer process finally ends when you can easily visualize a bridge from your present situation into this cause-effect stream of new events and actions that are being generated from the future.

I think one of the reasons Steven Spielberg is so successful is that he plans out each of his movies using this same paradigm. He knows what his audiences want, and he knows before he starts filming that his movie will end with some sort of happy ending. Of course his happy ending becomes our own as his version of a happy ending almost always affirms some of our deepest values.

ALIGNMENT—SHARE AND ACT AS THOUGH IT IS SO

Creating a *new* reality means creating a *new* shared agreement about what is true or valid. Consider a shopkeeper who hangs her sign out or passes out business cards at a party. She is declaring a new reality into being. As people understand and enroll into the vision, they start to act in alignment with this “new reality.” At first people may resist—but as long as you are acting and behaving as if the vision is already true, most people will align with the new reality. You have to keep in mind that people’s opinions are based more on behavior than words. They will listen to your declarations, but they will watch your actions to validate or invalidate which reality is really true. If your actions are inconsistent with the decision—in other words, if you act as though it *might be* true *someday*..., then it’s unlikely that people will buy-in to the change.

Once they buy-in, the next step is to work together on communicating the vision and the changes so that your new reality gains momentum.

GATHER EVIDENCE AND COURSE CORRECT

The best way to grasp the importance of this next step is to look at your present patterns or situations and write down all the evidence that you and others have gathered that supports the improbability of transforming the situation. These can be past failures, failed plans, feedback, comments, judgments, etc. It’s important to see that in the world of evidence gathered supports the situation remaining the same.

When you are in new territory, you will need to gather new evidence that supports that your vision *is* working. Remember, even when you are in new territory, there will be evidence that you are failing, or going too slow, or moving the wrong direction; but there will also be evidence that supports your happy ending is happening. Choose that evidence, and build on what's

working. Simultaneously, you want to listen to others feedback but only to make course corrections, not to validate or invalidate the vision. Gathering evidence that the vision is occurring is how you broaden support and fuel your resolve, listening to feedback is how you enlist others support and expertise as you navigate through uncharted territory.

HAVE FUN

For some, learning is fun, for others, the experience of going for it is fun, and for others, the journey of discovering what's possible is fun. Change does not have to be painful. Pain in most cases results from the perception that one must give up something. If you do not view these changes as exchanges of something old for something new, it's unlikely that you will stick with your vision.

Winning at what matters is fun and gives cause for celebration. Make sure your plan includes plenty of opportunity to experience continuous wins. Celebrating wins and having fun are the best way to sustain the momentum that will often be interrupted. Don't focus on the interruptions; focus on your new winning practices and building on what is already working. And, as Dr. Seuss wrote, "Today is your day. So be on your way!"

JIM ZARVOS is the president and founder of Paradigm Consulting International, a consulting firm specializing in leadership development and organizational change. With twenty five years of business and training experience, Jim demonstrates an ability to take organizations, teams, and individuals to a significantly higher level of performance. Jim is featured in the movie "The Answer to Absolutely Everything" and is working on a book "The Absolutes of Leadership" to be released in 2015.

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