

STRAIGHT-LINE LEADERSHIP

Dusan Djukich

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**TOOLS FOR LIVING WITH VELOCITY AND
POWER IN TURBULENT TIMES**

Dusan Djukich

Straight-Line Leadership

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For Mandy and Johan van der Put.

***For the selfless, relentless and unwavering
commitment you bring to the lives of others.***

***Thank you for living with velocity and power.
Your Lives Matter.***

—Dusan Djukich—

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***Life isn't about
finding yourself.
Life is about
creating yourself.***

—George Bernard Shaw—

PREFACE

THESE ARE FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

The skills you will be introduced to in this book are foundational. They are not soft skills, and they're not hard skills; they are the foundation on which all other skills are built. They are vital for effective leadership—and effective leadership is vital for individual and business performance.

Most individuals in business, try to correct their unwanted situations by introducing new soft skills (morale and team building training) and even hard skills (software training to track activity and results), but those skills will be greatly diminished when the foundation is not addressed.

Without a mastery of these foundational skills, leadership becomes non-existent. And leadership is the determining factor that will make or break the future of an enterprise. It can also make or break the future of a person's life.

Just as a home with a disintegrating foundation cannot be saved, by bringing in better woodwork or nicer countertops, neither can an individual looking to perform at extraordinary levels, transform his performance without these foundational skills. (Whenever I say "he" or "him" I also mean "she" or "her." I mean no offense to either gender, and I realize that women and men are equally qualified to be effective leaders.)

The foundation of any individual seeking a result is his inner stance—the place he operates from. We hear language that reflects this all the time. Someone who is effective is said to be "coming from a committed place," and someone who is ineffective is often said to be operating from his "inner victim."

What most people don't know, is that there is a way to take absolute control over this foundation inside of you, and to create it to be whatever you choose. This book is dedicated to that promise.

INTRODUCTION

THE GEOMETRY OF SUCCESS

Success in life and in business is actually simpler than it looks. Not easier, always, but simpler.

It's a matter of getting from A to B.

A is where you are now, and B is your chosen objective.

A leader's job is to get to B.

A leader demonstrates his commitment to get to B, by his willingness to be "who he needs to be," and do "whatever it takes in the form of necessary required actions" to get to B.

A successful leader accomplishes this feat by mastering his "inner stances," which are presented in detail in the next chapter as well as throughout this book.

What's the fastest way to get to B? What's the most effective way to get a result? It's simple geometry.

It's a straight line.

It's a straight line from A to B, as in the shortest distance between two points. From where you are to where you want to be.

Straight-line coaching has become the method of choice for leaders, professionals, and executives from all walks of life. As a result of their experience with this technology, most will tell you that they have been trained to solve their own problems, and are in a position to assist others in solving their problems as well. And this is one of the major skills of a straight-line leader.

A straight-line leader is extremely effective at solving problems in life. They solve their own problems, and they assist those they lead to become adept at solving their problems as well.

My extensive work over the years in the development and refinement of straight-line coaching methodologies, has always been a matter of simplifying the problem. The straight-line coaches I have trained, assist others in their quest for increased personal and business performance. We keep it simple. In simplicity lies fresh strength. We assist our clients by waking them up to the straight line that's always there. It's the straight line that they usually don't see.

Why can't they see it? Again, it's because of geometry. They are traveling in a circle—usually a vicious circle, going around and around, repeating the same old unworkable behaviors, performing the same actions and hoping for different outcomes in their personal and business lives.

This endless circular movement is what the mind does when it's stuck in the past, living Groundhog Day over and over, trying to “improve” over past performance. But improvement is not what's needed. What's needed is for the circle to be opened up and straightened out... for a new line to be drawn from where you are to where you want to be.

And we're going to create this straight line a little differently. We're going to put your pen on point B first (your future), and then draw the line back to point A (your present moment), so that now you have brought the future into your immediate present time actions.

The future is solely created in the present. The future can't be created in any other place but the present. What an individual creates “now” determines what the new “now” or what we call the future will look like.

Otherwise, you are living in a circular world, and your future is always stranded out there, as something you want but don't have. And it's that demeaning habit of continuous wanting (it's your lack), that keeps your confidence and vitality low. Wanting what you don't have robs you of the very energy that would get it for you. This continuous wishing, hoping, and wanting will replace a relaxed, focused mind with a worried mind... always getting out ahead of itself.

This book delivers the distinctions that straight-line coaches use when coaching their clients. These distinctions have been tested repeatedly for their proven reliability, in creating breakthroughs in business and other areas of life that require high levels of performance.

They open up your whole being and give you the space and strength for potent, new, decisive action.

These distinctions are not theories. When someone tells me, “I like your theory,” I realize he doesn’t quite get it. These distinctions are tools already used in practical ways. These distinctions are not definitions or a new form of knowledge you’ll have to try to remember or retain. They are tools for escaping a circular existence. They are tools to create the “Now I see!” moment for you. These distinctions distinguish a way of being that you hadn’t seen before.

You might remember when you first “got it” that you could swim or roller skate. You had your “Now I see!” moment and it was yours forever. You will notice, that the same thing happened, when you first perfected your balancing act on a bicycle. You will “get” these distinctions the same way.

Essayist Laurence Platt puts it this way:

“We have a natural ability to distinguish but it’s not always exercised. If you don’t distinguish doors, for example, you end up walking into walls a lot. People who don’t exercise their natural ability to distinguish have a certain bruised, banged-up look about them. What stops us from exercising our natural ability to distinguish? Or, to ask the same question in a less confrontational manner, why don’t we exercise our natural ability to distinguish more often when clearly, making distinctions in life works better? If there’s any doubt about this assertion, witness the condition of people who walk into walls a lot.”

These distinctions are the result of a retroactive process. They are observations from the front lines of a lifetime of “what works and what doesn’t work.” They will work when you use them.

These distinctions are not complicated. They are designed for immediate access and quick results. They are used (consciously or unconsciously) by the most successful leaders and executives worldwide, to bring major successes to their companies and organizations. They can be used by anyone.

These distinctions are the highly effective tools we use in the world of straight-line coaching (human performance and business performance facilitation). They are for people who have to get results, and they have to get them now. They want velocity.

You’ll experience how this powerful approach gets at the source of why people get stuck. You’ll experience for yourself how to resolve a troubling issue, powerfully, regardless of what’s going on in your specific situation or in the environment.

We work with committed people from a wide spectrum of industries, who do not have a back door that they can take when the chips are down. We work with these types of people, to get at the source of why they are not performing at the stellar levels of which they are capable. You could say the straight-line coaching distinctions we utilize are used to “unstick” the stuck.

***I believe that half the
unhappiness in life comes
from people being afraid to
go straight at things.***

—William J. Locke—

Welcome to the world of straight-line coaching.

Enjoy yourself as you navigate through this book, picking up the distinctions that serve you best. It doesn't matter which ones you start using first. You can use them no matter where you find yourself, or what you're up against. And when you do, I promise you that you will live with velocity and power, in both good and turbulent times. All you have to do is to be persistent in your use of them. Through persistent utilization of these distinctions, you'll see that there's a simple geometric formula for getting results. You'll actually experience for yourself, that the shortest distance between two points, is a straight line.

***The world said conform,
the world said settle for less,
the world said compromise
and no one will know...
So I made my own world.***

—Bijan—

01 | WHAT'S YOUR INNER STANCE?

You can think positively all you want. If your inner stance is weak—nothing good happens.

Therefore, the most effective thing that you can possibly do is to first distinguish your inner stance. What position are you taking? Where are you coming from? How are you actually operating in life?

And, given where you're coming from (your inner stance), how do you now see life? Most people have no idea that there is a way that they see things. They think that how they see things is "just the way it is." But if they stood in a different place, they would see things differently. And how they see things could open exciting new possibilities for successful actions.

Therefore, sitting down and figuring out where you want to go is not the most important first step in getting results. It's a great second step though. In fact it's critical in the long run. You certainly can't hit a target that you don't have in front of you. And yet, there is still something much more basic to living a life with velocity and power. It's something that runs much deeper. In working with a straight-line coach, he will first want to establish something more primary... something much more crucial to your success. He will want to know: Where are you coming from? He will want to know that because he will want to know what's possible for you to see.

It's not where you want to go but where you come from that most determines your success and results in life. While it's true that "where you want to go" provides direction in life, "where you come from" is like adding rocket fuel to the process. "Where you come from" is the foundation of "where you want to go."

The position you operate from in life is what ultimately has you be "who you are." By "who you are" I mean how you exist. How you live. How you function in life. The things you do and don't do. The things you say. The things you don't say. How you are experienced by others as well as yourself.

I call this operating position your inner stance.

And like in baseball, dancing, fencing or the martial arts, you can always change your stance. It's fully within your power in any given moment.

Your inner stance is the position or mental posture you create to live your life from. It is how you choose to live your life, exist, or “be” in regard to yourself, others, challenges, or life in general.

In other words, it becomes “how you operate” in life.
When people say, “He’s this way or that way,” they are relating to the person from the stances that he is operating from.
An inner stance is chosen and reinforced on a regular basis simply by living from the inner stance. Inner stances can be empowering or disempowering.

A straight-line leader is masterful at dealing with their own and others’ inner stances. Straight-line leaders function with wisdom and power.

Wisdom =	Being aware of the inner stance that you are operating out of in the moment.
Power =	The willingness and ability to shift inner stances at will. Shifting inner stances is done by choice and choice alone.

Most people have multiple inner stances that they function from daily. Sometimes people are so familiar with the stances they function from, that they just assume the stances are “who they are,” rather than something they either choose directly, or choose out of agreement with someone or something else. They don’t realize that they can rechoose or recreate their stance when the current stance doesn’t serve them.

Some people can be very defensive about their stances because of how deeply they have confused the stances for who they are. They trap themselves in disempowering stances by identifying with the stances themselves. They think in terms of DNA and permanent personalities.

Choosing to operate as a straight-line individual, is choosing to drop your disempowering identity (self-concept) by shifting your inner stance. Until now, almost all of your stances have been unconsciously assumed. From this point on, you will be choosing them consciously.
Conscious stances allow for freedom. You can always rechoose another stance to live your life from. When you are not pleased with the results that you are

getting from your current stance, change it until you adopt the stance that gets you what you want.

It's done, just as a baseball player in a slump, will work with his batting coach to change his stance. He'll move one foot back a bit, dip his knees more, square his shoulders differently, and soon he's hitting the ball again. The new stance was just what he needed.

In the same way, the inner stances you operate from in life, will determine the actions that you will take (or not take), and the results you get from those actions and inactions.

***At all times and under all
circumstances we have the
power to transform the
quality of our lives.***

—Werner Erhard—

Unconscious stances become prisons, especially when you are unaware that you have identified yourself with the stance. Remember that your stance isn't "you;" it's just the stance you take. You can change it at any time.

Distinctions are tools of vision, like microscopes and binoculars. They are being presented to you so you can see the stances you are operating from. Without seeing them, you can't change them.

As Nathaniel Branden says, "*You can't leave a place you've never been.*" And I would add to that, neither can you change a stance you don't see.

Distinctions give you an up-close observation of the stances that you live your life from. They make these stances clear and visible. Distinctions give you the awareness you need to clear your way for choice in the matter.

For example, you might be living from a stance of “overwhelmed.” When you can see it, you can choose to shift to a stance of “focused.” Notice that both stances are created places to come from in life.

See clearly that what I’m presenting is not “positive thinking.” You are not trying to paper over or cover up your negative beliefs with positive pep talks. Those pep talks tend to evaporate overnight. I’m not looking to sugarcoat anything. I am asking you for a total change of who you are on the inside at this moment, at the deepest level, where your chosen stance lives and dictates everything.

The inner stance you operate from, when consciously and intentionally generated, will allow you to live your life with velocity and power. Or, if it’s a dysfunctional stance, it can stop you dead in your tracks.

We’ve all experienced the example of multiple people attending the same seminar with wildly varying results. Some people apply what they’ve learned immediately and have quantum leaps in productivity, while others return to the same unproductive lives they were living prior to the seminar. This is because of the inner stance they are operating from. No matter how workable the information is in the seminar, it won’t work for a person whose inner stance is unconscious and weak.

Knowledge only becomes useful when it is successfully applied. Knowing without doing only frustrates you and dilutes your strength. So it’s never knowledge alone that gets you what you want. It’s where you come from. The inner stance that you operate from will determine how successful you are at taking on new knowledge, and getting it successfully implemented.

Most people don’t really pay much attention to the stances that they operate from in life. They simply focus on where they want to “get to.”

This is a big mistake.

Because the stance you operate from creates the reality of what is possible (and not possible) for you. The stance you operate from literally becomes

your life. It determines whether you will take the necessary required actions to “get to” where you want to go in life.

Trying to get to some place in life is commonly referred to as having a goal. It sometimes appears as an even less powerful “wish” or “hope;” but as Fernando Flores has said, “*Hope is the raw material of losers.*”

Most people don’t realize how the stances that they are operating from in life, or “where they are coming from”, impact the quality of life for themselves personally and professionally.

Without intentionally and deliberately creating powerful inner stances to operate from, there tends to be a lot of wishing and hoping with very little if any results. Straight-line leaders do not tolerate the existence of disempowering inner stances in their lives or the lives of those that they lead.

It boils down to this: Where you come from determines the actions that you take in life and the actions that you don’t take in life. Your stances will always be the keys to your castle or your jail cell.

Many times, people have been operating out of such disempowering stances, that they just “dummy down” and justify themselves and their actions, with “that’s just the way I am” or “I was just born this way.” This can be an extremely painful, expensive, frustrating and confusing way to live life.

Soon they find themselves chronically complaining. They can’t see that complaining is a poor substitute for being responsible for getting a result.

Examples of operating from disempowering stances are:	Examples of operating from empowering stances are:
- Worrying	+ Commitment
- Blaming others	+ Authenticity
- Trying	+ Growth choices
- Content with insight	+ Functioning from integrity

I refer to empowering stances as “straight-line positions.” Because functioning out of straight-line positions is a sure route to increasing velocity, power, and results in your life. Living from straight-line positions is the first step to becoming a straight-line leader in life.

Straight-line coaching, is designed to assist individuals to distinguish and “come from” straight-line positions in their lives.

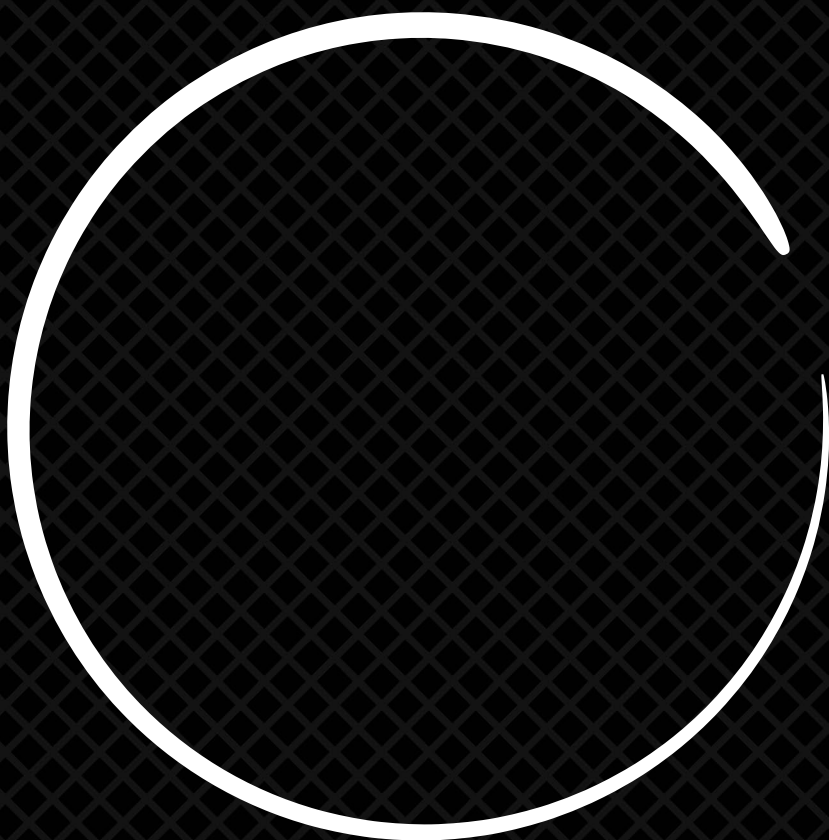
Straight-line coaching is also designed, to assist individuals to distinguish and drop non-productive and unworkable positions, that they may be “coming from.”

When an individual operates out of non-productive or unworkable stances (referred to in this book as “circle and zigzag” positions), productivity and profitability always suffer. Self-esteem sinks to a new low.

Circle and zigzag positions can usually be detected fairly easily by how individuals utilize language. Their language both creates and reflects how they normally function in life. And, of course, individuals coming from circle or zigzag positions are almost always struggling, with minimal results.

The power of straight-line coaching, is that it inspires individuals to distinguish (become aware for themselves) the various stances from which they are operating. With distinctions they can choose to keep or drop empowering or disempowering stances as they see fit. Clients make distinctions that free them from the unworkable stances that they are operating from in life, and then are in a position to choose stances that will allow them to take the necessary actions to get from A to B in short order.

Distinctions provide awareness, which is critical for change. You won’t change something of which you are unaware. The inner stances that are distinguished here are the same ones that top executives, professionals, and successful national figures in sports and the arts, are coached in on a regular basis to allow them to perform at such high levels.



02 | *LIVING IN THE CIRCULAR WORLD*

So why would we travel in circles?

Why would we talk around and around an issue, instead of being straight and solving it immediately?

Why do we live in loops and cycles instead of getting to the point?

Why do we keep repeating past mistakes?

The reason is this: we believe success is about having the right information. And for that reason it isn't long before we think we need more and better information. We keep seeking something that does not help, and it returns us full circle to the same failure that caused us to seek in the first place. We chase rainbows of information. What causes us to seek is what's causing us to fail. We don't always get that knowing what to do, and, implementing what you know, are two entirely different things.

We believe we don't know how to do what would have us be successful. We believe we don't know what to do. So we look for more information.

Even though we have so much information right now that our heads are spinning, we still think we don't know how to succeed. The circle is produced by the illusion of missing information.

But, for the most part, information is not what's missing. (Are you listening? Information is not what's missing.)

Transformation is what's missing.

Transformation: as in altering who you are being. It is an altering of where you're coming from. Learning to live in a straight line to where you want to be. It's all about learning to always find the shortest distance between you and your objective.

And the most effective tool for breaking the cycle of endless mental circles?
A DISTINCTION.

I use the term “distinctions” to indicate a clear grasping of new choices available to you. “Distinctions” are dramatic, graphic opposites, like life and death, day and night, profit and loss. I use this approach because opposites are easy to see. There’s no hidden subtlety. There’s no wiggle room. There’s no missing information to be filled in.

You can see the distinction between a straight line and a circle. You can draw it on a piece of paper and see it. You can see that you are either on the path from A to B or you are traveling in circles. We’ve all experienced both. But have we seen it?

***People can be divided into
two classes: Those who go
ahead and do something,
and those people who sit
still and inquire. Why wasn’t
it done the other way?***

—Oliver Wendell Holmes—

The best thing about a clear distinction is that once you get it—and you get it like you get a joke... a spontaneous awakening—you don’t have to think

about it. Or try to remember it. It's a true jolting insight. ("In" "sight"... something you see inside of you.) It literally becomes a part of you.

These distinctions now become tools to be utilized. Like an architect's drawing tools, you can use distinctions to design your life and your success in any field. I pull most of these distinctions from the world of executive leadership, because that's where they are most often used. It's where I've most often coached. But anyone can use these at any time for anything.

Anyone, that is, except those who insist on living in the circular world.

Circle people are running around seeking secret knowledge, always trying to find the next new thing. While many are quite competent, their competency is neutralized by their habitual self-indoctrination, of needing that last piece of sacred information before they will allow themselves to take action. They chase something outside of themselves and their own way of being. Let them continue living in that violent circle until they choose not to. You will now learn to break free from that kind of endless tail chasing and go straight for the prize.

As stated above, competency is not normally a problem for most circle people. Most circle people already possess adequate knowledge. Many have college degrees. Many of them have already read hundreds of books. But what they don't realize is that knowledge must be utilized to be of value.

Knowing about something and still not using it, gets you the same level of effectiveness as being ignorant. In fact, you are worse off with all that accumulated and unused knowledge, because you now have wasted a lot of your time, energy, and money gathering the knowledge that you're not using! Are you any better off than an ignorant person who didn't spend their resources learning anything?

Distinctions break you out of that circle.

They don't even have to be believed. That's a distinct advantage that they have. A straight-line person does not waste time trying to find and establish belief. She doesn't squander her precious mental energy wondering, "But do I really believe this?" The word "belief" etymologically means "fervent hope" and a straight-line person doesn't lose time hoping. There is usually too much at stake to bother with those forms of anxiety.

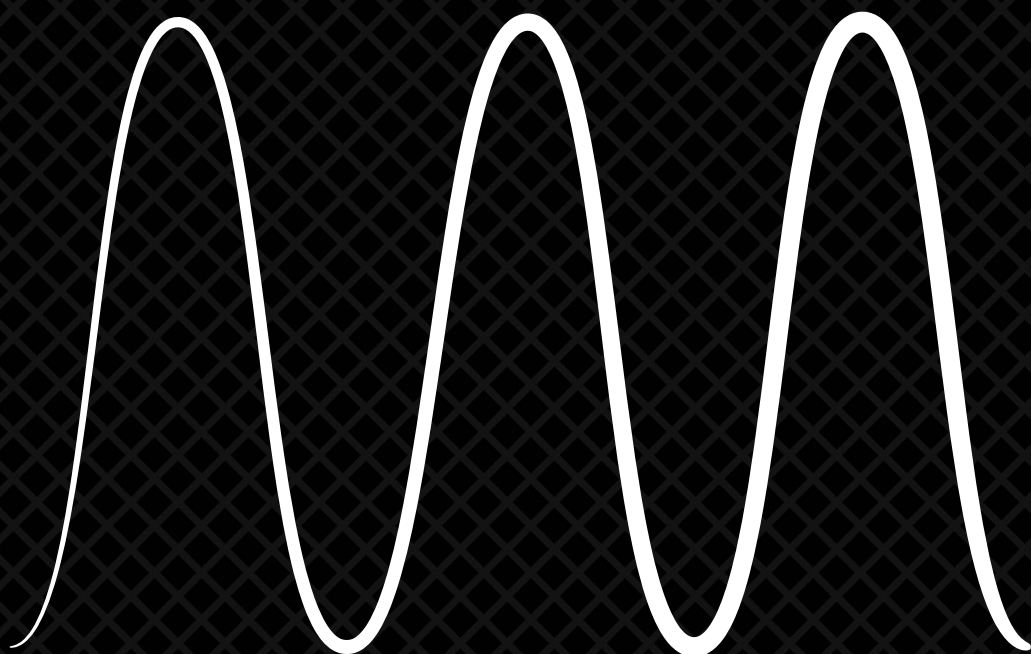
When you first used a hammer, did you have to believe in it?

Or did you just grasp it and start pounding a nail?

The minute you grasp and apply one of these distinctions like a hammer, it will become a tool of yours for life.

And you will no longer be trapped in your violent circle of worry and hope.

 | The shortest distance from A to B is always a workable inner stance, and
 | doing the necessary required actions until B is realized.



03 | *THE ZIGZAG WORLD*

Now we come to the third possibility—the third world that you can live in when it comes to performance. It's the world of the zigzag.

Zigzag people move between the first two worlds, the straight-line world of high performance, and the circular world of wheel spinning and non-performance.

Zigzag people often leave their circle and surge forward with an ascent to strong performance. Something might have inspired them. Maybe it was a great lecture that they attended, or a compelling book that had all the answers. They may have been ignited by a new colleague who was leading by example. Onward they go!

But unfortunately, the surge only lasts for a short while. Then they crash again.

And this cycle repeats when the next awareness and inspiration hits: temporary high performance and then down again.

Many salespeople exhibit the zigzag pattern each month. As they get near the end of the month, and their commission depends on a surge, they zig. Then the new month starts and they zag again. Soon they are either doing fairly well, or they are off the road again. Overall, when you add their performance up, they are doing just enough to keep their jobs. They drive their managers crazy.

Remember the three worlds:

The Straight-Line world	The straight-line world, is inhabited by people who get things done—they are amazingly effective. They are the people who others admire and look up to.
The Circular world	The circular world, is occupied by people who confuse activity with accomplishment. Like the dog chasing its tail. They never get anything important done—often they just burn out, and quit.
The Zigzag world	The zigzag world, whose occupants get some inconsistent success, but they also spend a lot of time off in the ditches of life.

Every one of us has experience in all three worlds. Every one of us can engage in all three behaviors. The key is this: to what degree do you function effectively when you are in each of these worlds? Are you even aware of it? My goal here is to make you so aware of these worlds, that you can no longer live in one without knowing exactly where you are, and the consequences of living there.

When you become awake and aware of these three worlds, they can no longer happen by default. They now become matters of choice. The sleepwalking is over.

Staying on the straight line to your desired results, requires a commitment to functioning at a very high level of awareness. Being fully awake to what you're doing, and whether it's getting you from A to B as effectively as possible.

The great psychologist and business consultant, Dr. Nathaniel Branden says, "A common cause of business failure: seeing that a strategy isn't producing the anticipated results—and responding by going unconscious. A common cause of failure in your personal life: the same policy."

Circle and zigzag people are not fully conscious of where they are stuck. Zigzag people might go to a workshop delivered by Dr. Branden, and be very "straight line" for the next week and a half, riding a wave of unaccustomed high consciousness.

But some small challenge arises, old beliefs kick in, and without even being aware of it, they have zagged back to old patterns of defensive, reactive behavior, and fruitless new knowledge-seeking.

You can see why zigzags cannot be counted on to get anything done long-term. They are constantly stalled and stopped in life. When you break momentum, you have to start over. Start-up energy should only have to be generated once, as having to re-start projects and actions leads to a sense of burnout and defeat. What's the use?

Zigzag people start and stop, start and stop. They stop doing what works, because many times they are not fully aware of what works, or how they are operating in life. Although they have surges of temporary productivity, they then fall back to their old habits and become completely disheartened.

They simply don't see that after that good start, a "challenge" doesn't have to stop them. They can keep going. In fact, they can use the challenge to build strength along the path.

04 | *STRAIGHT-LINE PEOPLE*

Straight-line people use distinctions to maintain their high levels of awareness and performance.

In this book, I am now revealing the most useful and powerful distinctions I know of, so that straight-line leadership can be your own route to success in any field that you choose. With these distinctions you can first notice the inner stance that you are operating from, and if that stance is insufficient, you can choose another stance that does work for you. You can start solving your own problems and assisting others to do the same.

But be careful at this point. It's easy to be misled, because straight-line leaders do not simply "understand" these distinctions, and then process them as information.

They live the distinctions.

So it's important to notice: **"Are you understanding it or are you living it?"**

Remember, knowing without doing dilutes your strength. When you assume straight-line leadership, you incorporate certain empowering distinctions into your operating system, so that you are coming from these now-internal distinctions instead of "trying to remember" them, which is what happens in the circle and the zigzag world.

Straight-line individuals can read three chapters out of a business book, and accomplish more than a zigzagger who reads seventy-eight books and underlines every word. Straight-line individuals are not content with understanding. Their purpose in reading is different. They are disciplined in remembering what their intention is. They are not interested in blabbing about the book to their friends, and trying to impress them with their new-found information.

When I take on zigzag individuals as coaching clients, they often tell me they've tried and read nearly everything. They say, "Now I know all this great stuff. Now what? Is it time to go read more stuff that I'm not going to do anything with?"

No. It's time to utilize some distinctions.

I get them to see that not applying certain “distinctions” will lead them to “extinction.”

Straight-line individuals are not “better” than the others. They are not, at heart, any different than you or me. Every one of us is a part of all three types, until we're choosing not to be. Here's the only real difference: Straight-line people simply create (and utilize) more internal tools.

And once those tools (distinctions) are incorporated, there is nothing but pure, powerful, intelligent action!

Circle and zigzag people are not in action because they are hung up. They are trying to sort out what they see as necessary preconditions to action. For example, they say they need more courage. Or they think they need to get rid of a certain bad habit. Or learn more about the situation before they can act. Straight-line people don't focus on those concerns. They simply act decisively. Fear or no fear. They know that all results come out of decisive action. So rather than looking for the courage, or the strength, or “enough time” to do something important, they forget all of that. It's too mentally exhausting to work on all of that. So they just drop the preconditions.

They know from experience that getting from A to B is always about doing the NEXT REQUIRED ACTION.

| The universe moves for the deed, not the doer.

Therefore, it doesn't matter if the doer has fear or experiences a lack of confidence. The universe just rewards the action taken. It doesn't matter if you have a lack of confidence or total unshakeable confidence. It's not about that. It's about doing the deed. And by doing the deed I mean doing “what's required” to get the results you intend.

How would your life change, if you could learn to give one hundred percent with or without fear?

Show me a guy who's afraid to look bad, and I'll show you a guy you can beat every time.

—Lou Brock—

Most people get sidetracked into “getting things” they think they need before they act, or getting rid of things (like fear) before they start.

I was training a group of sales executives who had a lot of questions for me about overcoming fear. They wanted to know how to deal with call reluctance and other forms of fear, that they believed were keeping their sales team from its intended results.

I recommended decisive action as the solution. Decisive action will defeat confidence and good feelings any day of the week. Just move ahead to take the decisive action that you are not taking, but you know needs to be taken. Do this enough times, and confidence and good feelings will no longer be an issue for you. You produce them not by nurturing their lack, not by “dealing with” them directly, but by setting them aside and taking decisive action. Within three months the team had more than doubled its sales volume.

Straight-line individuals simply decide what they want to accomplish, jot down what the necessary required actions are, and then do the necessary required actions.

Because most people never define the necessary required actions to achieve what they intend, they will always simply do whatever actions are comfortable at the time. They are always going with the feeling of activity, instead of insisting on doing the necessary required deed.

You can counter this habit by asking yourself five times a day, “**Am I being productive or just going through the motions? Am I just inventing things to do to avoid my NRAs?**” When the answer to both questions is “Yes!” then

it's time to create a must-do list, and then implement rigorous deadlines to force immediate action. Remember as you do this that "giving it your best shot" doesn't count for anything. You have to do what's required.

A straight-line person sees circumstances as neutral. Events have no meaning until useful meaning is applied through deliberate, purposeful language. Opportunities are constantly arising to a straight-line person, whereas the circle and zigzag people are stuck in stories about why so many events are "bad news."

Most people have no idea that they fall into these categories. They don't even realize that their perceptions have consequences. They think that everything they believe is just the way it is. But just because they believe something doesn't mean it's true. It just means they believe it. Only a few hundred years ago, most of the people on this round planet believed that the world was flat.

A straight-line individual uses the words and actions, that are most effective in creating movement from A to B. Their language creates an invented future (point B) and then they declare the necessary action.

Whereas the language of other people, usually just describes the unfortunate past. No future is being created.

A straight-line individual has a deep understanding of what it is to make a commitment. Their definition of commitment is crystal clear:

	Commitment =	A created stance in which you know what you will do (or not do) regardless of what happens or what doesn't happen.
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There's your straight-line right there. I invite you to begin living with that definition yourself, and choose what you are committed to doing. Watch how fast your life straightens out.

We all have circle in us and zigzag as well. But that committed person inside you is a straight-line being. That's the one you want to nurture, cultivate, and grow.

A famous Native American legend clarifies this idea beautifully. It lives on as a timeless parable from the Cherokee:

An old Cherokee chief is teaching his grandson about life:

“A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil—he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, self-pity, arrogance, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, self-doubt, and ego.”

“The other is good—he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, truth, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, compassion, and faith. This same fight is going on inside you—and inside every other person, too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, *“Which wolf will win?”*

The old chief simply replied, *“The one you feed.”*

05 | **WANTING** **vs. CREATING**

Straight-line individuals immediately shift from wanting to creating. Circle and zigzag individuals either stay at wanting or easily relapse back into wanting.

But notice what happens when you persistently want something to occur. Wanting soon leads to more wanting. And wanting depletes your energy and tends to upset you. It dramatizes and gives exaggerated “reality” to your identity as a person who does not have what he wants. That becomes who you are being. It becomes how you live. And, as with every other stance you live from, there are consequences.

It’s not powerful for you to live from that identity, and it’s certainly not enjoyable for others to be around it. It’s fine to have wants and dreams, as long as you are willing to wake up and make them happen. But staying in the wanting state is simply degrading. Test this principle for yourself: take just twenty minutes and consciously allow yourself to want something—the kids to clean up their room, or your investments to increase in value—now notice how you feel. Wanting what you don’t have just makes you feel worse and worse.

Those twenty minutes of wanting can destroy your spirit for a whole day. Continued over time, it can poison your attitude and cause an entire career to veer off course.

I once knew an executive, I’ll call him Scott, who isn’t an executive anymore. People always tried to help Scott get better. They shared with him ways to be more effective and enhance his performance. But when he received the workable information he would just chuckle and say, “Good stuff” but never apply anything. He no longer has his position.

The distinctions being presented here must be created and lived daily. Otherwise they won't be useful. They'll be reduced to interesting concepts that are fun to think about, but will never have any power to transform your life.

Scott, his head filled with good stuff—was let go.

Remember, it's the deed—not the doer—that gets you the results that you are after.

Let's look at this in another way. Take weight-loss diets as an example. It's my observation that all diets work—every last one of them. It's the dieters who don't work.

Have you ever seen someone who is grossly overweight with multiple health problems? His relatives and friends are seriously worried about him. They know that the person must lose weight to save his life, but they don't know what to do to help. Because it's the person with the health condition who must take the required action to drop the weight.

And we might make all kinds of things up about the person. He's lazy. He's self-destructive. But none of that really helps. Nor does it explain anything. There is only one explanation: the deed is not being done. It has nothing to do with labels we attach to the doer. People will do the deed (necessary required action) once they stop caring about anything but the deed itself.

| Straight-line individuals care so much that they don't care.

I know a professional coach, that cares so much, that he really doesn't care. His name is Kristof Cuppens.

Kristof is one of the few Straight-Line Coaches in the world. He has the unique talent of assisting people to live their lives fully and powerfully without regret.

He is a highly sought after speaker, who travels the world, impacting lives wherever he goes.

Kristof is able to create breakthrough results in ridiculously short time frames, with the people in front of him. He is able to do this through his penetrating and precise interactions with others. His unconventional style, and unapologetic commitment to interacting with people, has them observe what they were completely unaware of before. One of the things people experience, is the difference between Kristof and themselves. Kristof is able to communicate powerfully, because he is totally committed to the client's re-

sults and well-being. Being concerned with the approval of others, is not an issue for Kristof. His priority, is the results that he can produce in the lives of the clients. He has people see that simply imitating or parroting his way of communicating is not enough. You have to create it for yourself. And you do that, by creating a significant outcome that will actually make a difference in the quality of your life.

Many of his clients over the years, have hired Kristof as a coach for these exact qualities.

He utilizes the distinction “wanting” vs. “creating” and has people see how they degrade themselves and their lives by staying at “wanting.”

***Dying without regret, is the
only accomplishment that
really matters.***

—Kristof Cuppens—

To be more effective in producing results, have it be that when you say you will do something you can count on it. Make your words powerful and your language generative. The hallmark of a committed individual is that he can be counted on. In other words, what you say now makes things happen!

Most people use language for description, not creation. They are always describing what just happened. Straight-line people use language to create what they want... to move themselves and the people they are talking to into the realm of productive action.

06

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STOP STOPPING vs. STOPPING

Without persistent, focused action everything you know is virtually useless—a series of interesting mental exercises—nothing more.

Many people will begin a new project with inspired action, but then something happens, and they soon get discouraged, and then distracted, and then finally become so sidetracked, that what they began is never finished.

You have probably started a lot of things that you never completed. Maybe it was piano lessons, or an exercise regimen, or even a new system to improve sales in your business. You tried it for a while, and then for one reason or another it just dropped out of your life. You started and then you stopped.

Now it's time to stop stopping, beginning with the use of the distinctions in this book. You'll start using the distinctions that you find most beneficial. You'll be creating new places to come from. You may even carry this book around with highlighted paragraphs and chapters, to remind yourself of the new actions that you are creating.

Don't stop.

In the past, if you are like some of the people I coach, you've started a lot of various projects. If you had just stayed with them, you would have success now beyond imagining. But you stopped.

Stop stopping.

When you practice the act of stopping your stopping, you will leave your zig-zag life behind. This will keep you on the straight line. And it's the "keeping" part that's the most important. When you are on the right track, it no longer matters. When you hit some bumps in the road that slow you down, you will still get there if you stay on the right track. Just stop the stopping.

Most people confuse activity with productivity. They value busyness over results. So they jump into a new system of doing something that they are so excited about, and, start applying enormous energy to it, but soon shut down and quit. The slightest setback has them stop.

That won't happen to you when you stop stopping.

You can even slow down to a crawl and become more focused when you know you will not stop. Because frantic speed is not as important as "getting from A to B." Your frenzied beginnings have led to nothing. So stop doing life that way. Choose your path and stay on it.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "But why do I do that? What's wrong with me? Why do I stop? Don't I need to find that out?"

No, you don't need to figure any of that out. Why does it matter? It will only delay your progress to wallow in past theories, stories, and beliefs. You want to replace all that mental spinning with pure action.

There's an extremely effective formula I frequently use with clients, to provide access to achieving desired outcomes. It goes as follows:

Step 1	Decide what you intend to accomplish.
Step 2	Define exactly what actions it will take from you to achieve the outcome.
Step 3	Decide if you are willing to pay that price. (If you're not willing to pay the price to get whatever you want, you're just going to get frustrated.)
Step 4	Monitor the results of your actions and make corrections when needed.
Step 5	Continue to take the required actions and DO NOT STOP until your outcome is realized.

Most people never really define what it's going to take to get the result that they want. Therefore, they are unable to confront whether they are really willing to do what's required. Somebody sees a big, expensive house and says, "Well, that's my new goal. I want one of those!" and they don't really confront what they are really going to have to do, that they are not doing now, to get this big, expensive house. They never decide if they are really willing to

do what's necessary or not and therefore, as always, no house. You've got to define the necessary required actions you'll be taking. And then you've got to do the necessary required actions without stopping. It's just that simple. Also, remember to constantly observe the results that you are achieving, to see when your actions are moving you toward your desired outcome, or taking you further away from it. When necessary, take corrective action. Once you are satisfied with the results of your current actions, just continue to do what's working until you achieve the outcome. This formula will produce miracles for you when you work it.

***People of mediocre ability
sometimes achieve
outstanding success because
they don't know when to quit.***

—George Allen—

The above quote by the great football coach, George Allen, reflects a phenomenon known to people in the world of sports, business, and anywhere else where there's measurable accomplishment occurring. Most failure comes from quitting too soon. Most success comes from a willingness to go that extra mile and finish.

One of the greatest wide receivers in the NFL, Larry Fitzgerald, wears the following slogan on his practice jersey:

FAITH
FOCUS
FINISH

Bethany Hamilton was the 2004 ESPN Comeback Athlete of the Year, and an amazing example of someone who knew how not to stop. At the age of thirteen she was attacked by a shark while surfing and lost an arm as a result. Within six months she was surfing again competitively, and winning, with one arm.

Here's someone else who did not stop. After he was nearly killed in an auto accident that crushed both his legs, he would struggle to walk for the rest of his life. But, sixteen months after the accident, Ben Hogan won the US Open and ultimately five more major golf championships.

Stop stopping.

My close friend and colleague, Steve Chandler, in his leadership bestseller *100 Ways to Motivate Others*, talks about eliminating the habit of throwing the “quit switch.” Some people, out of a life-long habit, throw the quit switch at the first sign of frustration. Their workout gets difficult, so they throw the switch and go home. Their day of making phone calls gets frustrating, so they stop calling and go to get coffee with a co-worker, for two hours of sympathetic negativity.

A human being is built—like any other life form—to persist until a goal is reached. Watch children get what they want and you'll see the natural, built-in persistence. Children don't stop even when you tell them no.

But somewhere along the way we learn about stopping as an option. Soon we start stopping everything that gets uncomfortable. First we do it after a severe frustration, and then we get down to stopping things after a medium frustration, and soon we stop in the face of any discomfort at all. We quit.

When you learn to stop stopping, you will achieve virtually any goal you ever set. You will never give up on your projects. You will finish everything that you are truly committed to. You will make every month's sales goal. You will even lose all the weight you ever wanted to lose. You will achieve anything you want, because you will not stop doing the necessary required actions until the result is achieved.

The habit of stopping too soon is misinterpreted as a lack of willpower, courage, drive, or desire; but that's nonsense. It's only a habit. And like any habit, it can be replaced with another habit. One's inner stance is all that has to be changed. You can have the inner stance of a quitter, or the inner stance of a finisher. The choice is always yours, and it's never too late to choose.

07 | *WHAT DISTINGUISHES A STRAIGHT-LINE LEADER?*

Leadership is all about getting to “B.” A leader’s job is to get to “B.” There’s no reason to make it more complex than that. And to improve your velocity in getting to “B” (the result you have committed to achieving) you want to add power wherever you can. And one of the truest powers, is the willingness and ability to assist others, in making themselves more powerful. True power is the wherewithal to bring out the best in others.

Even when you are a sole entrepreneur in business for yourself, you will want to be a straight-line leader. You’ll be leading yourself, and you’ll also be leading your vendors and your clients.

A straight-line person is someone who deals effectively with his own nonsense. A straight-line leader does the same, but he has the added skill of being able to deal effectively with other people’s nonsense as well. And “nonsense” here is defined as attempting to operate from a disempowered stance.

Straight-line leadership begins with being a role model for clarity, commitment, and coming from the inner stances that get you from A to B. Leading by example, is the most powerful form of demonstration that you can provide for your people.

People love to be inspired. They hate being fixed and corrected. But they love being encouraged by what they see.

Unfortunately, most people who are creating business relationships and selling for a living, leave out the leadership element. They talk to prospective clients, hinting at their intentions, but they don’t lead the process and direct the action.

When you become a straight-line leader, and take it on as an inner stance, you’ll be willing to demonstrate tough love and confrontation. Before you let people off the hook for poor performance you’ll ask yourself, “**Am I being loyal to their smallness or am I being loyal to their bigness?**” When you don’t want to point out something that would make a difference, because you think you might hurt their feelings, you will speak up anyway.

The great Chinese sage Mencius said, “*Those who follow the part of themselves that is great will become great. Those who follow the part that is small will become small.*”

Straight-line leaders are willing to confront people and situations. When they confront people, those people are encouraged to become aware of the part of them that is great. You can’t ever lose by assisting others to empower themselves.

***My job is not to be easy
on people. My job is to make
them better.***

—Steve Jobs—

Notice as you lead yourself and others, that you only have access to that which you distinguish. When you can’t see it, it’s not there for you to use or not use. So, let’s say both you and the person you are leading, can see the disempowering stance from which the person is operating. It might be a victim stance or a low self-esteem stance, but whatever you both see is now beneficial. When you really see the dysfunction, you have an opportunity to change. To distinguish yourself or anyone else as operating from a disempowered stance, is to also provide you with an opportunity to shift to an empowering stance from which to operate.

And always remember, you must lead yourself before you lead others. Leading begins with distinguishing the disempowering inner stances in which you are stuck.

It is far easier to see the unworkable inner stances that others are stuck in than our own. This is where straight-line coaching is invaluable.

The positions that you operate from, define and shape your behaviors and actions in the present. Therefore, they generate your future results. Results are always ultimately produced by the behaviors and actions that are sourced from your current operating stance.

If it's "their fault" then you have no power. You've transferred the power of responsibility to others, and lost it in yourself.

Most people think that leaders have to accept responsibility. Wrong word. A straight-line leader creates responsibility. It becomes an inner stance. When you want to have power to deal with what's in your life, you'll begin creating responsibility everywhere.

Blaming others or yourself, does nothing more than drain you of your power.

Until you recognize the positions that you are operating out of, they will run you. They will operate you.

Explanations justify behavior, but offer no access to alter behavior. Shifting your inner stance will.

And as exhilarating as inspiration can be, it usually fades. You get no access to change your behavior from what inspires you. You change by "inventing" workable inner stances from which to function.

Most zigzag and circle people ended up being who they are, by their lack of personal intentionality. An "unmotivated inner stance" will do this. You need to put something into existence in order for things to change. You need to choose and live an appropriate inner stance for what you are up to.

You don't always have a choice about the immediate circumstances or conditions of your life, but you do have a choice about the "inner stance that you live from."

A lot of people think having confidence is important, but it's not. Confidence is actually quite overrated. "Lack of confidence" is often used as an excuse for inaction. Lacking confidence will not stop someone from taking appropriate action unless they let it. When you apply the "radical self-honesty distinction" to the "inaction due to the lack of confidence" excuse, the excuse will simply not hold up. Take someone with extreme stage fright. He says he would rather be dead than to get up and speak before an audience of a hundred people. But tell him that he will not be allowed to see his darling little three-year-old daughter, until he gives a speech to a thousand people, and he will knock people out of the way to get up on stage.

Confidence may or may not be present for you, but that's okay as long as you are living from an inner stance of responsible leadership, which will produce appropriate decisive action.

| In essence, a leader is someone who is willing to come from any inner stance necessary to get the job done. A leader is someone who is willing to generate any and all actions to get to "B."

08 | *A PROBLEM vs. A DECISION TO MAKE*

A problem is composed of three parts:

1. A deviation from normal.
2. You don't know the cause of the deviation.
3. You choose to do something about it.

So when all three parts are present, you have a problem. However, many times people don't have a problem... they simply have a decision to make.

Let's use this example of a deviation from normal: your monthly income has fallen significantly. You know the cause of it. So you automatically know what it will take to remedy the situation. Therefore, you don't have a problem. You simply have a decision to make. What's your next bold action? Choose it!

The willingness and ability to consciously choose and act decisively is real power. It's a complete demonstration of integrity. Integrity is the linchpin that provides access to performance. There is nothing complicated about integrity. Integrity is a "created stance" that says "you will honor your word once given." The key to power is to say what it is that you are going to do, and then go do it.

Most people are paralyzed by both problems and having to make decisions. They believe that they are "dealing with" their problem, simply because they are talking about it and thinking about it. But their inner stance has not shifted, and no action has been taken, because there hasn't been a decision made to act.

Is there a magical cure to all this inertia? The magic is in consciously creating and living your inner stances through decisive action, and not thinking things to death.

Most organizations think they've addressed their problem when they pay for advice, agree with the advice, and then do nothing. But they've done nothing! And they've done nothing because the culture (disempowered inner stances of the people involved) remains unchanged. Advice giving is not what's required. What is required is reinventing a culture.

The same is true with an individual. The "culture" of an individual is the inner stance taken. You must alter the inner stance of the individual before he can change his behavior.

***If you deliberately plan on
being less than you are capable
of being, then I warn you
that you will be unhappy for
the rest of your life.***

—Abraham Maslow—

Having a meeting and bringing in a motivational speaker isn't the answer either. Motivation is a high-energy feeling that lasts for a short while and then is gone. Instead of utilizing merely a motivational speaker, make sure that you bring someone in who will provide usable tools, that will lead to effective action. Make certain that your people learn to be bolder and more innovative.

The solution is always daring decisions followed by daring action. The great Roman philosopher Seneca said, "*It's not because things are difficult that we do*

not dare; it's because we do not dare that things are difficult." When you have a problem, dare to make a bold decision and take decisive action now.

Always remember this four-step process for decisive action:

- 1. List out what you are interested in accomplishing.
- 2. List out what you are committed to accomplishing.

Put away the list that has your interests on it. I don't know if you've noticed this yet, but people don't do very much about what they are "interested in" doing. So why pretend? When any of the interests become commitments, then we can talk.

Now that you've set aside your "interested in accomplishing" list, focus on your "committed to accomplishing" list. We're going to divide that one in two:

- 3. List out what you are committed to accomplishing later.
- 4. List out what you are committed to accomplishing now.

Now set aside the "later" list. You can always address it at a future time, when the commitment shifts to something that is a "must do" for "now."

Focus on the "what I am committed to accomplishing now" list. Make a decision. Take the required action.

09 | WHAT I KNOW vs. WHAT I LIVE

One of the fastest ways to achieve desired results as a straight-line leader, is to see clearly, what moves me along that line from where I am, to where I intend to be. In other words, “**What are the necessary required actions?**”

Werner Erhard once said, “*Power doesn’t come from knowledge. What people know doesn’t make them powerful. It’s being present to what you’re dealing with that gives you power.*”

It’s never what I know. Yes, what I learn is important. I do want to be in a state of continuous learning about my profession, about personal achievement, about life, health, and anything else that will support me. But not just to accumulate knowledge, because knowledge will just sit there in the recesses of my mind. Most people don’t put what they know into action so it is of little value. What does me some good is what I live. **Of all the information I’ve acquired, what do I live? What do I implement?**

In straight-line coaching, we consider intelligent people as those who implement what they know. Even when they have not acquired a lot of information, they are much more valuable to themselves and others, than someone who absorbs tremendous amounts of information and rarely does anything with it. Unless your goal is to be a walking, talking human library, trying to entertain yourself with what you know (content with insight), it’s best to start implementing what you know. Life is much more satisfying that way.

When I meet with a coaching client, I often hear a lot about what he or she knows. “I know I should be getting out there and meeting people and making offers,” and “I know this business inside out, and I know the market and the geopolitical nuances of my territory.”

Our clients often know what they “should be” doing. They know their business. They know themselves. They know a lot. Many are already quite well-

known and successful. And our first objective is to separate that—separate what they know from what they live. They are two entirely different categories.

You may know that the more conversations you have with prospects, the faster you will get business. Even though you know that, I want to know to what degree you live it.

It becomes very useful and illuminating to work with clients on these two categories. You can actually separate them out, and put them on opposite sides of the white board, or whatever you are working with:

- 1. What you know
- 2. What you live

You might know that a more organized week, and a more deliberately created day, will have you be more effective. But do you live this way? There are great opportunities in sorting these two distinctions out. Related to this is the distinction between awareness and action. Awareness can be a catalyst to make something happen, or it can be a security blanket to wrap your “issues” up in, to protect and incubate them.

Awareness is only one small part of having your life work. We all know some highly educated and amazingly aware people, who are also very ineffective. They may be able to analyze, advise and sermonize, but they tend to stop there—to cuddle up with their reasons and understanding, rather than follow through on that knowledge, with the necessary required actions to get the result that they are after.

Remember that reasons only help you to sound reasonable, and that they have nothing to do with producing personal and professional accomplishment.

Newly acquired knowledge must be implemented in order to be of any real value. Without implementation knowledge becomes stagnant. And implementation only occurs through the individual’s behaviors and actions. Personal and business transformation requires not necessarily that you acquire new understandings, but that you change.

10 | **WANT TO vs. CHOOSE TO**

On the straight line to getting your desired outcomes in life, there can be no more focus on the feeling of wanting. You may think you are exhibiting power when you yell out, “I know this is going to happen!” but anything that is “going to happen” means now it isn’t.

In the action comedy *Knight and Day*, Tom Cruise plays a good fictional version of a straight-line leader. His co-star, Cameron Diaz, wistfully tells him at one point about something she hopes will happen someday, and he says, “*Someday. It’s a dangerous word. It’s really just code for never.*” He then shows her how to make it happen now.

Standing around wanting it to happen just burns up energy. It’s ultimately degrading. It makes you feel much worse no matter what it is that you are wanting, because it lowers your self-respect and, therefore, puts you at a further disadvantage when it comes time to go get it.

So wishing, hoping, desiring, wanting—all these things are a waste of time. They deepen the story that you don’t have something yet. You are unfulfilled. You feel incomplete. You don’t have what you need to be happy. Wanting soon turns into infantile hoping, and now you are in no position to be effective.

Ask someone what he wants to do and he can talk forever. You will hear a lot. Now ask him, when he is finished, what does he choose to do? Silence.

That’s because there is a huge difference between the two activities. One lives in endless feedback loops of mental fantasy. The other lives in the real world of action.

Whether the action happens or doesn’t happen, always depends on what you CHOOSE to do. It will never depend on what you want to do.

Many people are paralyzed by the option of choice. It feels too dramatic. Maybe they’ll make a wrong choice! They are terrified of making the wrong

choice. Should I put this big a fee in my proposal? Should I ask for that consideration? Should I fly to Brazil and close the sale? Should I become a consultant and leave my old company behind?

The worries win. They are given the power. They take control of the brain. They stop all action. At the end of the day nothing is chosen. Choosing is powerful. Choosing is so powerful that many times it doesn't even have to be the "right" choice.

That's how powerful the act of choosing is. It's the ultimate leverage when you use it.

***Give me a lever long enough
and I will move the world.***

—Archimedes—

Two companies offer you a position. You are torn. You don't know what the right choice would be. You talk to an endless number of people whose advice you trust, and they are not in agreement! You wait and anguish and worry some more. You think you really don't know what to do. Your life has become miserable. What you can't see is that it may not even matter which job you choose, as long as you are willing to choose and move forward. Either company would give you a great career boost. Just choose! Not better or worse —just different.

This fear of getting it wrong, keeps people stuck in their "want to" without ever going to the more powerful "choose to" option.

This is a result of confusion about where the power in life comes from. When you choose to live a life and have a professional career characterized by velocity and power, then you will allow yourself to see and experience the source of that power. It's your inner stance. And you are the one who creates it.

It's not out there in "good fortune" and circumstance; it's in you. Therefore, it rarely matters which course you choose, as long as you choose and act. Keep choosing. Stop worrying.

What, in the end, determines whether something was a good choice? You do. What you do after you choose, can turn almost anything into a good choice.

11

 | **CAN'T**
vs. **WON'T**

Confusing can't and won't can be extremely disempowering to say the least. It is a very painful confusion to live in.

Can't refers to what is not possible for you to do. Won't refers to something that you are capable of doing but just choose not to; you are not willing to exert the effort.

There are some things you think you can't do, even if someone put a shotgun to your head. But you might want to look again. If someone offered you five million dollars to do what you are hesitating about, your answer might now be "Heck, yes!" Now you know that one was a won't as opposed to a can't.

This is called being radically honest with yourself. Many times it doesn't feel good, but it is a way to dramatically increase your effectiveness in life.

Life gets difficult, painful, and frustrating when you don't keep can'ts and won'ts separate. This is because you've disconnected yourself from the power to choose, act, and achieve.

"I can't solve this thing" is very different from "I won't solve this thing." You can choose how to behave regardless of how you feel. When you feel uncomfortable doing something, it means you have the opportunity to grow. Growth does not occur in the land of comfort.

It all comes down to:

1. What comfort choices do I need to give up?
2. What growth choices do I need to take on?

Somewhere in the archives of the crudest instinct is recorded the truth that it is better to be endangered and free than captive and comfortable.

—Tom Robbins—

People don't get frustrated about what they're not capable of doing. People get frustrated over knowing what they are capable of doing, and are still choosing comfort over action. They choose comfort over commitment—the commitment to do what is required. When it comes strictly to money, your greatest expense will always be the gap between what you are capable of earning, and what you are really earning. This gap is always due to the inner stances you have adopted in which to live and operate. Some inner stances can be very expensive.

What would your life be like if you altered your relationship to the idea of discomfort? What if you looked at your list of the things you don't think you can do, and changed the can'ts into more honest and actionable won'ts?

We subconsciously believe that by labeling uncomfortable actions as impossible and things that we can't do, we give ourselves relief. We take ourselves off of the playing field. But in truth we are losing strength, inside, every time we retreat. Our inner stance weakens each time we surrender to comfort. Soon we've developed an inner stance of total incompetence and impotent passivity. It's the most frightening way to live. It's a life without the power of choice. To allow your power of choice to be overwhelmed in this way is insane.

The power that you refuse to use has to go somewhere. That power that you give up by thinking that you can't do what in reality is quite achievable. That same power that you could utilize to act decisively! Where does that power go? It goes to outside circumstances and other people. Soon you are living in fear of the latest economic news, whether people are supporting you, and who is gossiping behind your back.

The transfer of power grows. The most exaggerated form leaves formerly successful people now looking for handouts and pity. They have surrendered their power to such a degree that they wake up in fear, wondering if they are going to receive permission to live and be okay.

These are the consequences of telling yourself, you can't do the things that you really can do. Repetition becomes hypnotic. Pretending that you are not suffering consequences from your current behavior, doesn't make the consequences any less real.

Each time you flinch the game gets smaller. Obeying your fears keeps you from acting effectively. It's that simple. Soon you've created a history of inaction. The choice is clear and simple. Do what's required now or repeat history.



12 | **BEING TRUTHFUL ABOUT WHERE YOU ARE vs. LYING ABOUT IT**

I have found that most of the clients I have personally worked with are exceptionally bright. But when people keep ignoring what's present, it makes them stupid.

I coached a large healthcare organization once, with a number of doctors who were particularly prone to being untruthful with me, about where they were in regard to the actual production and profitability of the organization. They told me things were fine in their business other than a few bumps in the road maybe, nothing serious. When I finally walked into their boardroom for a surprise visit, I discovered the organization was in full crisis mode! They were not being truthful about where they were.

To get to where you want to go, you have to know the exact location that you are starting from. When you know your location, you can plot your course accurately from that location to your desired location. But you must be truthful. You can't be telling everyone who could help you that "Things are fine!" when they are not.

If someone thinks you're calling from San Diego and you're really calling from Chicago, then his directions to Sausalito are going to be of no use to you.

| **Where are you now in regard to performance expectations?**

If you are my client, my first duty is to get you back to reality, and relieve you of your disempowering stories. The truth is always more exciting to work with than some cover-up made of fiction. Once you see how workable reality always is, you also realize that there's nothing wrong with you, other than the fact that you have been scaring yourself to death.

Don't be afraid to find out exactly what happened, and the reasons behind what happened. Suffering does not come from the event. It comes from the meaning you attach to the event. Let's take a brutally honest look at events and see what we can create from there. It's not life's conditions, but the inner stances that you operate out of that shape your destiny.

13

PLEASING ***vs. SERVING***

Approval seeking is a toxic addiction. It is the one thing of which a person must be cured, if they are going to do anything worthwhile in life.

We waste time seeking to please people. We prioritize winning their approval over actually serving them. What would truly serve people is not the same thing as what would please them short-term.

We know of coaches and consultants whose whole motive is to please their clients, to try and make them a little more comfortable during a consulting session. But they never truly serve them or move them forward. They are having unreal conversations. And unreal conversations just create more unreality. It doesn't matter whether they are completely dishonest, or simply fantasy conversations (such as those that recommend positive thinking); the result is the same, and the consequences are expensive.

Straight-line coaches don't pump clients up and goad them into "dreaming big." Anything you proclaim is "going to happen" only means that right now it's not happening.

We begin serving our clients from the very first conversation. We don't try to flatter, please, or manipulate them into working with us. We don't want them to believe, that getting out of their circle and onto the straight line, is going to be a quick fix.

I always have certain questions I want to make sure I ask someone calling us, to see if they can use our coaching services. Questions often make people uncomfortable, and when they are effective questions (as these have proven to be), they demonstrate the power of truly transformative coaching, versus "chatting" and "therapy lite" and "pumping the client up."

My first question could be:

“What would make this conversation amazingly useful to you?”

This serves you, by waking you up to the potential of usefulness, in every conversation that you have. It also begins our dialogue, by empowering you to participate and challenge yourself, to come up with some real answers.

My next question might be:

“How do you want to use the rest of your life?”

(And I recommend that you, as the reader, answer these questions as you go. As I’ve said, they have been proven over time to have a dramatic impact on your inner stance.)

Notice in this question, I have not asked you what you hope “happens to you” for the rest of your life. Nor have I asked you to dream big and tell me what you want to “attract” into your world. My question serves up the rest of your life, as something you will either use or not use. Your life is raw opportunity, not something happening to you.

Next I might want to know:

“What if you could act decisively with or without fear?”

Most of us have bought into the supreme majesty of fear, as the all-powerful force in the human realm. After we learn to worship fear, we run our lives avoiding what we fear. When we fear something, we don’t even consider doing it. I want you to consider the possibility, that you have overrated fear in your life. And then consider the possibility, that you can develop the practice of taking whatever required action is necessary, regardless of the fear that might seem to want to intervene.

I then ask:

“What had you call me?”

Because we can beat around the bush forever, but you and only you know what you really want.

And once you’ve told me what that is, I will ask you:

“What’s missing?”

This is where I almost always get an answer based on some perceived knowledge deficit. “I don’t know how to...” do something. Or, “I don’t know what to do.” That’s when I ask you whether it’s really a “how to” that’s missing or a “choose to?”

Change is never a matter of ability. It is a matter of choice. We all know that *another diet isn’t going to work* is not true because all diets work. It’s people’s

inner stances that don't work. Change your inner stance and any diet will work. **Where are you choosing to come from?**

Now, if I coach you:

"Will you make it worthwhile for you?"

Will you make sure you get your money's worth? Notice what I am doing here. My own track record is solid, and people can talk to my references all day long. So I'm not going to waste time trying to impress you and win your approval, by telling you how good I am. I want to know the truth about the real unknown factor: you! Will you play to win?

Now I ask you:

"How do you need to be to make this happen?"

And notice I want you to look inside, not outside. I want to have our work be about inner stances, not just outer circumstances. In fact, we can't change outer circumstances by themselves. The change won't hold. We have to change the way you are being, and subconsciously you already know that, because I always get immediate, eager answers to this question. People know how they need to be to get the job done.

"What stops you?"

This may be the most interesting of all my questions put to you, because this gives me the stories that disempower you. It reveals your perceptions about life and other people, and your own power to change. This question uncovers your underlying, disempowering beliefs.

Now you'll be surprised when I ask:

"What's the decision that you have made that has you go there?"

Decision? What decision? I can't help going there given the circumstances. Really? Think again. Look again.

I'll help you see it, and then I'll ask:

"What would life be like if you responded differently?"

This returns you to your power. Or at least the possibility of having power—a possibility you may not have ever seen.

Now we really get to work, because I'm going to ask four subquestions that will give us the reality we have to work with:

1. What's working?
2. What's not working?
3. What's missing?
4. What's next?

These are extremely effective straight-line intervention tools, that you can use with yourself alone, or inside any meeting you're having with your team, especially when you're stuck. These questions unstick the stuck. And we can take a significant amount of time exploring the answers.

***Moral courage is the
most valuable and usually
the most absent
characteristic in men.***

—General George Patton—

And now, we are nearing the end of our four subquestions together, so I want to check in with you with these questions, **"Is this useful? In what way? Is this too much information?"**

After you've reassured me, and given me your honest feedback on what we've discovered so far, I'll ask you, **"How do you want this to go?"** You will then tell me what you ultimately want to achieve and I'll ask, **"What experience do you want by achieving this?"**

Notice that I'm not just accepting your goal at face value as an obviously desirable goal. I want to know why you want the experience of achieving that goal, so I also ask, **"What purpose would that serve?"**

Now once we have the desired result on the table, and the reason behind the goal, the purpose behind the project, I ask a question that often surprises people, **"Are you open to it?"** I can only be committed to what you are committed to. So when you lack commitment then there is nothing to coach. "Why would I not be open to it?" Well, somehow you haven't been open to it in the past or you would have had it by now. You wouldn't just be talking about it. So something in you has been CLOSED to what it would take—who you would have to be—your inner stance. Are you open to it now? If I support and guide you, are you open to leaving the violent circle, and actually doing the necessary required actions? It's important to know so and say so. That's what we call a commitment.

These questions do not have to come in any rigid linear sequence. Everyone is different. We simply deal with what's there in front of us. Sometimes throughout our conversation, after I've answered a question of yours I'll ask you, "What makes you ask the question?" I enjoy finding hidden motivators and developing them. I also will want to challenge generalities that people try to put forth, such as, "I'm not good at confrontation" by asking, "Can you give me an example of that?"

And here's an effective question when things get bogged down in endless stories and excuses, **"WHAT DO YOU FEEL THE REAL ISSUE IS?"**

People often tell me they have a hard time making decisions. So I like to ask, **"What do you get by not being able to decide?"** This is a powerful opening for the understanding of hidden motives.

We were coaching a top executive I will call Harry, who could not decide whether to franchise his operation, and watch it expand across the whole country, as his partner wanted to do, or stay small and strong as an expensive boutique consultancy. He kept telling me he couldn't decide what to do. And when I asked him what he "got out of" not deciding, he was surprised. He didn't see that he had a habit of almost never deciding anything, so that he would never make a "bad decision." He was placing "pleasing" everyone ahead of serving anyone, and was therefore trapped in his own survival system. Playing it safe by pretending to be indecisive, is like building a bomb shelter and then locking yourself in.

I asked Harry one of my favorite questions:

“What are you waiting for to go away before you act?”

People believe that if they don’t act and if they wait long enough, difficult problems might just go away. But experience says otherwise. And it helps to call myself out when I catch myself doing that. It helped Harry, too, because he could now see that not acting and not deciding, was also an act and a decision, and a bad one at that.

People’s negative beliefs also get in the way of action. They fear what others might think. They say, “My partner wouldn’t be pleased if I did that” or “My customers will leave me if we raise our fees.”

So I ask:

“What is occurring that tells you that?”

Because I want to always be certain we are working with reality and not someone’s fearful belief system.

Why base your life on avoiding fear and feeling safe?

And this question will often stop someone cold. I’ll have nothing but silence for a while.

Sometimes even tears:

“When did you stop growing? When did you give up?”

Part of giving up comes from the misguided mission of pleasing people, and winning their approval. That’s such a waste, because you never achieve anything that you can count on. The next morning, after all you’ve done to win someone over, you have no idea who they will decide to be with you. So why bother?

Instead of merely pleasing others (which comes through all kinds of false flattery, and other demonstrations of soul-destroying insincerity), why don’t we focus on serving?



14 | **A CREATED WORLD vs. A REPORTED-ON WORLD**

The straight-line coach helps his client to determine, the specific measurable result that the client wants. Once the result is identified, behaviors and actions are created that bring the result into reality.

The Carthaginian general Hannibal, often regarded as the greatest military tactician and strategist in history, once marched an army that included war elephants from Iberia, over the Pyrenees and the Alps, into northern Italy. His motto was pure and straight, *“We will either find a way or make one.”* In a sense, Hannibal created the world he lived in. He did not allow circumstance to create his world.

Many people today, especially in the world of sales, venture into the marketplace to make a sale, and then come back and report on their result. They report that the client has no money, or that the economy is not good, or that the circumstances have changed, and on and on. You see the pattern, and it leads to very few sales. And that’s the result of living in a reported-on world. Another sales person returns to the main office and records a sale he made. He ran into the same circumstances. One client had no budget until the new fiscal year, but this sales person created a way to do business, that deferred payments and produced a contract anyway. That is called a created world. As a straight-line leader navigates between point A and point B, he will create the world he needs to get there.

We have worked with a number of business owners and team leaders who have ongoing complaints, about the productivity of their people, the short-fall in goal achievement, and the ongoing hassles they face in replacing people who have quit.

They report to us on how hard it is to find a good person for their team, and how doubly hard it is when someone unexpectedly quits, and they have to not only hire someone new, but train them as well.

In the meantime that position is unproductive. This is the consequence of living in a reported-on world. Living in a created world has you create the team you want, proactively and deliberately, using the motto of the great business leader Jack Welch, *“Change before you have to.”*

We had a client named Philip who was always wringing his hands about his difficult hiring challenges, especially when it came to his team of twelve sales people.

“It’s hard to get good people,” he said. *“And when someone quits, we have to go into full panic mode to replace them. It takes time that I don’t have, to interview people and try to choose the right person. Then during the training period they’re not productive at all. No wonder I don’t hit my monthly sales goals.”*

We listened to many of Phil’s reports about the situations he faced, and realized right away that he lived in a reported-on world, with all power granted to circumstances and the continuously unexpected turns of events.

After a few coaching encounters, it became clear to Phil that if he wanted life to be different, he would have to come from a different place. He’d have to alter his inner stance from continuous reaction to continuous creation.

“How do I do that?” he asked.

“What kind of sales team do you want?” we asked him.

“What kind of people do you want on your team?”

“Oh, we’re fine for now,” he said. *“The new person I hired two months ago to replace Alexis is starting to produce. It’s a real relief not having to worry about hiring for a while.”*

Phil couldn’t see that his approach was profoundly ineffective. He was making a classic mistake, made famous in Michael Gerber’s *E Myth* books, of working in his business instead of working on his business. He was showing up every day and reacting to whatever the current crisis was. His whole sales team was formed by a series of emergency measures, driven by panic and loss. When he lost someone, he went into crisis mode and frantically started interviewing. It was a backward, reported-on world, and it would never get him the result he said he wanted, and he would always be faced with disappointing numbers.

We helped him switch his inner stance to creating.

“What kind of team do you want to create?” we asked him.

And even after he tried to tell us that hiring was not a current problem, we pressed on, letting him know that straight-line leadership was not about bouncing from problem to problem, trying to survive.

Phil was finally able to describe the best possible sales team he could envision, and he based it on his two current superstars, Patti and Stewart.

“But they’re rare,” he said. “I got lucky with Patti and Stewart. That kind of person doesn’t come along every day.”

“Unless you are willing to create that they do,” we said.

“What do you mean?”

“What if, instead of believing that you have to survive having a sales team with a wide spectrum of players, from bad to mediocre to superstar, you made a commitment to create a team of superstars?”

“Like the all-star team in baseball,” he said.

“Yes, exactly. What if instead of anomalies, Patti and Stewart were your minimum standard for working here in sales?”

“I’d have to spend a lot of time recruiting and interviewing,” said Phil.

“You would.”

“I don’t know if my calendar could handle that,” he said. “I’m incredibly busy every day.”

“What’s the most important part of this business?” we asked. “What most determines how well you do each month?”

Phil had to think for a while. Then he came to the inescapable conclusion, that his sales team was the most important factor in month-to-month business success.

“Okay, we agree,” we said. “So let’s look at your day planner and see if you are allotting your time accordingly. If the productivity of that sales team is the most important factor in your business success, your allotment of time should reflect that. Wouldn’t you agree?”

Phil sheepishly took out his day planner and looked at it. *“How many hours were spent recruiting and interviewing to find your next superstar?” we asked.*

“No time,” he said, “because the team is full.”

“The team is full,” we agreed, “but the all-star team is not full. And when you’re willing to make a commitment to creating a team of all-stars, then you would be devoting time to it every day. Serious time. Would you not?”

“Yes, you’re right, I would,” he said. “In fact I will. I can see it. If I got out ahead of this thing, someone leaving the team would never be a crisis, because I’d always have my next person ready to come on board.”

“You’d be interviewing all the time.”

“I can see it.”

“Not out of need or crisis, but out of your own commitment to create the team you want to have.”

“Why didn’t I think of this?”

“You weren’t coming from the right place to think of this. This never would have occurred to you, coming from your stance of crisis management.”

***He who has a why to live can
bear almost any how.***

—Friedrich Nietzsche—

In the next few months, Phil began to create the team he really wanted. He could see that Patti and Stewart weren't just lucky anomalies, but the very prototypes of minimum acceptable salespeople in his created world. You can keep reporting on what's happening out there in your world. Or you can create the world you want to live in.

15 | *A DREAM vs. A PROJECT*

Circle people want to pursue dreams. For straight-line leaders, dreams are unstable. They are either to be discarded or converted immediately into a project. There's nothing wrong with any dream you have; but to live an effective life, the dream has to get converted from your head (thinking about it), to a project that you can get your hands on and do something about.

A project takes you out of the infantile dream world of hope and change. It moves you away from the disempowering world of I want. It delivers you to a more vital world of I am accountable.

And accountable has no sense of blame. It means, count on me.

We live in a world of dabblers who are content with simply knowing, dreaming, and thinking about something. But wishful dabbling will never get you results and will certainly never allow for fulfillment in life.

As Dr. Brad Blanton, the author of *Radical Honesty* says, "*Wishing is a way to remove one's self from what's going on now. Hope is how most people avoid growing up.*"

The beautiful thing about converting your dream into a project, is that true project work won't ever burn you out. As you move on your straight line from A to B, the movement energizes you.

There are some people who live in a dream world, and there are some who face reality; and then there are those who turn one into the other.

– Douglas Everett –

Burnout only occurs from trying to use your mental dream state to solve the same problems over and over again. You operate from the same undistinguished inner stances, that are producing the same unworkable behaviors and actions, that are producing the same unworkable results. To stay stuck in the dream with no action, is to miss the boat on a productive, fulfilled life. Well, actually, it's worse than missing the boat. It's more like missing the water, too.

The Chinese have a saying that if you don't watch where it is that you are going in life, you will end up where you are heading. Steve Zaffron and Dave Logan refer to this as the "default future" in their best-selling book *The Three Laws of Performance*. Default futures can be desired or undesired. Undesired default futures can be disrupted, by you becoming aware of the positions that you are operating from in life (your inner stances) that are producing unwanted behaviors. Once you have that awareness you can move to choosing. Now you are choosing to drop those unworkable positions, and choosing to operate from more workable positions. So look at where you are headed in life. Ask yourself, **"What will happen if nothing changes?"** Once you can see what will happen, you've identified your default future.

Motivational talks will not replace the default future that you are headed for. They will often keep you in the dream and out of the project. Getting started on your project is your solution. Is that such a hard thing to do? You just think it's hard. It's actually simple. It's been my experience that people who think that easy is hard, remain in some kind of financial trouble their whole lives.

Straight-line individuals know that the only time you can ever change from a dream to a project is now. As Lindsay Brady asks in his book, *As the Pendulum Swings*, “Which now are you going to change in?”

And the good news here is that it is always now. And the only time to change is now.

What are you thinking right now? The five most damaging words you could be thinking right now are: “IT CAN'T BE THIS SIMPLE.”

But it is that simple. And simplicity gives you strength. What are you waiting for? Do you need to find more reasons to take action on your project? Reasons will only help you to justify your actions. They have absolutely nothing to do with creating the life you choose.

Change only happens from the choices you make, once you've experienced where you are at, and how you are operating. This book may produce a number of very exciting awarenesses for you, but your choices after you experience the awarenesses are what will change your life.

And as you become more and more aware, you'll see that real awareness occurs as a result of confronting where you are, and how you actually operate in life. When you refuse to see the inner stance you are taking, there is nothing to choose.

The stances that you operate out of are chosen. But remember, most people don't realize that. They think their stance is “just the way I am!”

But thinking that the way you operate is the way you are, is exactly what keeps you stuck. It's also what keeps your problems in place, and looking more complex and daunting every day.

Complexity is a problem in a universe designed to be simple.

And, as L. Ron Hubbard said, “Complexity occurs in direct ratio to non-confront.”

If things are becoming too complex to manage, all you need to find out is what you do not want to face or deal with.

To stay stuck in a “that’s just the way I am” stance, is to give exaggerated importance to patterns you think you are seeing. Your very personality is, itself, a pattern of made-up stories about itself. All productive change comes from breaking such unproductive patterns. You can get caught up in those patterns, by defending the unworkable positions out of which you were functioning.

In the end, it’s not about finding a pattern or a story to believe in. In the end, it’s about doing what’s required. It’s about observing how you actually operate, and when that’s not workable, choosing a stance that does work for you.

It’s been said that your life, when it’s over, will either be a warning or an example. So ask yourself, **“Will my life be a warning to others? Or, will it be a powerful example of what’s possible for a human being to do?”**

Will you stay inside the dream circle, slowly spinning forever, or will you get on the straight line to where you could be?

What will shift you in life from the warning category to the example category, is awareness and choice. Avoidance of that awareness is nothing short of self-sabotage.

16

 | **WORRY vs.
CONCERN**

Worry is passive and concern is active. People who think it's a good idea to worry are basically confused. Worry sends you in circles. Concern can straighten you out.

You may think you are a good person because you worry. You think you are a responsible parent when you worry about your kids—but you're just confusing yourself and rendering yourself ineffective.

Worry delays appropriate actions. It scrambles your brain when you need your brain to be at its best. A focused, relaxed mind solves problems much faster than a worried mind. Countless studies of students taking exams proves this to be true. Relaxed and confident students always performed better than the worried, stressed-out students, even when their knowledge base was equal.

When you shift from worry to concern you can, 1) acknowledge the situation and 2) focus on the actions that will improve it. By not worrying, you have a lot more energy to get off your butt, and stay off your butt.

Concern is a more mature approach to life. Concern has dignity and creativity in it. You can act much more effectively from concern.

Worry produces mental paralysis. Worry is stagnant.

How is your worrying about your money helping your finances?

Concern leads to action.

Worry leads to dysfunction.

Worry is a practice. It is not a natural outcropping of love. It is a bad habit. Anything you practice long enough becomes a habit. It starts to feel natural.

Upgrade worry to concern so that effective new action is possible. From a state of concern you can now create appropriate action. Creating is the answer to just about any problem.

You can only go so far in first gear, and that's where worry lives. Success is not about sitting on the couch, eating chips, and watching other people live. Either you will make your life work, or it will not work.

When you shift from a passive, worried person to an active, concerned person you'll experience concern as being more adult. Concerned individuals make more effective choices than worried individuals. You can act quite powerfully from concern. With worry you just sit there.

Are you worried about your mother? How is your worrying helping your mother?

Worry shuts you down and renders you ineffective. It's certainly not genuine. It's certainly not compassionate.

Waiting for things to go away is living life as a victim. Give me one sane reason why you should stay at "waiting" or "worry" or "victim?" This is not about trying to deny an unfortunate reality. It's about addressing an unworkable position that is putting you at a serious disadvantage.

Concerned action is a created, committed place to come from. No matter what you think. No matter what you fear. No matter the noise in your head. What if you are aware of the noise in your head and act anyway? **Are you living at the level of choice or circumstance?** You can always change as long as you are aware of where you are living.

With a straight-line approach, we train people to see how deliberately creating positions to come from, is what makes your life work. In other words, we train people to solve their own problems.

The purpose of straight-line coaching, is to get participants to see that there is a choice, and a more effective way to operate in life, and that they can choose it. Playing wait and see for the rest of your life won't work. Waiting for a big Aha! won't work either. You have to choose. And only by choosing will you be able to live deliberately.

17

 | ***SHOULD***
S vs. MUST

People almost never do what they think that they should do. But they always do what they feel that they must do.

Everything that you think you should be destroys your freedom to be. The same goes for what others think you should do. So, forget what other people think you should do. Create your own life by creating your own commitments. Then turn these commitments into powerful inner stances. These are now your own must do's, instead of the shoulds that other people put on you. They'll also replace the shoulds that you've put on yourself.

A should do is a very weak inner stance. You can tell that by the results this type of inner stance produces. And remember that inner stances are not good or bad, but they do produce consequences. Some of those consequences are extremely desirable. And some are extremely undesirable.

A person barely getting by in life financially, and a self-made multimillionaire, are almost certainly functioning out of different inner stances, that are producing different outcomes.

Whatever you create significance for will affect your life one way or another. If you believe that what everyone says you should do has the most significance in your life, that position will change your life. Will it be changed for the better? You'll know the answer. You'll see the results.

When you create your own musts (commitments) and throw the shoulds away, you finally own your life. And if you don't step in and own your own life, who will?

Give up the story that it's hard. It's just the nature of the game that you are playing.

Remember that the inner stances that you are living from, will affect your life and your results in life, whether you are aware of them or not.

Most of your problems arise out of having been ineffective. And that lack of effectiveness, often comes from trying to do what other people think that you should do. Trying to always live up to other people's expectations will kill your spirit. And a person whose spirit is dead will encounter nothing but problems. And the longer you believe you should be solving those problems, the less you will approach them. Everything changes when you see that those problems must be solved. Feel the difference? Your energy goes way up. You are filled with new strength and resolve. The most effective way to solve those problems, is to strengthen your resolve to grow and do what must be done. Choosing the powerful positions from which you need to operate, and the necessary required actions, are now critical. Your life will be the result of your choices.

“Just Do It” is a great sounding slogan. But so few people go out and “just do it” even when they know exactly what to do.

What people don't know that they don't know, is that functioning from a disempowered inner stance does not allow you to just do it. Disempowered inner stances determine how you perceive yourself, and how the world occurs to you. Your stance determines what you can see as possible. And what you can see will always limit (or inspire) your actions and behaviors.

Failure to commit is the high cost of low living.

—James R. Baker—

Only by becoming aware of the disempowered inner stance from which you are functioning, will you have the choice to shift to an empowering stance. And, it is that stance itself, that will allow for the necessary required actions to “just do it.”

No one is special. It's just that some people are willing to exercise the courage to begin and persist, until they get the result that they are after. You are rewarded in life for taking effective action—not thinking, trying, or even the appearance of “giving it your best shot.” Ask yourself this question: **“Is avoidance my highest priority in life?”** Or does it just look that way as you review your past week? Procrastinating on basic responsibilities, is a covert attempt to make everybody you can your “mommy” figure in life. It's back into the crib. Provide for me! It's a refusal to evolve and grow up. You mature into your real power by the practice of not needing mommy and becoming an adult.

Thinking that you should start doing something different won't help you. Neither is it about understanding past influences and past patterns. Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself. And that happens when you're willing to operate from a must-do list every day.

There is a huge difference between understanding something and learning something. Essentially, the distinction “understanding,” implies that you can speak about something that you have observed or studied.

However, in straight-line coaching we utilize the distinction “learning,” as being something entirely different. When people actually learn something, they can then apply, implement, or get a result with what they have been exposed to. In other words they can use what they've learned.

Straight-line coach Terry Gibson from Northern California, works with companies to increase their bottom-line productivity, by addressing the fitness and stamina levels of their employees. It's a proven fact that healthy people produce more than unhealthy people, and they are more effective on the job. Challenges involving fitness and employee stamina, commonly revolve around the habits of smoking and overeating.

Gibson gets amazing results with weight loss and smoking issues, by introducing the employees to the above distinctions. The people Terry coaches really get that merely understanding why they smoke or overeat, doesn't do much to stop the destructive behaviors. Most people know a chain smoker or two, who definitely understands that smoking is bad for them, but that's about as far as it goes. One of Gibson's methods is to work with individuals until they can own and apply the distinction “must.” When people can actually see that their behaviors in the past, involved coming from what they should do, as opposed to making fitness and health a must, they will drop their smoking and overeating habits immediately and move on with their lives.

18 | ***“I’M RESPONSIBLE” vs. “IT’S THEIR FAULT”***

“Why do I have to be responsible when it really is their fault? That’s not fair. Especially if I never did anything wrong.”

Here’s a hot, politically incorrect tip if you can take it: saying “that’s not fair” makes you sound stupid and naïve. It also makes you sound like a whiner, which is even worse. People will not respect you.

***There are many ways to
victimize people. One way
is to convince them that
they are victims.***

—Karen Huang—

Really strong straight-line leaders are even effective at leading people who might not like their style. Because those people still respect them. They respect the leader for being responsible to be and do what’s required... even when they don’t approve of how it’s done.

People who worry about being liked and being approved of, will never be straight-line leaders. They will never be effective.

So being responsible and being at fault are two different things.

I once knew a man who had a partner with a hidden gambling problem. One day he found out that his company was millions of dollars in debt! He had thought that it was quite stable and growing.

We spoke. He didn’t like what he heard. But being an adult instead of being a child, he knew exactly what he had to do. He had to be responsible for the problem! That would be the only way he could effectively change the situation.

No, it was not his fault. Nor was he to blame for the gambling and theft. He himself never gambled in his life. And maybe it wasn’t fair. But who cared? He knew he would either be responsible for the mess, or remain a victim of it. And by coming from the inner stance of victim (which is weakness itself) he would never survive.

Three years later he was a multimillionaire again.

It really is simple. When it’s their fault you can’t do anything about the situation. But when you come from the stance that says, “I’m responsible,” you can cause what you intend from there. You want to have the power to deal with what’s in your life.

Remember, too, that you don’t have to like it. You just have to do it.

19 | **GROWTH CHOICES vs. SAFE CHOICES**

There is no standing still in life.
There is only growing or contracting.

Think about exercise. Can you exercise once and for all? It simply would not work. You could lock yourself in a gym for a year and create the perfect body. But if you stopped working out, it wouldn't be long, before you started to develop that spare tire around your waist, that you worked so hard to get rid of. A body needs a certain amount of stress and challenge in order to stay fit and thrive. So does your life!

So when faced with a choice between two options, don't forget to ask yourself, "Which option would be most likely to grow me? Which option is most likely to just keep me safe?"

A growth choice will empower you no matter what the outcome.

***It seems to be a law of nature,
inflexible and inexorable,
that those who will not risk
cannot win.***

—John Paul Jones—

We worked with a top-line business consultant named Rita, who never asked her clients for what she really wanted. After an exploratory meeting, she would always send back a small proposal with a small fee attached to it. She felt that she was operating at about fifteen percent of the revenue productivity that she could be generating, but she always played it safe.

“What if you came from a different place entirely?” we asked. “What if you consciously made growth choices throughout your business week, especially with clients and prospects?”

Rita was worried about what that might do to her relationship with her clients.

“What if they say no?” she said. “What if they no longer want to work with me?”

“They will respect you more,” we suggested, “if you are always bold and growing.”

“I don’t know if I can trust that.”

“You don’t have to trust it to do it. Trying to learn to trust it is just adding another mental exercise into the mix. It’s not necessary.”

“It doesn’t feel safe.”

“It’s not safe, but we’re asking you to consider a stance that does not value or seek safety.”

Rita began risking. She proposed bigger projects with bigger fees attached to them. Every time she entered a negotiation or wrote a proposal she asked, *“What if I ask for more?”*

Sometimes her clients balked and said no. But many times they admired her strength and bold offerings and said yes. She was startled.

And even when they said no, she didn’t lose the relationship. In fact, they ended up apologizing to her, for not having the budget to accept the bigger offerings.

“Why didn’t I do this from the start?” she said. “I can’t even begin to add up all the money I could have made in the past two years.”

We explained that her inner stance of safety first, had prevented her from seeing what was really possible, and that shifting to a growth stance would make a huge difference in resolving the matter.

20 | ***CONTENT WITH INSIGHT vs. ONLY RESULTS COUNT***

If you are going to be successful in life, the first thing you will have to do with all of the great information you learn, is to get it out of your head and into the physical world. Receiving an insight is just a mental thing a person does. He hears a good idea, he is excited about it for a while, but he doesn't really alter his behavior so he never gets a result.

A lot of people, very excited, go to a lot of success-type programs but they don't apply anything.

It's extremely wise to ask yourself, **"What am I really going to do with all of this great information that I am accumulating? Am I going to utilize it to get the results that I am after in life? Or am I just content with knowing about it?"**

Some of the straight-line coaches I have trained, have done a lot of work with healthcare providers over the years. Regardless of whether the healthcare provider is a dentist, plastic surgeon, chiropractor, or internist, their ongoing concern is the same when it comes to newly acquired knowledge: **"How do we actually put what we know to use to expand our practices?"**

As strange as it may seem, many practitioners in the healthcare arena have spent small fortunes at practice building seminars, or with various consultants and marketing experts, with only big credit card balances to show for it.

To bankrupt a fool, give him information.

—Nassim Nicholas Taleb—

With straight-line coaching, most practitioners realize in very short order, that the source of productivity and profitability, lies within the personal operating systems of the doctors themselves—again, their inner stances. No matter how brilliant they are, and no matter how good their newly acquired information and strategies, nothing gets better until the inner stance is confronted and altered. Nothing ever changes.

To get out of the circle of insight—all those new insights you got at the latest seminar—you want to perform an almost physical leap. When an insight occurs you have taken in information. The leap is created by taking appropriate action with the information that you have absorbed. This is what will move your life forward.

When you find yourself in a vicious circle, you might just be stuck on the track of spending your life being happy to accumulate insights. You might end up, at the end of your life, being the most well-informed person in the nursing home, but you won't accomplish much.

21 | **OPTIMISTIC DENIAL vs. THE VALLEY OF DEATH**

In Alfred, Lord Tennyson's great poem, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, the poet wrote of the six hundred brave, doomed military men who rode that day into the Valley of Death.

Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

The need to appear consistent is one of the most powerful forces in human nature. People don't like to be seen as flip-floppers. But as much as we hate to admit it, every once in a while we make a totally unworkable decision, and get bogged down in a no-win situation. It has been called the valley of death. If you find yourself in such a valley, with no way out, it's time to cut your losses and move on. Trying to pretend that what you did isn't what you did will only keep you stuck. You need to face up to the fact, that such a decision can become like a black hole, that devours your time, energy, and money. Living in optimistic denial is no more effective than beating yourself up. Sometimes I will get a client who is in persistent denial of a defeated position, and yet he keeps selling himself an optimistic interpretation of his situation. Even though he is stuck down in the valley, he speaks as if he is on the mountaintop. I sometimes ask, **"How has telling 'realistic' stories kept you from the life you desire?"** Really seeing that you are in the valley can be liberating. It gives you a chance to start life over and not look back.

What I love the most about the past is that it's over.

—Byron Katie—

Dwelling on past mistakes, injustices, or regrets is a useless indulgence. The past simply doesn't exist. You re-create it only by choosing to think about it in the present moment, with freshly chosen images and feelings. The past is only real when you think about it. Otherwise, it's over.

In a recent session, a client said, "*But isn't my past behavior the most reliable predictor of future performance?*" Absolutely not!

Your past behavior is nothing more than an irrelevant story that you choose to tell and retell. The best predictor of future performance is the position that you are coming from right now. And that is yours to freely choose.

22 | *PRODUCTIVITY* vs. *BUSYNESS*

Excessive busyness is a form of show business. It has no place in the real world of straight-line effectiveness. This need to put on a show—for yourself and those around you—of excessive busyness comes from not taking productive actions in the first place.

If you were actually performing productive actions, you would have to have a lot of free time. Because that's what productive actions do. They create free time by doing what matters.

Productive actions are the necessary required actions that are vital to a successful outcome. The more successful your outcomes are the less the need to appear busy.

However! When you take the easy way out and don't do what's required in the first place, it goes without saying that you are going to get further and further behind. Therefore, you come up with the greatest show on earth: excessive, dramatic, stressful busyness. It's the easiest way to go, because it looks to the outside world like the hardest.

You are actually attempting to replace required actions with busybody activities, that are less confrontive and easier. But it simply won't get the job done. When you get far behind because what was required was not done, you often try to make up for it by a flurry of foolish activities, that never end up amounting to anything. Have you noticed that?

Straight-line leadership is all about leading yourself and others out of the woods of busyness.

We begin with a series of questions:

“Is what you are doing in the next hour highly productive for you?

Is it your next necessary required action? Or are you just keeping busy?”

***Slow down and remember this:
Most things make no difference.
Being busy is a form of mental
laziness—lazy thinking and
indiscriminate action.***

—Timothy Ferriss—

Busy people fill their days with unreal conversations—conversations about things that they know will never be made to happen. Unreal conversations are expensive. People will waste precious time—time that could have been used productively—asking questions about things that they have no intention of doing. The reason people don't do "what's required" is because they really don't want to. Otherwise they would be doing it instead of talking about it.

The straight-line question you can use to snap yourself out of being unproductive is this one: **"What's the most powerful action that I can take right now?"** (It's always an action that you aren't willing to take, that stops you from your desired result.) And once you've identified the next powerful action to take, don't let what you don't know or don't feel stop you. You may not know exactly how to do something. Just get busy doing it. You'll find out how to do it by what fails and what doesn't. You may not feel the right feelings, like being psyched to do it, but do it anyway. There will be plenty of time for good feelings later.

Many people try to infuse their unproductive busyness with positive talk and positive thinking. This is what we've identified as optimistic denial. You

are denying reality and hiding behind false optimism. And even though it has a positive tone to it, it's no more effective than ignoring the undesired situation entirely. Positive thinking ends up in frustration.

Why would you have to engage in positive thinking if things were great? Why not just think honestly, so when there is a problem you can acknowledge it and do something about it?

Unproductively busy people sometimes identify truly productive actions to be taken, but they put them off until tomorrow. But then tomorrow becomes never.

Busy people run out of time for what's important. But lack of time is not the true issue. The issue is a lack of priority setting.

Effectiveness =	doing only the necessary required actions well, that will get your goal achieved. Efficiency is doing things well no matter what they are.
Productivity =	doing what's in front of you that will lead to the attainment of your desired outcome.
Busyness =	activity driven out of desperation, because you didn't handle what was in front of you, and don't want to appear as if you have quit trying.

Check in with yourself throughout the day:

Are you just inventing things to do to avoid necessary required actions?

If you remain focused it won't matter if you encounter turbulence. When you stay focused, do what's required, and don't allow yourself to get distracted; you'll always get there.

23 | COMMITMENT vs. TRYING

Many people spend their hours and days trying to get things done. They are trying to accomplish various tasks, goals, etc. They are even trying to have a good, prosperous life. But they are just trying.

Trying is a victim concept. Notice how you feel when someone tells you that they are trying.

You might ask, “Will you pay my loan back by next month?” and they say, “I’ll try.” Are you now counting on getting the money? No. Because “I’ll try” is code for, “Don’t count on it.”

There is another, opposite choice that straight-line individuals learn to make. It’s called a commitment. A commitment, unlike trying, does mean “count on it.”

A commitment is a particular type of declaration. It’s a declaration you use to move yourself forward, just like moving a chess piece across the board. It physically moves you.

A commitment is a move that announces to the world, what it is that you will accomplish. A commitment means that you will alter yourself and your actions, to match what is required to get the intended result that you are after. Commitment is the means by which you measure your intention and focus your will. And so action begins when you make the declaration, “I am committed to....”

| What you have been committed to up to now, is revealed by what you have produced or have failed to produce.

Why you don’t have what you say you want, is almost always due to your having not yet committed yourself. Instead of choosing to commit, we attach our intention to looking good, being right, and playing it safe.

A commitment is not a natural product of any special kind of mind. It does not naturally flow from any sort of personality. It is always a creation. A real commitment is a powerful declaration that functions to alter behavior.

We are living in a new world now. The investment bubbles and unlimited credit lines of the past are gone, perhaps (if we are lucky) forever. We are back to our own performance as the main driver of our success. In this new world, performance is what matters.

If performance is the capacity to generate results, then commitment is a promise to do what's required, to get those results you are after. It is the fuel that runs the engine.

Many people fail to see the distinction between doing everything you know of, and doing what's required. They are as different as night and day. Doing everything you know to do, is severely limited by whatever you know to do, at any given time. People fail to get their result, because all they did was everything they knew to do. Then they quit.

But doing what's required, by definition, is doing what gets the result. Doing whatever gets the result. And not knowing what that is, is not an impediment. It's not a reason to quit. It's a reason to keep going until you find, through experiment and/or inquiry, what the necessary required action is.

People don't make commitments, because they think it would be a drain or a burden. The opposite is true. Failing to make a commitment will dissipate your energies rather than focusing them. Commitment isn't about how much time you spend doing things—it's a line you cross within yourself. You might describe that line as being, "I'm doing this regardless of what it takes."

Commitment occurs the moment you slam shut and lock all of your back doors. It begins the moment you devote your entire being, to whatever it is that you have committed to.

If you are ninety percent committed, then you are not really committed, because the remaining ten percent serves as a breeding ground for excuses and for non-performance. That's the all-or-nothing nature of commitment.

Living is easy with eyes closed, misunderstanding all you see.

—John Lennon—

Straight-line coaches have major eye-opening sessions with their clients at the outset, because they confront the distinction of “commitment” right away. Where in your life are you committed and where are you just trying... just going through the motions? Let’s confront this. Are you really committed to doing something about the items in those areas of your life? When the answer is yes, it’s now time to define the necessary required actions to be engaged, and the timelines for completion. Without those, a commitment dies on the vine.

Take inventory:

1. Where have you been going through the motions?
(List them out.)
2. Are you really committed to each and every item on the list?
Yes/No.
3. If you are not committed to an item, clean it up. If yes, go to #4.
4. List the necessary required actions for each item.
5. Create a timeline for the completion of each item.

What new commitments do you need to create to get the future you choose?
What results will you produce as a measure of your commitment?

And when your days take you into overwhelm, remember this: it’s not time management that has you confused; it’s commitment management. Because when we aren’t clear about what we are committed to, we tend to get over-involved, and this is what produces what we call “the mess” of not having enough time. Remember: involvement and commitment are not the

same thing. There may be many things you are involved with but are not committed to. Keep the difference clear. Because a lack of clearly-defined commitments, opens the door to you saying “yes” way too much and “no” not nearly enough.

Once you’ve made your commitments, and made them as strong declarations, stay clear on what they are. A human can carry from five to seven authentic commitments at any given time. And your success in keeping them, relies on your practice of keeping them straight, and not confusing your true commitments with things you are merely involved with.

When I am unclear about my commitment, I procrastinate.

When I am clear about my commitment, I act.

When I am unclear about my commitment, I talk about my job.

When I am clear about my commitment, I do my job.

When I am unclear about my commitment, I maintain my image.

When I am clear about my commitment, I maintain my integrity.

When I am unclear about my commitment, I play it safe.

When I am clear about my commitment, I empower others.

When I am unclear about my commitment, I am dull and confused.

When I am clear about my commitment, I am intentional and direct.

24

 | **OWNER**
vs. VICTIM

You don't get to have a powerful life for free. You have to create it.
You have to own it.

I've had the pleasure of collaborating over the past few years with Steve Chandler, an internationally respected business consultant and corporate trainer who has written over thirty books, including *Reinventing Yourself*, wherein he first established his powerfully effective Owner-Victim training. It's one of the distinctions I use today, to coach people out of their circle and onto a straight line, to the results that they are after. This happens faster when they give up the inner stance of victim and become an owner.

Ownership is a created state of mind. It's a distinct place to come from. Once I'm there, I'm an owner of my life. I've taken over. I'm no longer a mere victim of circumstances. I will now create the circumstances in my life.

Even while taking the stance of ownership, victim thoughts can happen. But as an owner I am aware of a fundamental choice I always have, either to 1) latch onto the thought, believe it, and identify with it or 2) challenge the thought and let it go. Victim thoughts happen. Do I want to identify with them? Do I want to believe them? Not when I'm being an owner.

As an owner I take over my life right now. Now means everything to me. I realize right now that I don't have to solve things in my past to be effective. Victims are fixated on solving the past. They nurture past hurts and memories. Owners focus on creating the future.

It's a place to live from. Owner? Or victim? The place you operate from has you be who you are—an owner or a victim. You are who you are because you say so and for no other reason.

You get to own and invent the world you live in. You decide what will be made real. You decide how you will create yourself, and how you will respond to whatever circumstances arise.

Will you speak and operate from owner or victim?

A stimulus from the environment occurs. What will you do with it? The space between stimulus and response is enormous. That space is where you make your choice. You can choose! Choose the outcome you now want. Are you going to bring it into existence or just sit there?

Taking ownership gives you the power to bring outcomes into existence. It's your chosen state of being. This state of being is independent of the environment. This state of being is independent of surrounding circumstances. The owner "gives himself permission" to live the life that he chooses. The victim is still trying to "get permission from someone or something" outside of himself.

Taking ownership and being an owner is not some lofty goal to get to. It's a place to come from. And the more you come from that place, the better your life gets and the happier you are. After a while, through experimentation with entering the two states, ownership becomes the norm. You don't have to get yourself to do anything, but choose to create and come from ownership.

You can begin right now: When you operate from victim does it bring you stress or peace? Who would you be if you shifted to owner? Test it out.

Refusing to be a "victim" is not about trying to deny reality. It's about addressing a "way of being" that creates artificial hardships, that are totally unnecessary.

Being an owner is not about gaining approval. It's about dropping highly damaging ways of being that are costing you dearly. (They cost you financially, health-wise, and relationship-wise.)

When you find yourself in a difficult situation ask, "**How do I empower myself with this situation?**" That's ownership. That very question shifts who you are being from victim to owner. Distinguish who you are being whenever you feel stuck. Soon you'll see that "who you be" is "what you do."

The invented you becomes real when it is lived.

Whenever you feel frustrated or discouraged, ask yourself this question: Am I operating from default victim thoughts? You can upgrade yourself by

choice. Create an owner's stance to operate from. Creating a new stance to operate from does not change the world. It creates who you are in the world. Here's the secret within the secret. It is impossible for you to not create. You are always creating, consciously or not. You can believe you're not creating, but you are. When I meet with a new client who is stuck with a huge challenge, we will first look at what he has created that resulted in him being stuck. When he sees the creation he sees he has the power to change it. Now he can own it instead of being a victim of it.

How a victim behaves is perfect for how the world looks to him. From where he's standing (his stance) it's all he can see. All he can see are people not appreciating him, not treating him with respect, and not giving him a fair chance. He lives in a world of no opportunity.

When he sits across from me in our first straight-line session, I may tell him, *"It's about who you are—not who they are."*

Once he gains awareness of the owner-victim distinction, he might—at first—become upset with himself and how he has been living. He sees what a victim he has been. But being a victim about being a victim won't work either. It's in the past. It's over. And the past doesn't exist unless he wants to go dig it up and give it newly nurtured life.

Owners are thinking, "It's okay for others to have their stories about me," while victims are obsessed with, "What are they thinking about me?" Owners do what they are doing while they are doing it. Owners do one thing at a time. Owners are focused (while victims are scattered).

Now that you are getting this distinction between owner and victim, who are you?

The better question is this: **Who do you say you are?**

If you don't know who you are, you don't have to go try to find out. You just create it. It can only be a creation anyway. "Owner" can only always be a created, committed place to come from.

Owners are always looking for and finding how it can be done. Victims are always explaining to themselves and others why it can't be done.

Owners realize:

Given who we are, we get the world we live in.

No price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.

—Friedrich Nietzsche—

Owners tend to deliver well-compensated service. That's because owners are always looking for "How can I serve them?" While victims are trying desperately to find out "Do they like me?" When you forget to create yourself as an owner, life gets stressful. That's okay. You can use stress as an alarm clock. Let the occurrence of stress or fear alert you to who you are being. Always practice awareness of behavior, by noticing who you are being, instead of what you are doing. You are never "not being." When you are willing to be rigorous about observing your state of being, you will always see where the hole in the boat is.

Where you go in life is determined by "who you are being." Notice what's in front of you. What gear do you need to be in? Where are you now? Are you way down in victim gear asking, "How do I get through this?" or are you up in owner's gear asking, "How do I give 100% regardless of the circumstances and enjoy the process?"

Don't make excuses. Say what it is that you are going to do and then go do it. Victims talk about what they will do someday. Owners create the future today.

When you create a position of ownership to come from, know that it won't last. It won't hold. It has to be constantly created. You have to create it and then live what you create over and over again. Distinctions have a shelf life. They are living things. Every living thing has a shelf life. But that's the good news. Because there's no lasting permanence, you know that it's open to being created at any moment you choose. You can always bring it into exis-

tence yourself. You don't have to worry about whether it's there or not. You'll know to create it.

Victims believe the opposite. They believe in permanent personalities that never change. They hide inside, "That's just the way I am!"

As an owner, you realize that who you are becomes a function of what you speak. Words are there for you to invent yourself with. Invent yourself! Then reinvent yourself.

When you do not consciously do this, you will re-live your past by default. (Victims are always asking, "Why do I keep doing this?") You'll be someone you only remember. Or else you'll be someone who someone else told you that you were. These are not true, authentic states of being because they are not being freshly created in your speaking. They are dug-up corpses of distant painful memories. Victims are a collection of injustices and shortcomings, functioning out of childhood personalities, that may have worked at one time but not anymore. All remembered from the dead past.

You can choose right now to live as an invented you or a default you. It's all the story of you anyway. What do you want the story to be based on? What you are creating today? That's you at your very best. Or do you want the story of you to be based on past hurts and injuries to your ego? That's where most people live. No wonder they are always so overly careful and cautious. No wonder they are always playing it safe, and never really risking doing anything extraordinary.

Ownership is not a version of positive thinking. It is very radical, potent material that changes cultures.

When you are a straight-line leader delivering the distinction of ownership to others, it moves your people and empowers your culture. You can see that these are powerful distinctions, that people can use, the moment they grasp them. They won't have to struggle to remember them. They will own them.

I've recently been invited to train various sales teams within the troubled auto industry. They have sought straight-line solutions to the vicious circle they are in. I deliver owner-victim distinctions, and they come alive. I show their people how to be more productive and effective, and sell more cars based on these distinctions.

The salespeople realize that they can create a vision of who they choose to be, and live into it right now. They don't have to wait to receive a vision from someone else.

You create a vision and you live it right now. This is what alters behavior and creates powerful results.

I tell them repeatedly, *"Who you create yourself to be, determines the actions that you take and the results you achieve. And 'Now' is the only time that you can produce results. When it comes to producing results, the past and the future do not exist."*

By giving them a distinction, I offer them a choice. A distinction returns you to the level of choice. Most people do not live at the level of choice. They live at foggier, weaker levels of victimization and circumstance. But ownership returns them to the level of choice.

A victim approach to life concedes all power to circumstance. Therefore, it takes no responsibility for the results. It's a life built on regret and fear.

An owner's life is based on what he is here to do. A victim's life is based on what he seeks to avoid.

An owner comes from the language of intention (what he declares that he will do). A victim comes from the language of obligation (what he believes that he should do, as if it were a burden).

Whole organizations can declare a deliberately created culture of ownership. People who bring our organization in to coach and train straight-line ownership, know that our sole concern is for profits and high margins. We are not working toward improved mood or spirit, although those are usually the side effects of this training.

Our coaching is performance and productivity focused. It's not mood work. Motivators who come to sales meetings and pump people up with positive thinking, can actually make things worse. Because when you don't have ownership deep down at the level of choice, it doesn't matter what you try to put on top of it as a positive thought. The true inner you will argue back. If you keep lying to yourself with false positives, you'll get a riot going in your mind.

Your people only do two things. They either take ownership of their mindset, or they default into a victim mindset.

Our chief interest is effectiveness. Some organizations want to make their people happy, and that is simply not possible. However, happiness is a natural by-product of growth, so we put our focus there. Human effectiveness

and growth in productivity is what straight-line coaching is all about. Human effectiveness tends to produce considerably lower stress levels inside organizations.

People soon see that it's a victim mindset that leads to distraction, procrastination, office politics, low productivity, and secret sabotage. And these are all the classic stressors in modern life as well. In short, when people are growing and expanding, they tend to be satisfied, fulfilled, and highly productive. This leads to an increase in individual and company profits.

A half century ago there used to be openly racist and sexist cultures in organizations, until they were disallowed. You can personally disallow victim cultures the very same way. You can choose to create a powerful culture deliberately. When you live a life that dictates that all power is outside of you, you will feel stuck, frustrated, and helpless. You will have given up your choice. Owners function from the viewpoint that no matter what they are faced with, they are going to get something good out of it—that it will be a learning experience—they will always live more powerfully thereafter. They grow stronger.

Victims carry around a negative inner parental voice. They are still subconsciously responding to words that were shouted at them when they were young, as opposed to creating their own voice. (They're caught in a cybernetic loop.)

Owners challenge that voice whenever it comes up. They neutralize it. They create their own voice. They take charge of situations. They, therefore, become more rational, realistic, scientific, and tough-minded. They know that if there is no solution, then there is no problem. They don't dwell on the injustice of it all. They don't think about things in terms of shoulds and should-nots. When a problem cannot be changed, then it is a fact of life and it's time to move on.

Victims embrace pessimism. And when one embraces pessimism long enough it becomes depression. Pessimism leads you to the couch. Pessimism leads you to low productivity and increased stress levels.

Optimism is not a response to positive news. It is something useful that you can generate to impact circumstances. Owners personify tough-minded optimism.

An owner will assume any personality in order to keep his commitments. He will be who he needs to be. A victim will break any commitment to keep his personality intact. They live in the "I've got to be me" syndrome.

To an owner, commitment is created. To a victim, commitment is a feeling that is fleeting and untrustworthy.

Owners convert problems into projects. Living with exciting projects is more fun and empowering than living with depressing problems. You can take ownership right now. It's there for you in the act of taking. Being an owner is not a permanent personality or characteristic that you have or don't have.

It's a state of being you enter or don't enter. No one has greater claim to it than you do. You can start by relating to your current problem, as a project that you're happy to be engaged with. You will have a totally different experience.

Ownership is not something you learn; it's something you practice. But when will you get time to practice? The great soccer star Pelé was once asked that same question. Given his hectic schedule, when does he have time to fit soccer practice in?

"Everything is practice," said Pelé.

When you get this distinction between owner and victim, you too, will see that everything you encounter today is an opportunity for practice. By choosing to take ownership and responsibility, you'll break out of the victim's circle and get on the fast track to the results you want. You will thrill to the power of a truly straight line.

25

 | **THE SAME
vs. SEPARATE**

In essence, the work of a straight-line coach is to simply deal with people's nonsense, and to assist people to see their nonsense.

Most often the nonsense shows up as the irrational collapsing together of separate things. People keep trying to mix oil and water, and they have to see that they won't mix.

They want to mix "what they are going through" right now, with whether they will (and why they can't) generate a commitment to a result.

What you are going through and your commitment to change your life are two separate things! People keep recycling themselves like tossed laundry inside the complaints of what they are going through, and when it is suggested that they have the option to commit to something bigger and better, they try to put the commitment inside of what they are going through and it doesn't go there! They tend to collapse situations in their lives, instead of seeing the separateness that would give them freedom.

One person might say, *"I am broke and therefore I can't start a new business."* They don't see that they have two separate situations occurring. Being broke is one issue, and choosing to start a new business is something entirely different. The more I collapse these issues, the less freedom I have to address them separately and to solve them.

Once you see something as separate, that's it. You can't go back to confusing it for something else. There's clarity and freedom in that.

The ancient sages of India talked of enlightenment in terms of the snake and the rope. If you are walking along a road at night and the lighting is bad, you might come upon a rope and believe it to be a snake. You are filled with fear and panic. But as you look more closely you see that it is only a rope. Once you see it clearly as a rope, you cannot ever fear it again. You can't feel any panic.

Once you see that the trouble you are going through, is merely a separate set of circumstances, that has no relationship to your commitment to change yourself and your life, it will no longer panic you. You will not confuse the circumstance with the commitment ever again, which leaves you free to focus on and enjoy the fruits of your commitment.

Once you see that the snake is a rope, it cannot return to being a snake.



26

 |

AGREEMENTS vs. EXPECTATIONS

The straight-line leader has no time for expectations. He expects nothing of the people around him; when he wants something done he creates an agreement.

Expectations lead to poor time management. Expectations also encourage employees, to take a more immature position in their communication with management; almost an attempt to be re-parented by a supervisor, rather than having an adult-to-adult relationship based on agreements.

Once agreements are made on an adult-to-adult basis, people don't have to be managed anymore. What gets managed is the agreement. It is more mature and respectful to interact in this manner, and both sides enjoy more open and trusting communication. There is also more accountability running both ways. It is now easier to discuss uncomfortable subjects.

The biggest beneficial impact of managing agreements is on communication. It frees communication up to be more honest, open, and complete.

The problem with having your relationships held together by expectations, is that the person you expect things from does not feel respected in that exchange. And the most important, the most powerful precondition to good performance is trust and respect.

Managers make the mistake of trying to manage their people's emotions and their personalities. They try to take care of their most upset people, not in the name of better communication and understanding, but in the name of containing dissent and being liked.

This leads to poor priority management and a lot of ineffective, amateurish "psychotherapy" instead of leadership. It puts both people in a vicious circle of expectations and disappointments.

A straight-line leader takes responsibility for the relationship being a mature one. You are creating responsibility for showing respect and treating the employee as an equal adult on equal footing.

A straight-line leader does not run around, trying to anticipate and navigate around people's emotions and personalities. He is not engaged in setting up new expectations and always being disappointed. Expectation almost always leads to disappointment. While agreements, made voluntarily and creatively by both people, are almost always kept.

A straight-line leader manages commitments and agreements. He creates agreements with team members, and enters into those agreements on an adult-to-adult basis. All communication is done with mutual respect. There is no giving in to the temptation to be intimidating, bossy, or all-knowing, which comes from having expectations and no courage to make an agreement.

Expectations are the stories I believe about how others should behave. Yet, the more expectations I have the more I set myself up for disappointment. With no expectations, there can be no disappointment. And that's why creating agreements is so much more effective—no expectations, just agreements. People can be unconsciously tormented by expectations—their own and those of others—and it keeps them from ever growing into who they could be.

They wake up in the morning and put their sensors out and ask themselves subconsciously, "What do people expect of me today?" and then they try to live up to all of that. It becomes a life run totally by other people's expectations or the imagined expectations of others.

What does my boss expect? What does my partner expect? What do my kids expect? If I spend all my time trying to guess and then live up to others' expectations, it's a no-win situation. It simply cannot be accomplished. They'll just keep adding more expectations. Not only that—if I'm living my life based on guessing what other people's expectations are, I will sink down into confusion and resentment.

When I want to enjoy people at work, I will want to create agreements. What should we agree to do here? Instead of, "Oh, no!, I wonder what he expects—is he expecting me to get that report in by Friday? I can't believe that, as overworked as I am."

Agreements support the straight line to a result. Expectations produce the vicious circle of confusion and misunderstanding.

***I am more afraid of an army
of 100 sheep led by a lion,
than an army of 100 lions
led by a sheep.***

—Talleyrand—

Notice that the nature of an expectation is passive. When you are expecting something you are totally passive, just hoping someone will do something. It requires no courage or creativity from you to have an expectation. Therefore, it keeps you in a womb of inert, flaccid, motionless anticipation. You float anxiously in your little circle of inactivity. No one can get on the straight line to extraordinary results this way.

The creation of an agreement takes courage, bold requests, and promises. It always contains specific measurable timelines and deadlines. It asks that we give and keep our word. It asks of us that we take the appropriate action required to keep the agreement.

27 | ***RADICAL SELF-HONESTY vs. BEING INSINCERE***

One of the most effective ways to enliven your life is to make a declarative statement, and then live consistent with what you’ve stated.

You will notice that the people you respect the most in life, are the ones who say what it is that they are going to do, and then follow up and do what they said that they would do.

Being real =	saying what you mean and doing what you say.
Being insincere =	saying one thing and doing something else.
	rarely following up on your promises unless it’s convenient.
	damaging to relationships.

Insincere people tend to be available for every sure thing and absent when it counts.

Where there is no respect, there is no true relationship. Insincerity is not respected. Most people do not even want to be around insincerity. People want to be around someone who is stable. They want to be around someone who will be direct and honest with them. They want to be around someone that they can count on.

There’s another form of insincerity that is even more damaging to a purpose or a project, and that’s internal insincerity. It’s the insincerity with yourself about what you’re doing throughout the day.

When I look at my activities on any given day, I want to employ radical self-honesty: **“Am I just inventing things to do to avoid or put off the necessary required actions?”**

When I’m radically honest with myself, I will acknowledge that the straight line from A (where I am) to B (the result I intend) is made up of necessary required actions. Am I doing those? Or am I inventing other tasks, that somehow provide me with a sense of accomplishment?

We were coaching a business consultant who wanted to expand his client base. He was a good consultant, who knew how to consult quite effectively with small and mid-sized businesses, but he had very few clients and didn’t know how to build his business. He’d been to various schools and seminars that claimed to be able to show him how to do that, but he made no progress. We will call him Martin for this story.

We challenged Martin to be honest about the actions that were necessary for him to build his business—the sales conversations he would need to have to make it happen. We pointed out that no sale ever occurred outside of a conversation, so therefore the route to increased sales would be increased conversations. Those were necessary and required actions for him to succeed. Martin confessed that most of his time had been spent on re-designing his website again and again, playing around with social and professional networking groups, and meeting with people who gave him no business “but might do so some day down the road.”

Each day he would invent more things like this to do, but his world had become a circle. He was going around and around, getting no results.

Armed with radical honesty as a distinction, Martin began to perform more effectively. He blocked out hours of sales-conversation time as his first daily priority. He was honest enough to see that only through scheduled conversations could his business grow.

And grow it did. Soon Martin had a thriving client list, and he was even more effective at consulting with his own clients, to engage in a more radically honest approach to their own business—to identifying what works and then ruthlessly prioritizing that activity each day.

Martin had been telling his peers and his family, that he couldn’t figure out why his business wasn’t growing. He always said to them that he was “doing everything he knew to do.” But doing everything you know to do doesn’t count—you have to do what is going to make a real difference.

When Martin would come to work and look at his emails and answer his phone messages, he was choosing what to do based on his thoughts and feelings. Having lunch with one person felt like the right, diplomatic thing to do. Answering another person's email with a long email of his own, was something he thought he ought to do. He had a lot of great thoughts and ideas throughout his day. And he did everything he felt like doing, and when he didn't feel like doing something, he set it aside for later.

As we surveyed his unproductive business, we helped him to see that allowing his thoughts and feelings to determine his actions, didn't make a lot of sense. That's because your thoughts and feelings come and go. They ride in on the breeze and change every hour. They are nothing with which to base a business's success.

However, when Martin got the distinction of radical self-honesty, he began to experience the value of having his day be based on what was necessary and required. He was now functioning on the straight line.

And the best way to know when you are actually on the straight line is to look at your results. Are they showing up yet? If they are not, you are still in the circle.

Martin began to experience his life as powerful. He also started to see that no one hands you a powerful life for free. You have to generate it. You have to pull it away from thoughts and feelings, and put it back under your own control.

In one of our first coaching sessions with Martin we did an exercise called, *"Who owns your life?"*

"I suppose I'm supposed to say that I do," said Martin.

But we wanted radical honesty, and Martin knew that the moment he said, *"I do,"* he was being insincere. It had no conviction. So, with his help, we began to list all of the people who owned Martin's life: creditors, family members, business acquaintances; the list was long. He realized that he spent his days trying to please all these people. They owned his life.

"Why didn't I see all this?" he asked. *"Why don't I already know these distinctions like you do?"*

"Powerful distinctions are not something you are born with," we said. *"They are something that you choose. And they must be created on a regular basis."*

"That's too bad," said Martin.

"No, that's actually good news because it gives you ownership. Choosing the distinctions you operate from is ownership. Once it becomes a daily practice, you'll never go back. You will love your life."

“I don’t always like doing the required actions on my daily list,” he said.

“You don’t have to like it. You just have to do what’s necessary. You don’t have to like performing certain required actions; but when you keep doing them, you will be amazed with the results that you get.”

Martin started looking forward to each coaching session. After his business was thriving he remarked that straight-line coaching, for him, was like driving a car.

“It’s like turning the headlights on after you have been driving all night in the dark,” he said.

That’s the true power of radical self-honesty. It confronts the insincerity in statements like, “I’ll do that tomorrow.” Radical self-honesty acknowledges that tomorrow never comes. The implementation of this level of honesty in your own world can be assisted by these questions:

What are you pretending not to know?

What’s going to happen if you continue down this path?

How do you need to be different?

Are you assuming that logic is running the show?

How could you be in the face of this?

Where has going easy on yourself gotten you so far?

Radical self-honesty is not easy. It wasn’t easy for Martin. But once he began using it and then actually living from it as an inner stance, his whole life got easier. Growing his business got easier, too. He finally realized:

The easier you are on yourself, the harder life is on you.

But the more honest you get with yourself, the easier life is.

28 | ***REALISTIC OPTIMISM vs. UNREALISTIC PESSIMISM***

Straight-line coaches utilize the many years of deep research done by Dr. Martin Seligman, on the scientifically measurable benefits of optimism. His breakthrough study is contained in his book, *Learned Optimism*, wherein he establishes that optimists are far more effective than pessimists in all categories of life.

Our functional straight-line distinction is this: optimists are realists. Pessimists are unrealistic because of what they see and don't see.

Optimism is the practice of focusing on opportunities and possibilities, rather than complaints and regrets. It's obvious, therefore, why optimists are more effective than pessimists. It also turns out (and you can logically verify this) that optimists are healthier than pessimists, they're financially more successful than pessimists, and they perform better in learning institutions than pessimists. Not only that, optimists have more fulfilling relationships than pessimists. All of that comes from focusing and acting on possibilities.

The best news in Seligman's research studies is that optimism and pessimism are learned habits. They are not inherited. There is no gene for optimism. We create it as a deliberate habit.

All humans behave largely according to habits. And these habits are developed through repetition. The habit of being realistic is the habit of seeing all possibilities. It's what an optimist does.

The pessimist does the opposite. The pessimist quits too soon. The pessimist shuts out even the possibility of possibility. His artificially limited thinking, is often used as a misguided protection mechanism, for dealing with future disappointment. The problem with that habitual mechanism is that the practice of avoiding disappointment, has all of one's life ending up being a total disappointment. Optimism is programming. It's not a character trait, even though we usually think and speak of it that way. "She's such an optimistic person. He's a born pessimist!"

Optimism can be learned. It's a habit caused by repetition. Optimism repeats proactive, creative, accepting thoughts.

When problems arise the optimist asks, "Considering what I'm up to, what do I want to create with this situation?"

When I open my eyes in the morning I am not confronted by a world, but by a million possible worlds.

—Colin Wilson—

Optimists interrupt their negative trains of thought. They watch over their thoughts, and know that they do not have to believe any of them.

Pessimists believe almost everything they think. Once a gloomy thought occurs to a pessimist, he latches onto it and believes it as if it were the truth. Optimists challenge negative thoughts. They do not believe in them. They use their minds optimally and actively, and guard their potent mindset with everything they've got.

Pessimists unrealistically take the first thought they think and never question it. They shut down the act of inquiry, and thereby they preclude any chance that they might have had, at finding inspired ideas and innovative action.

Optimists know that their feelings come from their thinking. They also know, that they are in charge of whether they challenge or accept, any line of thought that appears. Therefore, they end up being in charge of how they feel. Straight-line clients, when learning this distinction, take charge of their moods, attitudes, and morale.



29 | ***BEING BOLD*** ***vs. BEING ARROGANT***

Some people ruin their relationships by being arrogant. They try to hide their insecurity behind a show of superiority.

It's not the same thing as being bold. Being bold takes courage. It's stepping up when you don't feel like stepping up. It's taking appropriate action when you'd rather not.

Being arrogant amounts to just being pushy and obnoxious, in an attempt to get your way.

Insecure bullies are arrogant. Even when people give in and let them have their way, they usually want nothing to do with the bully after that. They will resent them after the negative experience. Therefore, arrogant people have a difficult time getting things done in the long run. They have a difficult time in winning the support of others in the future.

The gods favor the bold.

—Ovid—



30 | *DISCOMFORT AND PAIN* *vs. CHAOS*

Without a sincere respect for focus, we tend to escalate whatever it is that we are feeling uncomfortable about. Richard “Mack” Machowicz, former Navy SEALs operator, is the host of the Discovery Channel and Military Channel show, *Future Weapons*. He spent ten years operating as a U.S. Navy SEAL, and now searches for new weapons and military technologies used in modern warfare, to present to his television viewing audience. I have been privileged to have Richard train many of our clients in various Navy Seal techniques for self-defense (and larger life issues).

One of Richard’s primary teachings, is worth applying as a straight-line approach to any problem or challenge.

If a person invades your home and attacks you, your first reaction is going to be discomfort. I know you may think you would experience panic immediately and automatically, but you would only experience panic when you were not focusing on the situation. If you are injured in the attack you will probably move from discomfort to pain. The trick is to not ever let it escalate further in your mind.

Because what most people do is escalate the discomfort and pain to chaos. That’s not where you want to go.

Chaos is that irrational, emotional place in your mind, where you’ve melted down and can no longer think or make sense of the world. We usually go there by catastrophizing a situation and exaggerating the drama of it.

From chaos, you cannot focus on what may save you in an attack. Also, from chaos (an irrational inner wailing like, “I’ve been a good and honorable person all my life; how did I deserve this attack on me; I will never make it; life will never be the same, etc.”), you are likely to scare the assailants themselves into escalating to their own chaos, (“This person is freaking out; now I’ve got to silence them forever”), and bring you even greater harm.

This happens in business situations, too. If two of your top managers quit and you escalate from discomfort to chaos (“This is a nightmare! I’m being betrayed! We’ll never recover from this!”), then your ability to respond with focus and precision goes out the window. Others pick up on your panic and may also quit, or worse. But from this point on, you can now simply refuse to ever allow discomfort or pain to escalate to chaos. Notice in your life where you might have done this in the past. You got uncomfortable and then you escalated that condition emotionally. You went from discomfort to pain and then all the way up to chaos.

Machowicz gave this example in his Navy SEAL training to those in attendance: If an intruder walked into your kitchen, and they stabbed you in the stomach with a knife, it normally would take about ninety minutes for you to lose enough blood to pass out and be in trouble. But we don’t utilize that window of opportunity to repel the attacker and get to safety. We escalate because we don’t focus on what’s needed to be done. If we did not escalate, we could generate a much more effective response.

If we focused on taking the person out and neutralizing him (in other words, gouging his eyeball or smashing him in the throat, etc... then calling 911 and then getting to the hospital), we would probably survive.

What Machowicz teaches is that people usually don’t do that. They don’t just deal with their discomfort and pain rationally. They emotionally escalate it into chaos. Now in addition to the physical discomfort, they are feeling mentally horrified, violated, and offended. They then get into a wildly catastrophic mindset.

And if they continue their escalation into chaos they are finished. Because when they are in chaos they can’t mentally function. When you can’t function, you are obviously at a serious disadvantage.

Staying focused simply gives you the best chance of being effective and surviving. Security cameras have recorded little old ladies fighting off big male attackers in their twenties, simply by remaining focused and being intentional.

This same syndrome applies to the corporate world. You feel attacked by problems. People do verbal equivalents of stabbing you in the stomach or in the back. Many people in the corporate world talk about someone having “stabbed them in the back.” It’s the same thing. It’s escalation.

The straight-line practice that eliminates all this emotional escalation is this: when you are in discomfort keep it there with focus. Do not go to pain when

you can help it (emotional pain is created by judgment alone) and never go to chaos.

And what do you focus on? You focus on the next thing to do in the moment. When you are uncomfortable or even in pain, you don't have to label it as bad or unjust and catastrophic. Instead, keep it right there where it is so you can still do something with it. And how you do that—that magic tool—is focus.

You just accept the discomfort and focus on what you intend. Accept the discomfort, and then focus on what's required to get the job done and start taking action. Once you are in action, that will be enough to keep the condition at discomfort. And after a little more productive action, even the discomfort will start to subside as you start getting desired results.



31

 | **PURPOSE MANAGEMENT**
vs. TIME MANAGEMENT

We use the term “sawing sawdust” to describe performing unproductive activities over and over, and generating what looks like a “time management” problem, in the process.

If you have a time management problem, you’ll want to ask, “**What’s beneath the time management problem?**”

In almost every case it will be a dysfunctional inner stance. It’s not what you are doing so much as who you are being right now. So look at the problem again and ask a weird question:

“**HOW COULD I BE IN THE FACE OF THIS?**”

And to get you there you might have to backtrack a bit and ask, “**What is my basic purpose in life?**” Once you connect to that, it will allow you to always know what to say YES to and what to say NO to.

When you are not sure what to say yes to and what to say no to, you will always appear to have a time management problem. Having no committed stance throughout the day looks like a time management problem, but it’s not. It’s actually more of a bold communication problem. Remember your purpose, and you solve time management forever:

Who am I?

Why am I here?

What do I choose to create?

A really dysfunctional way of living life, is to check in with your feelings all day: “What do I feel like doing now?” By choosing to obey your feelings, you run a huge risk of wrecking your life. When you just start doing what’s required and ignore your feelings, you will develop a muscle that will change your life.

What do I really intend to achieve?

Am I willing to get it?

What would guarantee it?

How can I ratchet up my accountability level?

Maybe what’s missing on my road to the result I want, is a necessary required action that I am not willing to do! You can do what you’re not willing to do by fooling yourself and doing it anyway, before your willingness can figure out what happened. Just do the things you are procrastinating on. That’s ultimately how you outwit procrastination. As the great philosopher Emerson used to say, *“Do the thing and you shall have the power.”*

Notice the order Emerson has it in. He does not advise that we find the power or even the willingness to do it before doing it. He says to do the thing first and experience the power after that.

People assume that they have to wait for things that they don’t have to wait for. They think they need certain qualities that they don’t have. So they spend their day sawing sawdust, doing all the easy, non-productive activities they’ve already done enough of.

It’s not about biochemical imbalances in the left side of your brain, producing excessive thinking about a memory of your pet dying when you were seven. It’s not that or anything of the like. It’s just that you’re not doing what’s required. That’s all. All that’s keeping you from doing it is that you’re not doing it.

***We either make ourselves
miserable or we make
ourselves strong.
The amount of work is
the same.***

—Carlos Castaneda—

You don't have to be a disciplined person. There's no such thing as a permanently, genetically disciplined person. You choose discipline or you don't. Discipline is simply remembering what you intend to do and refusing to get sidetracked. Are you not doing something that you say you want to do? You are not doing it because you have not chosen to. Willpower has nothing to do with it. Willpower is not necessary. It's all about choice. This is how to manage your time step by step:

- 1. Have a purpose.
- 2. The purpose tells you the next step to take.

Put that next step in front of you. All you ever have to do is what's in front of you.

32 | ***EXTREME SELF-CARE vs. SELFISHNESS***

Buddha said, you've got to take care of yourself, before you take care of other people. That is why, in an airplane, you put the oxygen mask on yourself first, before you put it on your kids.

Selfishness is small-minded and greedy—but self-care is wise and benefits every life you touch. When you engage in extreme self-care, you are supporting your own well-being, so that you can better contribute to others. Taking care of yourself allows you to make a greater contribution. It allows you to serve at a higher level. Extreme self-care and generosity can exist simultaneously. It's not self-absorbed, because practicing extreme self-care makes you more effective at serving other people.

***For the personality, bankruptcy
or failure may be a disaster.
For the soul, it may be grist
for its strangely joyful mill,
and a condition it has been
secretly engineering for years.***

—David Whyte—

I recently spent some time coaching a woman, who is a remarkable positive example of how extreme self-care can benefit everyone you interact with. Her name (her real name) is Rohini.

Six years ago Rohini was married to an angry, unsupportive, selfish, immature, and emotionally abusive man. Now she is married to the most kind, generous, caring, loving, and supportive man alive.

The funny thing is it is the same man.

It took her own growing up and becoming the best person she could be, to save her marriage. It took exercising extreme self-care for herself.

There was a time when she did not think that this was possible. She thought the only solution was to either leave the marriage or stay and be miserable, but fortunately, she woke up and realized that her husband's behavior did not exist in a vacuum. She did not condone his bad behavior; but when she took a close look at herself, she realized that she was the one guilty of giving up on herself.

Somewhere in the process of marriage and children she gave up on her goals and dreams, thinking this would create harmony. BIG MISTAKE! Instead, she numbed herself to her inner wisdom and was robotically going through

the motions of each day, unaware of the brewing resentment and rage just below the surface, and her husband was willing to act that out. But when she finally put herself back in the equation, breathed life into her aspirations, and transformed her dream into a project, she awoke to her true passion, and as if by magic her husband became the man she fell in love with all over again.

Rohini now specializes in helping women to reconnect with their inner wisdom, so they can empower themselves and live their deepest desires. The side effects are extraordinary: better relationships, more wealth, increased health, vitality, and more joy.

Rohini Ross has become a recognized expert in helping women to transform their lives. She is a relationship empowerment coach in Los Angeles, and received her MA in Counseling Psychology from the University of Santa Monica.

Rohini works intensively one-on-one with a small number of women, who are truly committed to creating positive change in their lives. She has a special ability to come alongside her clients in a spirit of deep compassion and practical support, helping them to achieve transformational results. Rohini offers a group coaching experience for women. It's called "Nurturing Your Potential" and is designed for nine women who are deeply committed to achieving their goals, living their magnificence, and making self-care a priority.

It's a mistake to think it's selfish, to take extremely good care of yourself as life's first priority. It's a mistake to confuse self-sacrificing with love and support. Rohini's successful life is an example of why it's always wise, to put the oxygen mask on yourself, before trying to put it on others.

33

 | **HOW TO vs.
CHOOSE TO**

In our straight-line coaching work over the years, we have found that there's one distinction—one shift inside the mind—that's more profound than any other.

This shift, when people make it, when they see it—when they can really see it clearly—allows them to participate in a future that offers a much higher level of performance. They start getting their intended outcomes. And it works in any field where they would like to have greater productivity—greater results. It can be weight loss, it can be sales, it can be income, it can be relationships—anything that they want to go out and bring into their lives, and then measure the result.

When clients really enter the straight line, they come out of being stuck. They come out of their passivity and really start to get into productive action, and attain the outcomes that they are choosing in life. That's what happens when they get this distinction and begin to live from it: moving from an obsession with knowing how to do something to simply choosing to do it.

In order to see this distinction clearly, let's start with where people need to shift. Where are they stuck? What keeps them from achieving what they want to achieve? What's the mindset? Where does the mind need to shift?

It needs to shift from knowing as an inner stance. There's a big problem with the stance of knowing. It's the idea that I need to know something before I can take action. And here's how it shows up: "I don't know how to do this" or "I don't know what to do. I want to do this but I don't know how to do it." It also shows up this way: "I would like to reach out and connect with people and let them know about my service, but I don't know who to call."

So those are the three ways this dysfunction shows up.

- A. I don't know how to...
- B. I don't know what to...
- C. I don't know who to...

Let's start with, I don't know how to. People say, "I would do that but I don't know how to. I would make these calls, but I don't know how to make cold calls in a graceful way. I would reach out and find people who would have an interest in my service or product, but I don't know how to find them. I would patent my inventions, but I don't know how. I don't know how to do this; I don't know how to do that."

Well, there's no longer any truth to that, because if you simply go on Google and you type in "how to" and then fill in the blank, you'll get so many articles and so many interviews and so many interesting pages of advice, enough of which can be quite useful, that you could get into action right away. And if there is specific information which is truly needed, your "choose to" will provide it. A powerful "choose to" will cure ignorance and an inadequate skill set every time. You can find out how to do anything. The how to is never really what's missing. The choosing to is what's missing.

It's simply not true that you don't know how to do this. Here's what's missing—you have not chosen to. And that's the whole point here and that's the major mind shift. It's a shift from knowing to choosing. The person who is not performing is not choosing.

Once our friend and author, Lindsay Brady, was presenting to a mastermind group of which we were a part. Lindsay is a nationally respected hypnotherapist and a very profound philosopher, and understands the interplay between the brain and the mind better than just about anyone in the world. While he was talking to the group, one of the young executives raised his hand. Lindsay had just done a really great demonstration on how the mind controls the brain. This young executive raised his hand and said, *"I am so confused; I don't know what to do with my future. I have a feeling that you could really help me. I really have a sense that you know how I can make my decision. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to decide. I've got this opportunity and that..."* and he explained a few options he had and a few places he could go and things he could do, but he didn't know how to make the right decision and he didn't know what to do. At least that's what he was telling Lindsay at the time. Lindsay stared at him for a second and then he said one word. He said, *"Choose."* Now that was very profound. The room grew silent, and the person who was asking Lindsay the questions, just stared at him like a deer caught in the headlights. And then the young executive got a big smile on his face because he could really see it—that's it. That's what I haven't done. I've simply not chosen. That's why I'm stuck.

This is about freedom from the circle. There is freedom in choosing because it puts you out there on the straight line, where velocity and access to results reside. Choosing puts you in action because even when you make the wrong choice, you are normally better off than you were.

When we feel stuck and afraid, not knowing how to do the right thing, we suffer. Revisiting Nathaniel Branden, he says, *“Suffering is the easiest thing human beings do.”* It’s the easiest place to go. Suffering. *“I am suffering from my lack of knowledge. I’m really suffering. I don’t know what to do.”*

This idea we call the wrong choice or a bad decision is what stops most people. “Well, what if I... what if I make a bad decision? What if I do the wrong thing? What if I don’t call the right people today? Is this the right person to call? Is this the right proposal to make? Is this the right service to offer?” People get so hung up in what would be the right thing and then they tell themselves, “Well, I don’t know. I don’t know what would be the right thing to do. I don’t know how to decide. I don’t know how to know. It’s not just that I don’t know what to do, I don’t even know how to know what to do.” That stops people. Can you see where that stops people?

There’s an effective question we’ve used to free clients from being stuck with the problem of not knowing how to get a result. This question provides access to the power of choice. They can simply choose to act. It’s what I call the million-dollar question.

Let’s say I have a client who says, *“I really want to go into that market, I want to go into that city, I want to introduce myself, I want to go in and travel there and talk to some people about what I offer, but I don’t know who to call.”*

And I say to my client, *“What if I told you I would give you one million dollars if I left the room for an hour, and when I returned you had twenty good people to call listed on a sheet of paper? You can get the names anywhere. You can get them from your computer, from calling others, anywhere you wish; but I want you to come up with twenty really good people to call, and I’ll give you a million dollars when you do it. You have one hour. Would you do it?”*

The answer is always yes. They can see right away, *“Yeah, I’d come up with twenty good people. I’d collect my million dollars; you bet.”*

They can see that once they began calling their original twenty people, the list would expand with references, the ball would be rolling, and everything would be on its way to the result.

We do know how to get our result. We are simply choosing not to. So people are not stuck in not knowing “how to.” They are stuck in not “choosing.”

When I pose the million-dollar question, their awareness is elevated. They snap out of that low circular evolutionary sleep. When I dangle a million dollars in front of someone, they wake up and start to see what they are normally unaware of. They will shoot up the evolutionary ladder for a million dollars by choice alone.

34

 | **NICE**
vs. **KIND**

The vast majority of the most effective people I have ever met in life have been direct, gracious, generous, caring, and somewhere between moderately and brutally honest with themselves and others. They were demonstrations of sincerity and kindness. Very few were ever “nice.”

Nice stops you from being effective. Nice is not respectful. Nice is a stance you take to protect your own feelings. It’s insincere. Being nice is manipulative and wastes a lot of time. Individuals operating out of an inner stance of being nice have trouble choosing “in” or choosing “out.” They tend to stumble around and produce very little.

When people say “I was nice because I did not want to hurt their feelings,” the truth is that they didn’t want to feel bad themselves, about being blamed for someone else’s hurt feelings. The truth is you don’t have the power to hurt someone else’s feelings, no matter what you say. They can tell themselves a story about what you said and hurt their own feelings, but that’s another thing entirely. I know this may sound a little off the wall, but I’ll be straight line about it anyway. If you have been coming from a stance that people have the power to hurt your feelings, you’ll want to shift your position immediately and forever (because they simply don’t). This book doesn’t go into detail on that subject, but Byron Katie’s *Loving What Is* does. If you care to explore the subject further, that’s the book that I would want you to read.

The measure of a person's results in life can usually be reduced to the number of uncomfortable conversations he or she is willing to have.

—Tom McGovern—

So, then what is being kind?

Being kind is simply being truthful with other people. It is not telling other people what you think that they want to hear, so that you can personally feel better.

If one of your direct reports asks what you think of his new suit, and you think it looks like something that he slept in for the last three weeks, for Pete's sake be kind and tell him. If he lives in a PC world, he may be a little shocked at first; but you are giving him access to see a blind spot, that may mean the difference between a huge sale or a bust.

35

 | ***POSITIVE NO
vs. REJECTION***

The quickest way to insert yourself into a violent circle, is to have no purpose guiding your day.

No-purpose people become a victim of the unlimited amount of requests that they get throughout the day, to do things that have nothing to do with their real goals or purposes. This and this alone creates the illusion that they don't have any time.

What looks like a time management problem is not that at all. It is a problem of purposeless living. We sometimes call it intention deficit disorder. You are not intending anything; you're frequently just dealing with your fear of other people's judgment.

You only feel like you don't "have enough time" to do what's important, because you leave your bedroom in the morning without choosing your purpose for the day. What do you choose instead? Well, it's not exactly an active choice. It's more like a passive default collapse into worry and anticipating.

You are guiding yourself, by trying to anticipate what others will accept you for, and what they will reject you for.

So, in a way, you're right to think that you don't have time, but it's because you're off doing all these people-pleasing things that have nothing to do with your basic purpose. People ask you to do things and you respond quickly to their every text and email, take their calls, do things to please them. You can't say no. But, why can't you?

It's because you've not yet generated a strong enough YES to what you want to do with your own precious time.

But when you set your purpose at the beginning of the day, you are creating a straight line. People trying to pull you off your line will get a polite, positive NO. Notice that when your mission is clear and committed, the positive no comes easily. If you are on your way to the airport and your best customer asks you to come by for coffee, you easily say, "No thank you; I am on the way to catch a plane." That's what purpose does for you.

Your inner stance can always be a commitment to fulfilling your purpose today—airport or not. You can know where you stand and what you can decide to say yes and no to. You know what pulls you off the straight line and what doesn't. You are no longer afraid to say no. You even learn to turn the dreaded no into a positive no.

A positive no is something you utilize to create time. You know what to say no to based upon what your purpose is. So when somebody asks you to do something that's totally out of line with your purpose, you can easily say no to that. You do that in a strong, polite, considerate, positive way. No apology.

Utilizing a positive no appropriately is vital to a successful life. Being able to receive a positive no is just as vital. If you are selling a service or product, or making any kind of request throughout your day, you'll see how you yourself value a positive no. You'd much rather hear an honest "no" than have to decode, interpret, and translate all the socially correct fabrications that come your way. It's more effective for your productivity, to deal with an honest "no" than to have to listen to people pretending, that they are interested in doing something that they are never going to do.

So rather than seeing someone's "no" as a personal rejection, you can use it as a positive piece of information. Honesty saves you a lot of time.

When you deliver a positive no, it creates time for you automatically. You learn to decline requests that would only serve to take up your time. When your time is consumed by always saying yes, and pleasing people unnecessarily, you're not doing the necessary actions that you need to achieve your goals.

By mastering (through practice) a positive no, you're simply remaining true to yourself and what you are committed to.

It's been said that there are two pains in life: the pain of discipline and the pain of regret.

In the long run the pain of discipline weighs ounces, while the pain of regret weighs tons. The pain of discipline disappears quickly, while the pain of regret lasts forever.

You may experience some mild pains in the beginning, when you first practice handing out your positive nos. But in the long run it will save you tons of everlasting regret.

36

 | ***TOLERANCE vs.
CONFRONTATION***

A straight-line leader makes clear requests and proposals.

He respectfully confronts people and situations. He wants the truth, and challenges himself and others to get to the bottom of things.

Do you want to measure your straight-line leadership? Once a week stop what you are doing. Observe the activities that you are engaged in, and really challenge yourself by asking, “Are these activities taking me toward my goal or are they just making my life more complex?”

Most people really don’t want to confront anything—whatever it might be. Therefore, that thing, person, or situation they don’t confront gets very difficult to deal with. Let’s say that they don’t want to confront their reluctance to go into the world and make a big sale.

Now they think they need to read thirty-four sales books, before they call on some potential prospects. Or, if they are unwilling to confront their fear of public speaking, they think they need to go to Dale Carnegie six times before they go out and give a talk. Then they think they need to take additional public speaking courses after that.

The things that they don’t want to face get bigger and bigger. Life and its difficulties grow very complex out of non-confront. Unfinished jobs pile up. Promises are now broken. They could have just gone out and done what was required at the time, but they didn’t.

***You have to take risks.
We will only understand the
miracle of life fully when we
allow the unexpected
to happen.***

—Paulo Coelho—

To activate this distinction, it's time to list what I call your tolerations. What are you putting up with in your life? Situations that aren't benefiting you at all, but you tolerate them.

Let's say your executive assistant has now been late to work three times this month. Have you just tolerated that? Notice what toleration has done to you and to your relationship with her. What about the effectiveness of your business, too? Tolerations are the things that you're putting up with, that you actually have the ability to resolve and yet you still choose to ignore. Tolerations are things that literally suck and drain your attention and your energy. They always live in the back of your mind, from the minute you get up in the morning to the moment you fall asleep. They sometimes live after that in bad dreams. They are like mind parasites.

It is now time to confront them. Are you willing to risk the unexpected?

Your straight-line confrontations could be anything, from having a conversation with a friend who is bugging you, to cleaning up your messy desk, to washing your car, to sending a bold proposal to someone you know you want to do business with. Without being willing to confront these tolerations, they will drain your energy whenever you think about them.

Now notice that there's a difference between tolerating and coping. When

people are coping, they usually feel that whatever they are coping with can't really be changed. So they cope. They relax a bit about it and do their best to deal with it. But whatever you are tolerating, you know you can change; and that is why your tolerations drain you.

So now list those things that you have been tolerating—both in your personal life and business life. Put them on two separate lists. Got them down on paper? Good. Your next step is to write out the downside of keeping the tolerations in your life. What is the negative impact on your psyche? How about your relationships? What's the impact on your bank account?

Got all that down? Good, and now for the fun part. It's time to write out the upside of letting these tolerations go out of your life. What are all the positive benefits (list these in detail) of removing these things? On your peace of mind? On your relationships? On your pocketbook?

Finally, you are going to list out the actions that must be completed, to eliminate each and every toleration. Put the actions down next to absolutely every item that you have on your list. I like to look at three choices I have in every matter:

- | | |
|----|----------|
| 1. | Do |
| 2. | Drop |
| 3. | Delegate |

If I look out the window from my home office and see that the swimming pool has not been attended to, and is turning to an unsettling shade of pale green, I can apply my three options.

I can DO	I can go DO something now, like spend a couple of hours cleaning it, going to the pool supply store, putting in chlorine, etc. That's always an option.
I can DROP	I can just DROP it as a concern. As a toleration, I can choose to have it be a total non-issue for me and cope with the consequences (smell, mosquitoes, new forms of reptilian life, health inspectors, etc.).
I can DELEGATE	I can DELEGATE it, give the job to the local pool service company and probably be done with it.

It's always a refreshing experience to ask myself, "**What am I tolerating right now?**" And then list those tolerations. Am I ready to confront what's on the list? If so, I look at each item and either do, drop, or delegate.

It's always an action that someone isn't willing to take that stops him from succeeding, but only every time.

37 | **LANGUAGE THAT DESCRIBES REALITY vs. LANGUAGE THAT CREATES REALITY**

Some people use language to describe the lives they lead, while other people use language to create the lives they lead. These are the two types of language: descriptive and generative. One type describes; the other generates.

Notice that when you say, “It’s a beautiful day,” nothing happens to the day. That’s descriptive language.

But when you say to someone, “I promise to deliver your order by five o’clock today” and you’re sincere about it, you’ve altered that person’s day. Because of what you said, life has been influenced.

That’s because a declarative promise is a generative speech act. It produces real-life action and results. As is so well explained in Tracy Goss’s powerful book, *The Last Word on Power*, the major components of generative language are declarations, promises, and requests.

When you continue to make enough sincere requests and promises, without stopping, you can get almost anything accomplished. We can use our lives for creating or we can use them for reacting. While creating, we are engaging a higher bicameral creative brain activity, versus fearful lower reptile brain activity that centers on reaction.

A dog looks out into the environment for a new stimulus and reacts to it. That’s all the dog’s brain can really do. It can’t create reality like we can because it doesn’t possess the language we have. So why do we still live like dogs? Why do we just react to things all day? Why do we only use language to describe the things we react to? Why do we live these lives of reacting to everything instead of creating the life we choose? ANSWER: We do it out of habit.

When you do something long enough, it begins to feel natural and normal. Dysfunction becomes the comfortable norm.

You can shift to a different gear that will serve you more effectively, by becoming aware of the gear you are presently in, and then consciously choosing to shift from there. Your dog can't do the same thing because he only functions out of a lower brain. There's no language capacity there. You can shift from reaction to creation by utilizing the "law of creation." The law of creation goes beyond the law of attraction. Once you have the picture clearly in your head, of what you want and what it feels like to have that, you then become proactive. You produce the life you get. And you produce the life you get by declaring it, promising it and implementing the necessary required actions.

***The future enters into us, in
order to transform itself in us,
long before it happens.***

—Rainer Maria Rilke—

As Steve Zaffron and Dave Logan write in *The Three Laws of Performance*, "Future-based language, also called generative language, has the power to create new futures, to craft vision, and to eliminate the blinders that are preventing people from seeing possibilities. It doesn't describe how a situation occurs; it transforms how it occurs. It does this by re-writing the future." You practice the law of creation by creating. So, based on what I'm up to, "What do I want to create?"

Fear causes reaction. Shifting out of fear allows creation to occur. Fearful business owners are simply "locked in" out of habit and are just reacting to things. Successful business owners are people who know that everything that comes their way is neutral—and therefore an opportunity to create. Neutral is far superior to good and bad when it comes to creation. Neutral

is not passive. Neutral is the blank canvas where creation starts. An artist's dream!

Handle complaints with grace and open, generous listening. Reacting is the lowest form of reptile living. There is no bad news. There is only information which I choose to work with.

We are talking about deliberately shifting the mind. We are not talking about waiting. Waiting is reacting.

How do we shift? We do it by noticing the inner stance from which we are operating, and choosing a more workable inner stance.



—Bijan—

38

 | **COMMITMENT**
vs. INVOLVEMENT

People think that being involved in something is enough. They are involved in their job. But to them, that may mean simply doing enough to not get fired.

They are involved in their children's activities. But that could simply mean that they go to their kids' games, and spend half the time on their cell phones talking to their colleagues.

Commitment is much different.

To hear the sound of commitment, listen to my friend, Bijan, one of the world's most famous men's clothing designers: *"The world said conform, the world said settle for less, the world said compromise and no one will know... so I made my own world."*

A popular way to distinguish commitment from involvement is the following observation. If your breakfast is bacon and eggs, notice that the pig was committed while the chicken was merely involved. If you are enrolling people into a project, or selling them a service, your commitment to truly serve them will be the deciding factor in your success. You don't have to always have your sales act together. You don't always need a polished technique or script. Just trust the basic childlike innocence of authentic commitment to serve. Know that a deep desire to serve someone will always connect, no matter how you say things.

It was character that got us out of bed, commitment that moved us into action, and discipline that enabled us to follow through.

—Zig Ziglar—

One of the first signs of commitment is a request for assistance. It demonstrates that the person requesting assistance is more committed to getting a result, than they are worried about how it looks to ask for help. It all starts with your commitment to the result. Anyone really committed requests assistance.

Some people feel that making requests is a form of begging. It is not. When you make a request based on a worthy cause, to which you are committed, you also provide that individual with an opportunity to contribute and grow. When you're not committed, you worry about losing face and what people will think of you needing assistance. When you are committed you don't care what anyone thinks; you get someone to assist you in achieving the result.

Are you living in a way that is required to get the results you want?

It's about staying focused and finishing what you start. That's what true commitment does. Commitment doesn't fade. Commitment always finishes strong.

Unsuccessful individuals are always trying to decide, if they feel like doing the things that are required to get the job done. How involved do they feel like being? There's no commitment in that.

There are people who hate the life that they have. The problem is that they don't hate it enough to change. So they just drift along, either living a life of quiet desperation, or making a lot of noise constantly complaining about it. It's called "living in no-person's land." You hate where you are at but you don't hate it bad enough to do anything about it. This is exactly what commitment is not.

Commitment is relentless. A professional doesn't quit until the job is done. A true commitment alters behaviors and actions. When a person says he's committed and his behaviors and actions remain the same—he's not committed.

A person functioning from a relentless, direct, upbeat inner stance will out-produce a person operating out of a tentative, overanalyzing inner stance eleven out of ten times.



39

 | ***I CONTRIBUTE***
vs. I DESERVE

It's impossible to be a creative, thriving straight-line leader if you are focused on what you think you deserve. Obsessing about the concepts of fairness and what others owe you, will put you in a victim's mindset in no time, which is the most disempowering inner stance that you can ever assume.

To be an effective leader you must assume the stance of contribution. You will always ask yourself, inside every encounter and conversation, "**How can I serve this person? What can I contribute?**"

Many managers feel threatened by star performers on their team, so they keep their distance and don't give their best people much time or appreciation. They are the same managers who are bitter about turnover and lack of loyalty. As a straight-line leader your mission is to encourage and empower others, and let them get the credit. Straight-line leaders don't call attention to themselves. They grow leaders all around them.

True power is the willingness and ability to assist others in making themselves more powerful. The most effective coaches in the business world, are those who bring out the power inherent in their clients. The best leaders do the same thing.

The worst, least effective coaches and leaders are those who are always dispensing short-term, quick fix-it advice. People receiving the advice never grow. In fact, they become even more dependent on outside influences to have their lives get better, instead of creating empowering inner stances, which are the source of lasting change.

Jeanette called us in, because her direct reports were not giving her very good evaluations for leadership. They said she wasn't a good listener. They said she didn't understand her people. She talked to us about the reports co-workers made on her in which she was described as "controlling." Even

though she saw some truth in the reports, she resented them. *“I deserve better,”* she said.

We asked whether she would be willing to shift her inner stance from what she felt she deserved from her people, to how she could contribute to their success. We also pointed out that those reports were a form of valuable feedback, and that all growth is dependent on feedback.

“I guess it’s my nature,” she said. *“I’m always trying to solve their challenges for them. I’m a problem-solver. I am just now seeing that my approach is actually causing more problems. I’m impatient. Sometimes I don’t even let them finish their sentences when they come to see me.”*

We let Jeanette know that her so-called nature was non-existent. What was at play was her inner stance—the operating position she was habitually coming from. When she was willing to change that, she would solve her problem.

“I like the word ‘stance’ for this,” she said. *“I played softball in college and whenever I went into a hitting slump, I would change my stance at the plate and pretty soon I’d be hitting the ball again.”* It’s the same idea exactly, we told her. The position you choose to operate from in life has you be who you are. Who you are in life determines how you function in life (the actions you take and don’t take). How you function in life determines the results you get. At first she felt uncomfortable listening and asking questions instead of giving advice. We let her know that when she stayed with it, she would learn to be comfortable about being uncomfortable.

Willingness to accept being uncomfortable is a major skill cultivated by the straight-line leader, because all growth is accompanied by discomfort. A true master is soon comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Jeanette saw that quick advice and obsessive control of the conversation was not a contribution. A true contribution would be anything that grew the person that she was speaking with. Her true power as a leader would be in her ability to bring out the best in others, rather than trying to fix them and control them.

She worried about whether she would be able to consistently give up control. We pointed out that people can always give up what doesn’t serve them. Always.

Jeanette began to enjoy her new power as a leader who specialized in contribution. She dropped all mental chatter about what she deserved or did not deserve. The whole concept of deserving left her world because it no longer had value. It didn’t serve her in any way. She was now operating from pure contribution. Her stance had changed.

40

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS vs. PROTECTIVE ACTIONS

When things start to get difficult people start to avoid reality. They don't see that reality is always on their side. They get lost in explaining away their part in the story about difficulty.

In his breakthrough book *Actualizations*, Stewart Emery draws a very valuable distinction between correction and protection.

Any boat or plane on a journey is in a constant state of correction. It is always off course the majority of time until it arrives. The corrections it makes are what get the desired result.

If we humans would follow the same flight path, we would also arrive at our destinations (the results we want) with the same kind of accuracy.

However, we get upset when we are off course. We think we have failed, or are making a mistake, and need to protect ourselves from criticism and low self-esteem. So we come up with stories about why we went off course. It wasn't our fault. It was someone else! And as we tell these stories, we get further and further away from the destination. By always trying to protect our feelings, our ego, or our image, we miss the available correction.

This happens quite often when a sale is about to be made. The buyer raises an objection and the salesperson is now into full protection mode, giving reasons and excuses and debating the objection. If the salesperson could see the true value of an objection, he or she would welcome it every time because it offers a correction in where the dialogue is going.

Buyers will tell you what's going wrong in your communication when you listen and are willing to correct. The same is true with employees who are not performing for their manager because they are upset with her. The correction is there for the taking, but the manager is so busy protecting and defending that no correction is made.

“Somehow people have the notion that they are going to get away from failure, that they are going to succeed enough to never fail again,” says Emery. “That option is simply not available; it’s like trying to eat once and for all.”

The value of having a coach who is straight with you, is that you can view all failures eagerly, and with enthusiasm—as opportunities to make fresh corrections.

Otherwise, the human tendency is to protect against failure and get defensive and self-serving. Meanwhile the plane veers further off course.

41

 | **NOW vs.
LATER**

| The only time you can ever do something about anything is now.

The problem with individuals who tolerate mediocrity in their lives, is that no matter what good idea for taking action comes up, it's never going to happen now. It's an idea for some distant future. People who struggle have great ideas that they will implement "some day in the future."

Almost everyone, deep down, knows what to do to get whatever result they truly want. It's just that they are not choosing to do it right now. "Getting around to it" is not leadership.

The future is a terrible place to put an action plan because the future does not exist. Literally.

The pattern of a low achiever is, "Next week," "Next month," "After I save up enough money," "After I..." and "As soon as I..." But any time but now won't get you the results that you are after.

One of the first things a straight-line coach looks for is the possibility of decisive action. What can my client do now? Decisive action is the difference maker. Decisive action is the game changer. And decisive action can only live in the now, which is the only place that it can assist you.

The only real question you face regarding your goals in life is "Now or later?" And realize that later is code for never. We speak in code because it's too painful to really confront how passive we have been.

While indulging this passivity, our mind turns to wanting. We think we want things. But while we are wanting, we are not creating. And, therefore, the very wanting of something forestalls its creation.

Pause here and ask yourself: **"What's the most powerful action that I can take right now to resolve this challenge?"** Do this many times throughout your day, and watch how your life leaves the violent circle, and gets on the straight line to results. We are talking about velocity.

Look at everyone in your world who has stopped—your friends, your family, your professional peers—look at them all. They had such big visions! They even had callings! What stopped them? People go to psychologists to find out why they stop. They study past patterns, old wounds. They begin to construct a personality, a solid story worthy of absolute belief. They go down on their knees to their own identity, falsely thinking that various traits, tendencies, and characteristics have stopped them. They study their past. They work their cleansing processes. But they still stop. They still don't know what stops them.

Let's reveal, in a very straight way, what stops them, so that there can be no more confusion.

You were not willing to do what was required to get the result that you were after. That's it in a nutshell.

So, from now on, don't let what you don't know or what you don't feel stop you. Ever. Because those are false obstacles.

Once again, it's always an action that you are not willing to take that stops you.

There's good news in that. It's actually great news, as a matter of fact, because it makes life so much simpler. Here's "A;" there's "B;" let's draw a straight line. You game?

In physics, the law of entropy says that all systems, left unattended, will run down. Unless new energy is pumped in, the organism will disintegrate.

—Alan Loy McGinnis—

Clients have said to me in coaching sessions, “I wanted to do that, but a lot got in the way. My daughter got sick. My car needed repair. My board of directors wasn’t convinced that our business plan is good enough. I had to replace our sales manager. Our best customer had a horrendous problem. I had to fly to Dubai to hold my client’s hand in a negotiation. Our pool was hit by lightning. My plastic surgery didn’t turn out well, and I couldn’t go out for a week or two. My computer was down. I lost the backup files. I wanted to do it, but a lot got in the way.”

So I set them straight. And maybe it should be called Setting-Them-Straight-Line Coaching. Here’s what it is:

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY IS NOT DOING IT.

You simply didn’t do what was required. That is all. Put that on your wall.

42 | **CHILDLIKE** **vs. CHILDISH**

The great philosopher Immanuel Kant said that enlightenment occurs, *“when a person grows out of his self-imposed immaturity.”*

We call these unenlightened and immature people childish. They are often quite rigid and inflexible in their immature and stubborn approach to life. Whereas childlike people are quite flexible in life, and are usually much more successful than childish people.

It’s fine to set standards that you live from, and not be willing to deviate from them when they truly work for you. But simply being rigid and unyielding for the sake of being stubborn, is not useful for anyone.

Childish people are usually stuck in childhood survival strategies, that although they may have worked at one time early in life, no longer work now.

Childlike people are commonly referred to as adult adults.

Childish people are referred to as adult children.

Notice that these are simply different inner stances that people choose to operate from. Age has nothing to do with it. The stance is everything. The stance is fundamental. Adult adults can be twenty-five years old and adult children can be sixty.

Many times the source of childish behavior in adults, can be revealed by using the following straight-line coaching questions:

When you were a child what was your favorite strategy for:

1. Getting out of trouble?
2. Getting what you wanted?
3. Getting your way?



43 | **PLAYING TO WIN vs. PLAYING NOT TO LOSE**

Kansas City in the 1970s was a rough place to grow up. When I was twelve, I got tired of getting beat up so I got my parents to enroll me in a karate school. After a while I got several promotions. A television station even came in one day and filmed me. They put me on TV. I looked really good performing the various martial arts moves. The problem was that I was still getting beat up. I also noticed that some of the students in my martial arts school, were coming in with more than a few bruises and occasional black eyes. They had various excuses. I was twelve. I readily bought their excuses. Then I went to a karate tournament. My black-belt instructors, whom I idolized, were demolished. That was enough for me to figure out that I was in the wrong place.

Later I read an article in which Bruce Lee was interviewed. He said that although he feared no one, Jim Harrison was the last person he would ever want to meet in an alley fight. Harrison's school was about thirty minutes from my home, so I contacted him. He said, "*Come back when you're sixteen.*"

So on my sixteenth birthday I went back. I noticed he had a strange rust-colored discoloration on his training mats. I didn't realize it was dried blood at the time. Harrison was the most disciplined and detailed man I had ever met in my life. I got the distinction of "mastery" versus just "dabbling" from him. Life was never the same for me after that. And I never got beat up again.

The lessons I learned from Harrison extended far beyond the ring of physical battle. His take-no-prisoners approach to finishing what you start, gave me a distinction for winning, that I have carried into every business and life situation since. Known for his notorious battles during the unforgettable "Blood-n-Guts" era of American karate, Jim Harrison has been called the closest thing to a modern Samurai the twentieth century can produce. He has won numerous karate titles, including the first-ever, full-contact kick-boxing match held at the 1970 U.S. Karate Championships. Harrison also

held the first-ever World Professional Karate Championships at his dojo in Kansas City, 1968. This was a heavy contact, no-pads competition that drew the best fighters in the world. Jim Harrison is known for both hitting hard and taking hard hits. I can vouch personally for that reputation. He is one of the toughest and hardest training competitors alive, even today at the age of seventy-three. During his first-ever, full-contact bout in Dallas, Texas, he received a cut from a glove lace over his eye. Attempts at taping failed to stop the bleeding. Finally, between rounds a physician came into the ring, and without anesthetic stitched the wound over Harrison's eye. Harrison, lying calmly on the floor of the ring during the stitching, never flinched. He then went on to win the fight with a knockout. Perhaps Harrison's most legendary feat of toughness was when, as a police officer, he was ambushed by an ex-con who came out of a bathroom stall and fired point blank with a high-caliber pistol at him. Harrison managed to subdue his attacker before passing out from his wounds. The wounds, very serious in nature, kept him down for a while, but he recovered and came back stronger than ever. Harrison, now a retired police officer, continues a long and successful career as an instructor, mentor, competitor, and promoter.

He taught me how to enter a martial arts match with full focus on winning. He taught me how to not let up or back off. When I was winning, he taught me to stop stopping and finish what was started. I'll never forget what Harrison emphasized. He would invite other martial arts schools over for a competition and then lock the door to the dojo. He would have us fight until there was a clear winner. He was all about teaching us to finish. While other martial arts instructors were teaching all kinds of complicated sparring, Harrison would focus us on one technique and have us do it over and over until we got it right. He drove us as far as he could—and then some.

Many times in business we get a big win and then we coast. Instead of continuing to play to win, we are now simply playing not to lose. We get cautious and lose our energy and our drive. Creativity and innovation soon disappear. And by trying not to lose, we find we are losing even more. We lose our fire. We've lost the innovative spirit. We begin to doubt ourselves.

In his play, *Measure for Measure*, William Shakespeare famously wrote, "Our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt." The great tennis pro and coach Ron Waite says it this way: "If you are up by more than a break, you must try to play more aggressively. You want to punctuate the advantage in your opponent's mind. Go for bigger

serves. Serve and volley on points. Hit with more pace. Run your opponent 'coast to coast.' If you win a game in this manner, your confidence soars and your opponent's confidence diminishes. If you lose, you are still up a break."

Most people get a little bit ahead and then they back off. They start playing not to lose the advantage that they have.

Many times this weak, playing not to lose mentality, shows up at the negotiating table, where people enter a conversation already seeking a "win-win." This is soft, conciliatory negotiating that always ends up with you giving too much away, and not being fair to your own side. This comes from needing to be liked, thinking we need the relationship, and not advancing our own mission or not acting from what we are committed to. We always lose by playing not to lose.

Jim Harrison focused on one thing: winning. He always did what was core. My relationship with Harrison changed my life. I learned from him that winning comes from going deep with what it is that you are committed to do... that, and not backing off until you are finished.

44 | INVESTMENT vs. COST

When straight-line individuals are confronted with a potential opportunity, they will look at the opportunity in terms of an investment.

If they are going to participate, they look at the potential return for the time, money, and energy that they will expend.

Unfortunately, most people who struggle on a consistent basis look at only one thing: cost. They usually never get past their obsession with how much they will have to pay. They end up sitting there. They remind me of the following story, the author of which is anonymous:

HELP!

I walked through the wildwood, and what did I see but a unicorn with his horn stuck in a tree, crying *“Someone please help me before it’s too late.”*

I hollered, *“I’ll free you.”*

He hollered back, *“Wait, how much will it hurt? How long will it take? Are you sure that my horn will not scratch, bend, or break? How hard will you pull? How much must I pay? Must you do it right now or is Wednesday okay? Have you done this before? Do you have the right tools? Have you graduated from horn-saving school? Will I owe you a favor? And what will it be? Do you promise that you will not damage the tree? Should I close my eyes? Should I sit down or stand? Do you have insurance? Have you washed your hands? And after you free me, tell me, what then? Can you guarantee I won’t get stuck again? Tell me when, tell me how, tell me why, tell me where.”*

I guess he’s still standing there.

You can see all of the circles and the zigzags in the mind of the unicorn, as the opportunity fades away. Once again, a straight-line individual will look at potential opportunities as investments in their future. They will make a decision and live with the decision. Circle and zigzag people have a tendency to look gift Rolls Royces under the hood and always wonder why life is so hard.

45 | **CORE ACTIONS vs. SURFACE ACTIONS**

Core actions are actions that will make a real difference, in producing what you intend to achieve in life. They are a very straight line to desired results.

Surface actions can keep you busy but they don't produce much, if anything at all, in terms of real results.

Think back to the people you know who are on a continuous diet and exercise regime, but hardly ever lose weight. You are looking at surface actions.

Many times people engage in surface actions to look good to others, and to show that they are somehow committed... but what they are really committed to is staying comfortable.

Core actions are commonly referred to as "necessary required actions." People who are sincere about their desired results engage in core actions, because they know that they are the only things that matter.

For a fulfilling life:

1. Define what you choose to produce.
2. Define the necessary required actions.
3. Do the necessary required actions.

Doing "what matters" will save you enormous amounts of time and energy.

At least fifty times a day, ask yourself if you are doing the necessary required action for what you are up to in life.

Straight-line leaders become masters at doing "what's core."



46

 | **FOCUS**
vs. SPRAY

There is an old saying in the halls of business and sports:
“Winners focus. Losers spray.”

One of the greatest challenges of our high tech, massively informational world, is that spraying is easier to do than ever before. And focus is more difficult than ever. Focus requires an active, conscious commitment.

The great martial artist and actor Bruce Lee once said that a warrior is, “*an average person with laser-like focus.*” It’s logically clear that a focused mind will be far more effective than a mind scattered by emails, texts, and voice messages. So, why is this even a problem? Why would people not be ruthless about cultivating their focus and eliminating the behavior that sprays? Because of the payoff.

Every bad habit has a big payoff, no matter how dysfunctional it looks on the surface. Before eliminating that habit, we want to identify and acknowledge the payoff it gives. There is always a payoff to someone engaging in unworkable behavior. No matter how costly the behavior is to the individual, there is always a perceived upside for engaging in that behavior. Payoffs are nothing more than expensive benefits that people receive, for engaging in unworkable behaviors, or tolerating unwanted situations. There is also a perceived downside for letting go of the behavior.

If I stop checking my email every ten minutes, I might miss something. I might miss an opportunity that’s time-sensitive. I might lose that sense of reassurance I get that people want me and need me. “Look! My cell phone says I have a text! People like me!” Focus requires that the anxious, people-pleasing and instant-gratification behaviors, be set aside for the higher good. It also requires, that we are willing to engage our minds, in the one thing that matters at the time. Life moves forward with greater velocity and power after this.

Focus the sun with a magnifying glass, and you can burn a dead leaf in a matter of seconds. Allow the unfocused sun to shine down and spray its beams onto all the dead leaves in the forest, and the decomposing process will take weeks. Our lives are exactly the same.

Andrew Leung is a successful straight-line coach, who specializes in working with mid-sized companies in the Silicon Valley. His clients appreciate his commitment to focusing them on activities and actions, that lead directly to the results they want.

It may seem strange to note, that so many of our nation's best and brightest executives and company leaders, can get swept into the low-return activities of the day, that lead nowhere.

When Andrew Leung comes in to meet with them, it's a major wake up call. One of his specialties is to discover what he calls, "*the goal behind the goal.*" Many times Leung uncovers an undisclosed goal, that they really want to achieve but don't acknowledge. Therefore, they put forth a surface goal that they think sounds better. Andrew uncovers that in the beginning, so that both he and the client are not barking up the wrong tree. Once the true goal is clarified, the necessary required actions are spelled out. This produces a powerful focus on high-return activity, and eliminates the tendency of (even the brightest) clients, to spray their mental energy wastefully throughout the day.

"If my clients' activities aren't focused on necessary required actions," says Leung, *"the results just won't happen, and soon people are content all day long with trying, and then they become totally disenchanted with the company."*

Some people are "feedback sensitive" and want to continue to use the same unworkable actions, despite a lack of results. But it's like repeatedly trying to put a square peg in a round hole. They choose to protect (their feelings) instead of correct (their actions). Soon they become defensive, but Andrew does not let them get away with that.

Since some of these people are in very high-powered positions, Andrew chooses to be kind with them and share the consequences of their actions, instead of being nice, like coaches that they have had in the past who just ignored the consequences.

Andrew's celebrated achievements in hunting, shooting sports, and martial arts have trained him to hold a bold focus on the target, and coach his clients to do the same. He is effective at getting the client to confront and do core activities, and always stay away from the surface activities that only feel like work, but don't really produce results.

It's Andrew's way of coaching focus versus simply allowing spray. The same aggressive mastery and precision, that has had his shooting skills written up in national journals, is applied to clients whose problems stem from lack of direction.

Leung is fond of reminding his clients that any organization—no matter how big or how small—is composed of individual people. No matter how popular or well known the organization is, it would not exist if it were not for the people who work there.

The performance of an organization is solely dependent upon the performance of its people. For this reason, Andrew relentlessly brings the focus of his clients' attention to "what's core" to increasing their performance, and maintaining that increase.

More often than not, performance blockages are due to how people communicate to themselves about one of two things. It's usually a disempowering conversation that they have about a particular situation they are up against, or a disempowering conversation that they are having about themselves and their abilities.

By getting to the source of and resolving these performance blockages, individuals are freed to align around the common purpose for the organization's existence. Once the individual's purpose and the organization's purpose are the same, all the previous disempowering conversations disappear. The only question that remains is "What's next?"

Alignment causes inspiration in people. They stop stopping and persistence becomes much easier. When individuals drop their resistance to doing "what's next," they experience a surge in performance. And when that occurs the organization surges as well.

47 | *HOW IT CAN BE DONE vs. WHY IT CAN'T BE DONE*

The human mind is a very creative bio-computer. It can be used to create results in amazing ways. But it can also be used to justify failure, in equally inventive ways.

Most people in the world of sales and business, use their minds to build elaborate stories and theories around “Why it can’t be done.” They talk constantly about how difficult working in sales is, how volatile the market is, how hard clients are to persuade, and why the economy is the problem.

Once the “why it can’t be done” mind is finished with the outer environment and circumstances, it turns inward. It turns on itself. It talks about why “I’m not cut out for sales. My personality is not appropriate. I’m not one of those sales types. I have severe introverted tendencies. My parents never gave me social skills,” and the list goes on, very creatively, to explain, justify, verify, and anchor the belief system to “why it can’t be done.”

These people don’t see that they are wasting a precious resource. They don’t realize that the mind can just as easily be used the opposite way—to discover “how it can be done.” And when the mind is used in that direction, a straight line to your intended result has begun.

I will use my client Tom McGovern as a living example of this. During a time when the conventional wisdom says that commercial real estate is not a very lucrative field, Tom McGovern is running counter to that trend. He’s been working in the field for twenty-five years, and has been a dramatic professional example of how a straight-line leader creates his own success, independent of the market or the economy. It’s based on holding his focus on how it can be done.

McGovern does not waste his time thinking things to death. He chooses his next action and moves. His competitors spend huge amounts of time obsessing about things. Tom doesn’t overthink anything. He just acts decisively.

The first time I met Tom was in 1991. He said to me at that time that he wanted to become extremely successful, so that one day he could devote significant time to supporting disadvantaged children. I thought this was fascinating, as most people want to become successful, so that they can buy big homes and fast cars and look rich. I knew it wouldn't take long for Tom to become a star. McGovern decided early that even though he was not a typical "sales type" person, that he could counter that by choosing to become a knowledgeable expert in his field, and simply learn more useful information than his competition. Note that McGovern's quest, was always for information he could immediately and usefully apply to his profession, as contrasted with the people we identified earlier, who use the acquisition of knowledge as a substitute for required action.

"I always had the idea that if I learned more than anyone else, that at some point it would be a competitive advantage that I could apply," said McGovern. "So I was always committed to learning more to differentiate myself in the marketplace."

He was calling forth the formula that Jerry Garcia had used to make *The Grateful Dead* a legendary band. *"Don't just be better than everyone else at what you do,"* Garcia said. *"Be the only one who does what you do."*

McGovern was taking ownership and creating rather than reacting. He chose to be the only one who dug as deeply as he did into client business knowledge.

Then in 1996, McGovern met Yahoo! It was at that point that his career took off. In that meeting, he was able to apply the knowledge and business understanding, he had so deliberately accumulated over the previous ten years.

McGovern remembers, *"I knew I wasn't going to compete on just my pure sales ability. So it was intuitive to me that I needed to compete some other way. I needed to be more technically competent than others—to offer service in a way that other brokers were not offering. I knew if it was just a matter of being aggressive and pushy and whatever else—just selling—that wasn't going to work for me,"* he said. *"I knew my own mind-set wasn't that. I had to take a different approach."*

McGovern used two straight-line distinctions:

- 1. Commitment vs. involvement
- 2. Well-practiced vs. winging it

He was absolutely committed to being unique at what he did, and more valuable to clients than his competition. While other people were merely involved in commercial real estate, McGovern was committed to leading the field and being unlike anyone else.

He also practiced his craft more than anyone. He learned more. He went to greater knowledge depths than others. He was better prepared for client meetings. While other sales types relied on winging it with charm and aggressive closing techniques to make a sale, McGovern demonstrated a well-practiced craft of useful consultation. This practice continues for him to this day. He has been in a business education course for sixteen years; that has made a huge difference for him.

McGovern illustrates how a powerful inner stance can create a faster route to success. It doesn't have to go through all the old orthodox/be pushy/win people over/do schmoozing and networking—because there's a straighter line between A and B. It involves taking ownership of getting the distinctions that shift your inner stance. It requires that you apply the distinctions to your own professional life.

What Tom McGovern has done in his life, is a good illustration of how you can use your mind in more ways than one. You don't have to use the old, worn out 1940s concept of selling to succeed.

Many people at McGovern's stage of success start to wonder if "the ride" will last. McGovern, however, takes ownership. He takes responsibility for his continued success.

Clients hire McGovern because he can add more value than others—because he has more business and real estate knowledge. Outsiders get confused, and think his success is due to the fact that he's been around so long, that he has "old boy" relationships.

When McGovern first met with Yahoo!, they had fifty people. The CFO had a relationship with a competing broker who was referred to them by their investors. But the CFO also agreed to meet McGovern.

The CFO was immediately impressed with McGovern's immense knowledge of his industry and Yahoo's situation as well. It wasn't long afterward that McGovern was awarded the Yahoo! account.

The rest is history. McGovern and Yahoo! turned out to be a perfect match and a perfect relationship that has lasted for over twelve years.

Nobody said you couldn't go out of the box. You assumed there was a box, and you assumed there was a rule.

—Bob Koether—

Notice that the advantages straight-line performers have in the marketplace, are advantages they take responsibility for creating and maintaining. They are not handed to them.

McGovern is also a strong advocate of coaching.

“When I have a blind spot, or I’m not seeing what I need to be doing, a great coach—and I’ve had great coaches—points that out to me so that I can actually do what’s required. It’s not a matter of I don’t want to do it; it’s just that I don’t see it in certain situations—all the options that are available that a coach can see. A coach can then get me through that stuck period, so I can get to whatever it is that is going to make the biggest difference.”

Another straight-line distinction that McGovern has utilized to his benefit is *“I contribute” versus “I deserve.”*

“You’ve really got to help somebody before they are going to help you,” he says. “I’ve always looked at becoming valuable to others first, and then they would be of value to me. Be good at something yourself—be really good at something—so you can be valuable to somebody else; and then they’ll include you in their business and their life, in a way that they wouldn’t have included you otherwise.”

McGovern sees that focusing on always making a contribution pays off. Whereas focusing on what you deserve is a futile activity, that never leads anywhere but to low energy and low creativity.

McGovern has learned that coming from these powerful inner stances and operating principles, consistently holds his focus on how it can be done. He wastes no precious mental energy on why it can't be done.

Although Tom has achieved all this success, is invited to A-list parties and plays golf with some of the most powerful people in the Silicon Valley, he has remained humble and supportive, always giving back to his community, being supportive of colleagues, and accepting speaking requests whenever possible.

McGovern is in great demand as a public speaker and mentor to up-and-coming real estate professionals. They are fascinated with his story and they want to learn his secrets. He knows, through experience, that you can achieve anything when you stay focused on how it can be done.

48

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STRESSING vs. CARING

Most people stress themselves out as a form (or a show) of really caring about getting a result. But it's not caring; it's just stressing out. Stressing out only makes one do worse. True caring makes one do better. That's why it's vital for a straight-line leader to know the difference. The two couldn't be more different.

Caring is relaxing, focusing, and calling on all the resources that you bring to bear, when you pay full attention with peace of mind. No one performs better than when they are relaxed and focused.

"Stress is basically a disconnection from the earth," says the great creativity teacher Natalie Goldberg. *"It's a forgetting of the breath. Stress is an ignorant state. It believes that everything is an emergency."* Most circular managers unconsciously try to use stress as a way to motivate others. First, they intentionally upset themselves over the prospect of not completing a project or getting a desired result, and then they use the upset as negative energy to fire up the team. It doesn't work.

Stressing out over our team's goals is not the same as caring about them. Stressing out is not a useful form of motivation. No performer, when tense, or stressed, performs well. No leader does as well. No salesperson. No athlete. No fundraiser. No field-goal kicker. No free-throw shooter. No parent.

A stressed-out, tense performer only has access to a small percent of his or her skill and intelligence.

Ron Ristaino is a straight-line coach who specializes in increasing performance, productivity, and profits, while reducing the stress in his clients' professional lives. He was born and raised in the Coachella Valley in California. Today, he focuses his talents on coaching professionals and businesses, on straight-line distinctions that pull them out of the circle of non-productivity, and restore their enterprises and careers to ultimate effectiveness.

People fly in from all over the country to be coached by Ron, finally landing in the small Palm Springs airport in his hometown, after having experienced time-consuming layovers along the way.

He is totally dedicated to not only the financial aspect of his clients' lives, but also their health and well-being. One of his favorite distinctions is, "Stressing versus caring."

"Many of my clients spend their days racing around firefighting and trying to do everything at once," says Ron. "They think it's because they care so much about their business that they stress themselves out every day, but stressing is not caring; stressing is stressing."

Ron works with his clients to help them slow down and focus. They soon see that all their stressful running around was not advancing the cause of the business at all. He gets them to own the difference between busyness and productivity. Soon they're achieving higher sales, less stress, and more productivity.

The exaggerated sense of urgency that leads to frenzied firefighting, often exists in confusion about true obstacles interfering with intended results, and simple conditions of the game. He works with business owners until they can relax into seeing clearly, that many uncomfortable situations are merely conditions of the game that they are playing, and are not obstacles at all. Perceived obstacles produce stress, whereas conditions of the game are just conditions of the game.

A stressed-out performer is always a poor performer. In football, the opposing team will often call a time out, just as a field goal kicker is lining up to kick. They want him to go back to the sidelines and think more about the kick. They want him to consider the downside of missing the kick. What will his teammates think of him? What will it do to his career? And it's proven statistically, field goal attempts made after the opponents call a time out, have a lower rate of success than field goals kicked right away, before the kicker has a chance to stress out.

The same relationship exists in business between stress and performance. The greater the stress, the poorer the performance—and only always.

Therefore, Ron sits down with coaching clients to eliminate the stressors in their system as a starting point.

"I like to introduce them to reality," he says. "The reality of the problem is always less dramatic, than the story people have made up about the problem. These catastrophic, panicky stories soon become the problem. When the client looks at reality with me, he usually sees an easy solution."

Ron worked recently with the owner of a healthcare facility, who was frozen stuck on a reimbursement problem in his system. *“He thought his reimbursement issue was the end of the world,”* Ron said. *“He had built up such a big story around how difficult it would be to solve and how crippling the consequences were, that he was completely divorced from reality. Returning to reality showed him that this issue was easily solvable.”*

People who are trying to do everything themselves, without a coach or consultant to show them options and alternatives, often go down the rabbit hole into absolute despair. Small problems begin to look huge. Tiny matters become major obstacles to profitability. The stressed-out mind creates a nightmare out of nothing.

Ristaino has worked with healthcare companies who have become temporarily paralyzed by their stressful stories. They are afraid to launch a new product because they’re scared about timing, the market, the economy, and everything else they can tell a story about. Ron wants them to see the distinction between waiting and creating. All the time waiting for circumstances to be perfect, is time that you are not creating. And creating is what drives business success.

The stressed-out manager is also usually in trouble with the people who report to him. His stress is not fun to be around. It results in low morale, tardiness, absenteeism, and a high rate of turnover. *“When that’s happening I introduce the straight-line distinction of Expectations versus Agreements,”* says Ron. *“When people learn to sit down with another person and create agreements, it’s almost as if miracles happen. Both people are immediately happier and better able to do good work.”*

Expectations, on the other hand, only lead to more stress. Leaders who lead by expecting things are not straight-line leaders. They are stressed-out circle people trying to manage.

Ristaino’s dramatic successes as a coach have been the result of delivering usable distinctions, that his clients pick up like a gardener picks up a tool off the ground to use. Straight-line distinctions are not philosophies or mere concepts to mentally agree with. They are usable tools that alter your inner stance in such a way, that results that once seemed extraordinary are now the everyday norm.

49 | *MAKING A LIVING vs. CREATING PERFECTION*

Of all the fascinating people I have ever had the privilege of knowing, no one has ever demonstrated a grander commitment, and a greater love for their chosen profession than Bijan Pakzad. To many, Bijan is simply known as the most expensive men's clothing designer in the world. But there is so much more to the Bijan that I know.

Born in Tehran, Bijan settled in America and started his global fashion business in 1976. It wasn't long before kings, presidents, and captains of industry sought him out for his unique commitment to perfection. Today his story is the stuff of legend.

What makes Bijan so unique is the inner stance from which he operates. He comes from perfection. In his heart and in his mind, perfection for the creations he designs for his clients is actually possible. This type of audacious stance seems impossible until you speak with his clients. Listen to them, and you'll find out that in their opinion Bijan actually accomplishes his goal. They will tell you no one compares to his brilliance and his relentless dedication to his clients. Bijan once told me that he lives for every detail in each of his creations. He intentionally puts his life into each button, each stitch, and each seam. When you look into his eyes you don't doubt him. Bijan does not concern himself with what other well-known designers are doing. He doesn't seek greatness in comparison to his competitors. He seeks to be a world apart. He is the only one doing what he does. If you say the others are designers, then he is not a designer. He is the creator of perfection.

Intuitively, he always knew that limitation created value. It's a straight-line principle we teach every one of our clients in business. However, with Bijan it is being lived. He does not dilute his line. You may see Brioni agree to put some of their clothing lines in Neiman Marcus or Saks, but never Bijan.

Straight-line leaders get their power from empowering others. They do not wait to be empowered. When they're in a jam, they do not look outward to be saved.

When Bijan could not find anyone to create his designs, he became his own manufacturer. He didn't see that situation as an obstacle to the perfection he was embodying. To him it was simply a condition of the game. His ready smile and obvious joy do not come from his great wealth; they come from continuously enjoying that game, and all of its conditions.

Bijan has become a billionaire himself by having his artful designs empower the powerful. He knows that a man makes a definitive statement about himself in the first fifteen minutes you meet him. Bijan assists this process by designing exquisite wardrobes and accessories, that put the offerings of other outrageously expensive stores to shame.

From day one Bijan has had "by appointment only" on his door. No one on Rodeo Drive has dared to be that elegantly exclusive, and over thirty years later, to this day no other clothier does it.

To this day, the media still doesn't understand Bijan. They always end up talking about the \$20,000 suits, the \$150,000 and up watches, or a \$200,000 chinchilla bedspread. They don't see the inner stance of the man behind it all. They don't see Bijan's commitment to perfection.

When you purchase a Bijan product you buy a piece of his soul. He insists on living that way. And Bijan is all about service. Extreme service. He is the only one I have ever known, who makes house calls in his own private jet.

Bijan's store could best be described as "opulence on steroids." He has created it to make a dramatic declaration of his respect for perfection. His store literally communicates the moment you walk in the door, that this man has perfection as an inner stance.

***Let the beauty of what you
love be what you do.***

—Rumi—

Bijan loves the challenge of astonishing the most difficult and demanding clients. Rather than being cynical and annoyed, by the egos and quirky tastes of the many millionaires and billionaires who buy from him, he enjoys the game. He enjoys the world that he has created. At the age of ten, Bijan declared that he would become the world's most exclusive men's designer. By the age of fifty, he made his first billion running a multimillion dollar design company, unlike any other in the world. His career's trajectory was a perfectly straight line.

I was recently looking at a Christmas card that I had received from Bijan from a few years ago. I noticed that even his Christmas cards are masterpieces, and demonstrate such an intense commitment to perfection, that I would never think to throw them out. The inside of the card read, "Life imitates art; Bijan imitates no one."

Although Bijan speaks with a pronounced accent, his complete attention and communications are so focused, that I have never failed to understand a word he has ever said to me. Bijan treats each individual he speaks to as if that person is the only person in the world. It's a part of coming from perfection. And because it radiates from his inner stance, he never has to think about how to treat people.

Bijan's life, is a demonstration of how a commitment to the creation of a magnificent world—fueled by an intense love of what he does, and a complete and utter dedication to his clients—can be accomplished in reality.

I've saved his story for last, because Bijan so dramatically illustrates the power of straight-line leadership. He has led himself and everyone around him to vast success, and wealth, by being an example of a powerful commitment and continuous decisive action. He has shown the world that when your inner stance is clear, you can create any result you choose.

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WAKING UP TO THE CONTRASTS

INNER STANCES
(CONTRASTS)

EMPOWERING

What I live
Choose to
Creating
Concern
Project
Must
Growth choice
Choosing “what is”
How it can be done
Serving
Notice and alter behavior
Only results count
Productivity
Commitment
Radical self-honesty
Conditions of the game
Doing what’s in front of you
Invented Future
Separate
Optimism
Bold
Overrespond
Extreme self-care
Choose to
Kind
Results goals
Honest thinking

DISEMPOWERING

What I know
Want to
Waiting
Worry
Dream
Should
Safe choice
Dread
Why it can’t be done
Pleasing
Notice and justify behavior
Content with insight
Busyness
Trying
Insincere
Obstacles
Sawing sawdust
Default Future
The same
Pessimism
Arrogant
Overthink
Selfishness
How to
Nice
Activity goals
Positive thinking

EMPOWERING

Assurance
 Contribute
 Willing to deal with
 Long-term satisfaction
 Straight talk
 Feedback tolerant
 Proactive acceptance
 Stop stopping
 Start starting
 Owner
 Choosing to be effective
 Focus
 I'm responsible
 Now
 Powerful result
 This will be
 Choosing powerfully
 Acknowledges mistakes
 Flexible
 Grounded
 Take on
 Well-practiced
 Active relaxation
 Learn
 On track
 Choosing deliberately
 Intelligence

DISEMPOWERING

Involvement
 Deserve
 Dabbling
 Immediate gratification
 Verbal manipulation
 Feedback sensitive
 Surrendering
 Stopping
 Wanting to start
 Victim
 Needing approval
 Chaos
 It's their fault
 Later
 Nonpowerful result
 We shall see
 Choosing weakly
 Optimistic denial
 Rigid
 Unstable
 Avoid
 Winging it
 Passive relaxation
 Understand
 Off track
 Choosing from feelings
 Information collector

I **RECOMMENDED READING**

Can't Hurt Me by David Goggins
Antifragile by Nassim Nicholas Taleb
Hard Times Create Strong Men by Stefan Aarnio
Something to Do with Death by Sir Christopher John Frayling
Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand
On The Shortness of Life by Seneca
The Coddling of The American Mind by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt
Inner Stance Volume One by Dusan Djukich
Once Upon a Time in Italy by Sir Christopher John Frayling
1984 by George Orwell
The Last Word on Power by Tracy Goss
Radical Honesty by Brad Blanton PhD
The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho
It's Called Work for a Reason! by Larry Winget
A Message to Garcia by Elbert Hubbard
Will by G. Gordon Liddy
Learned Helplessness by Christopher Peterson, Steven F. Maier and Martin E. P. Seligman
The Will to Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl
You Are What You Say by Matthew Budd, M.D.
Inventing Reality: Physics As Language by Bruce Gregory
Understanding Computers and Cognition by Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores

SUNNY

2004—Eternity

Thank you for how you lived.

Thank you for how you still live.

Thank you for your velocity and power.

Thank you for the stance you played from.

You will always be with us.

***Thrive now.
Regret nothing later.***

Find out more at
www.straightlineleadership.com

- Stressing vs. Caring - Making a Living vs. Creating Perfection - Wanting vs. Creating
 Living vs. Creating Perfection - Wanting vs. Creating - Stop Stopping vs. Stopping -
 1 - Wanting vs. Creating - Stop Stopping vs. Stopping - a Problem vs. a Decision to Make
 - Stop Stopping vs. Stopping - a Problem vs. a Decision to Make - What I Know vs. What I
 Live vs. a Decision to Make - What I Know vs. What I Live - Want to vs. Choose to - Can't
 vs. Won't - Being Truthful about Where I Live - Want to vs. Choose to - Can't vs. Won't - Being
 Truthful about Where You Are vs. Lying about it - Pleasing vs. Serving - a Created World
 vs. a Reported-On World - a Dream vs. a Project - Worry vs. Concern - Shoulds vs. Musts -
 I'm Responsible vs. It's Their Fault - Growth Choices vs. Safe Choices - Content with Insight
 vs. Only Results Count - Optimistic Denial vs. the Valley of Death - Productivity vs. Busyness
 - Commitment vs. Trying - Owner vs. Victim - the Same vs. Separate - Agreements vs.
 Expectations - Radical Self-Honesty vs. Being Insincere - Realistic Optimism vs. Unrealistic
 Pessimism - Being Bold vs. Being Arrogant - Discomfort and Pain vs. Chaos - Purpose
 Management vs. Time Management - Extreme Self-Care vs. Selfishness - How To vs. Choose
 To - Nice vs. Kind - Positive No vs. Rejection - Tolerance vs. Confrontation - Language
 that Describes Reality vs. Language that Creates Reality - Commitment vs. Involvement -
 I Contribute vs. I Deserve - Corrective Actions vs. Protective Actions - Now vs. Later -
 Childlike vs. Childish - Playing to Win vs. Playing Not to Lose - Investment vs. Cost -
 Core Actions vs. Surface Actions - Focus vs. Spray - How It Can Be Done vs. Why It Can't
 Be Done - Stressing vs. Caring - Making a Living vs. Creating Perfection - Wanting vs. Creating
 Perfection - Wanting vs. Creating - Stop Stopping vs. Stopping -