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**Welcome to SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS™ — THE E-ZINE**  
**A Newsletter About Creating What Matters Most in Life & Work**  
**Bruce Elkin, Personal/Professional Coach**  
**<http://www.BruceElkin.com>**

Volume 2, Number 2, Dec 16, 2003. All rights reserved.

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\*NOTE: Our TURNING RESOLUTIONS INTO REALITY workshop runs JANUARY 9 TO 11 at the Seabreeze Inne Resort on Saltspring Island (near Victoria, BC). It's subtitled Creating and Sustaining the Results You Most Want in Life, Work and Relationships and will be a great way to start the New Year fresh and focused!

The fee for this 2 & 1/2-day workshop, which includes 3 nights accommodation, breakfasts and lunches, a signed copy of Simplicity and Success, a Participant's Workbook, personalized instruction and a follow-up coaching session, is \$425 CAN or \$325 US. 2 night and no accommodation options can be arranged.

For more information or to register, call or e-mail Bruce Elkin directly

## **WELCOME!**

We've finally cracked the magic 1000 subscribers mark. Thanks for all your help in forwarding Simplicity and Success to friends and colleagues. It has helped a lot. We now have 1050 subscribers.

I continue to receive great feedback on my book SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: CREATING THE LIFE YOU LONG FOR. I appreciate all of your feedback and remind you that the book can be ordered directly from me, or through your local bookshop. Also, those who you who can't afford to purchase a copy can download the PDF version off my website. No cost. My gift to you.

This issue, there's just one article "Turning Resolutions Into Reality: Skills and Practices for Creating What Matters Most." I've left out all the other stuff to be able to give you this newly revised article in full. Next issue, we'll return to a regular format.

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## **QUICK TAKE: The Importance of Scrooge**

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This is the season of A Christmas Carol, Charles Dickens's timeless story about how an embittered old man learns some important lessons and uses them to transcend his past and live a rich, full and focused life in the present and future.

For me, the most important lesson from Scrooge is "transcendence," the notion that at any time, we can turn a new page and start our lives anew. That's what Scrooge does on Christmas morning. Delighted that he's not dead and filled with the new insights provided him by the Spirits of Past, Present and Future, he CHOOSES to live a different sort of life. New actions then flow from his decision. Scrooge does things he's never done before and produces results < laughter, happiness, connection, etcŠ < that he's never produced before. He < and his life < are transformed.

We all have the possibility to transcend ourselves. We can choose to live differently. People who choose to live simply yet successfully find themselves taking new actions, and producing new results. They create the kind and quality of life they truly want, independent of their past and current obstacles.

This year, think about choice and transcendence while watching the various versions of A Christmas Carol and think about ways that you can transcend the problems of your past and present. Move forward into the future and create the life you long for. A great way to start this transformative process would be to set < and keep! < New Year's resolutions using the principles and practices outlined in the following article. Enjoy!

## **FEATURE ARTICLE**

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### **TURNING RESOLUTIONS INTO REALITY: Creating Simplicity and Success in 2004**

Those who do not create the future they want must endure the future they get.  
< Draper L. Kaufman, Jr.

"Quitting smoking is easy!" quipped my friend Ken. "I<sup>1</sup>ve done it hundreds of times."

We were talking about our New Year's resolutions. Ken thought resolutions were a fun New Year<sup>1</sup>s ritual but didn<sup>1</sup>t really expect them to produce results. I do.

So do most people. People I talk with tell me that, each January, they resolve to quit smoking, lose weight, get in shape, be nicer, improve their business, make more (or less) money, or any of a thousand things they think they should or want to do. However, something upsets their plans. They ignore their resolve and drift back into comfortable but ineffective habits. Instead of reaping the results, rewards and good feelings they wanted, they feel frustrated, guilty, and depressed.

Sound familiar?

If it does, don<sup>1</sup>t beat yourself up. That just compounds the bad feelings. There is a better way to turn resolutions into reality.

The following skills and strategies have helped my clients create small businesses and reinvent large ones. They have helped individuals shift careers, redesign and renovate homes and offices, build studios, start alternative schools, find their dream jobs, spend winters in Mexico, craft loving relationships, and feel freer, more engaged, alive, and in the flow. They can help you do the same.

## FOUR SIMPLE STRATEGIES FOR CREATING SUCCESS

### 1.) See resolutions as results.

See them as things you want to create rather than solutions to problems. Don't think about those twenty pounds you want to get rid of. Think about the lean, fit, healthy body you want and how you'd look and feel if you created it.

Focussing on problems on what you don't like and don't want depresses you. It decreases energy. It's hard to sustain. It produces relief rather than results. However, creating bringing into being what you do want feels good. It's engaging. It energizes. When you're focused on a vision of what you truly want, it is easier to sustain results. The bonus is that, when you focus on creating what you most want, problems lose their urgency. They fade, as Carl Jung said, "when confronted with a new and stronger life urge."

### 2.) Accept that your ordinary self is good enough.

You do not have to be anyone other than who you are to create what matters. True, you may want to learn new skills but you can do that. Don't confuse your self with your skills. Not knowing how to make resolutions that produce lasting results doesn't say anything about which you are. It just says that you don't know how yet. So, accept yourself. Learn to create. Enjoy your results.

### 3. Think "integration" not "balance."

Balance is a mechanical concept. It can mean, "to cancel out." Trying to balance life is like trying to balance a seesaw. Instead, focus on integrating the various aspects of your life around what truly matters to you. Integration is about simplifying, making one of many, and unifying the diverse interests and desires that make up your life. An integral life is more graceful and harmonious and successful than a balanced one.

### 4.) Practice!

Desire alone does not lead to success. Nor does insight. To succeed, you have to link desire and insight to action. Creating is driven by a clear, compelling vision of desired results. It is rooted in an objective view of current reality. It is focused on action that builds momentum and leads to results. You practice creating just as you would practice a sport or a musical instrument. As a great violinist once said when asked what was the best way to get to Carnegie Hall, "There is only way: practice, practice, practice."

## SEVEN PRACTICES FOR CREATING ALMOST ANYTHING

The seven practices that follow are not a magic formula. However, they can help you stick to your resolutions, create results, and sustain them in spite of setbacks and adversity.

### 1. Create a clear, compelling vision of what you want to create.

Focus on what you want to create, on what you want to bring into being.

"Lose weight" becomes "A lean, well-toned and athletic body." "Quit smoking" becomes "A non-smoker with clean, fit and healthy lungs."

It's fine to start with concepts such as "success," "a great relationship," or "a better business." However, power comes from focusing concepts into visions. Picture the specifics of what you want to create. What would it look like if you were successful? How would you know your relationship was great? In what ways would your business be better?

A clear, compelling vision focuses and increases energy. Which is more compelling? The concept "A new car," or the vision of "A candy-apple red, 2004 Miata convertible with a black top, beige leather seats, and a six-speaker Alpine CD system."

Vision does not have to be realistic. It has to be what you truly want. So, stretch for what matters; let your aspirations soar. Grounding vision in reality is the next step. Later, you'll set realistic goals that help bridge the gap between where you are and where you want to be.

## 2. Assess Current Reality Accurately and Objectively

Vision by itself has little power. Unless it is rooted in reality, vision is merely wishful thinking. You need to know your destination and your starting point. If you want to go to Vancouver, for example, and think you're in Victoria but are really in Calgary, you'll head in the wrong direction.

Unfortunately, we often misrepresent reality to ourselves. Instead of describing it, we judge it. For example, we might say, "Everything is screwed up," when only a small part of our work is not going well. Or, "Everything is great," when it isn't. Distorting reality creates a shaky foundation for action. The key to assessing current reality is "Describe it, don't judge it!"

Instead of "Everything is screwed up," say something like, "I'm behind in an assignment at work but my relationship with my partner is improving, my health is top notch, and I'm putting \$100 a month into an RSP." Describing reality establishes a solid foundation for action.

## 3. Hold Vision and Reality Together to Set Up Creative Tension

Holding vision and reality in mind simultaneously sets up a discrepancy—a gap—out of which a useful, creative tension emerges. Creative tension is the engine of creating. It makes this approach different from other goal-setting approaches. Creative tension embraces and transcends the emotional tension that accompanies problem solving. It generates energy you can use to move from where you are to where you want to be.

Imagine a rubber band stretched between Vision and Current Reality. The tension in the rubber band wants to resolve. There are three ways to do so. You can let go of your vision and give up your goals. You can lower your vision and compromise your goals. Or you can hold vision firmly and change reality so that it—and you—move consistently toward the result you want to create.

Holding vision and reality in mind together sets up a container for creativity, an organizing framework in which you can experiment, explore, learn from experience, and gradually shape the results you want. The key to creating successful results is orchestrating the resolution of creative tension by making choices and taking actions that support the results you want to create.

## 4. Take small steps. Create and adjust.

Many of us are closet perfectionists. We demand that our first steps be perfect. So, either we give up when we falter, or the fear of failing prevents us from acting in the first place. The key to getting started is taking small, easy steps. See each step as an experiment that teaches you what to do next. If you don't like a result, adjust your action. If you make a wrong decision, make another one. When you're creating, failure is simply feedback.

If you're not sure where to start, work backward from vision to first steps by asking, "Can I do this today?" If you can't do it, ask, "What must I do first?" If your vision is to be fit, healthy and energetic enough to run a half-marathon but you get winded walking up stairs, you obviously can't do it today. So what must you do first? Build an aerobic base. Can you do that today? No. What must you do first?

Use the questions to work back to small steps that you can do today. Identifying first steps overcomes fear and inertia. Taking several steps creates a pattern of success. Such patterns increase confidence, build momentum, and help you stretch toward larger steps.

## 5. Build Momentum

Momentum is more important than motivation. It generates energy that can get you through times when motivation fails. Any time you encounter adversity can be a "creative moment." Instead of getting stuck or stalled, the following exercise can help you keep moving and build momentum.

When something does not go as you would like it to:

1. Notice what is happening and what you say about it, others and yourself.
2. Is what you're saying consistent with what you really want? Is it true? Is it accurate and objective? If it isn't, change how you describe it to make it so.
3. Ask yourself, "What do I want?" Envision a clear picture of what you want.

4. Choose by saying, "I chooseŠ" and fill in the blank with your result.
5. Move on. Take whatever next step occurs to you.

It really doesn't matter what you do, just do something. Like rocking a car backward to generate momentum before pushing it out of ditch, you can use this technique to get unstuck when you are angry, frustrated, depressed, or facing adversity. It will shift your focus from problem solving to creating. It'll flip your mood from negative to energetic. Most important, it'll keep you moving and build the momentum that can act as major force on your behalf. Momentum makes completion possible.

#### 6. Practice, Practice, Practice!

Few of us are born with the skills and talent to achieve all our visions. But we are learners. We can try things, correct mistakes, and practice until the new becomes natural. Practice may not make us perfect, but it will make us better and the road to success always runs through better.

One of my clients wanted to be a "good guitar player." However, because she judged that she "was not good," she felt bad and didn't practice. I helped her change that judgment to the more accurate description that she "wasn't good, yet."

I also helped her see that, instead of demanding that she be good, she'd do better to focus on getting better. In no time, she was playing well.

Making success an all or nothing leap often leaves you with nothing.

#### 7. Know When You Reach Your Goal

It's not enough to say, "I want to be successful." Without guidelines for judging results, you are like a dog chasing its tail, seeking success but never knowing when you achieve it.

To harness the full power of creating, you have to know when you've completed your creation. This is why vision is best when it's specific rather than general. Assess your result against the specifics and see if it matches your vision. If it doesn't, keep working at it; if it does, you're done.

Completing a creation generates new energy with which to initiate new creations.

When Picasso was asked what his favorite painting was, he immediately answered, "My next one!" Finish fully, acknowledge your results, and celebrate your success. Then, start on your next result. Success builds on success.

#### Create Your Own Future

The philosopher Goethe advised, "Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

So why not be bold this New Year. Take charge of your future.

Apply these principles and practices and see if you don't turn your resolutions into real and lasting results. Focus your vision and action on what you most want. Think big, start small, and get better. Learn from your mistakes, build momentum, and follow through to completion.

Last New Year, my friend Ken tried out this approach and he hasn't smoked since.

#### SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS RETREAT IN MARCH

In Mid-March, we'll be offering a 4-night, 3-day Simplicity and Success Retreat on Saltspring Island. Details have not been finalized but they should be by the time the next issue reaches you. For more info on our retreats, go to <http://www.bruceelkin.com/simplicity.html>

To get your name on the waiting list for the retreat, call or e-mail Bruce directly.

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**THE SMALL PRINT: Copyright and Getting On and Off the List**

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**THE LAST WORD: QUOTABLE QUOTES**

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" All appears to change when we change.  
-- Henri Amiel, 19th-century Swiss writer

"The purpose of life is not to win. The purpose of life is to grow and to share. When you come to  
look back on all that you have done in life, you will get more satisfaction from the pleasure you  
have brought into other people's lives than you will from the times that you outdid and defeated  
them."  
-- Harold Kushner, Rabbi and author

"Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together."  
-- Vincent Van Gogh.

Well, folks, that's it now. I hope you've had a great year and are looking forward to an even  
greater one. I wish you all a wonderful holiday season and, for us all, peace on earth, good will  
toward all humanity. Thanks for reading and forwarding the newsletter. I appreciate it.

All the best.  
Cheers!  
Bruce

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Bruce Elkin: High Performance, Full Potential Coaching  
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< A book about organizing life, work and relationships  
around what most matters to you.

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" Find what you really care about and live a life that shows it."  
— Kate Wolf

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