

Simplicity and Success

Creating What Matters Most In Life and Work

A Proposal

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Concept

*I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity,
but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Crafting a simple life would be easy if getting rid of stress and clutter was all that simplicity seekers sought, but it isn't; they also seek success. They long to create results that matter in their lives, work, and relationships. However, by defining simplicity as a *solution* to life's stress and complexity, even the authors of excellent books point readers toward relief rather than results. Because relief is usually temporary, readers often oscillate between simplicity and success without realizing either. At best, the simplicity they achieve is the simplicity on *this* side of complexity.

Simplicity and Success will show readers how to integrate conflicting desires by shifting their primary focus from solving problems to *creating* what matters. It will help them to go beyond merely getting rid of what they *don't* want and show them how to bring into being what they truly *do* want. Moreover, it will enable them to embrace life's complexity, appreciate its richness, and move through its often chaotic "messiness" to the deep, lasting, and fulfilling simplicity on the *other* side of complexity.

With its strategic *Vicki Robin meets Phil McGraw* approach to life creation, ***Simplicity and Success*** will speak not just to simplicity seekers. It will appeal to the millions of frustrated boomers, downshiftners, "Cultural Creatives," and members of generations "X" and "Y" who, research shows, yearn for a simple, rich, and integrated life but don't yet know how to create it.

Bruce Elkin is a writer, speaker, and coach/consultant with sixteen years of experience in helping individuals, organizations, and businesses create what matters. In ***Simplicity and Success***, his careful analysis will show readers why problem solving is a shaky foundation on which to produce results. His engaging stories of clients struggling to craft rich yet simple lives will bring the creative process to life. His action-provoking exercises will challenge readers to develop the desire *and* the tools to integrate values such as simplicity and success. Most important, by drawing on his own twenty-five year experiment in simple living, he will show readers how to *sustain* results that matter—in spite of the problems and complexity they face—ensuring that the successful simplicity they create becomes an enduring way of life.

About the Book

In the spring of 1973, a new outdoor centre hired me to develop an environmental curriculum. A middle class, thirty-year old, ex-high school teacher, I'd never heard of simple living, and rarely, if ever, thought about consciously creating what matters. That changed when I met Steve Van Matre, author of *Acclimatization* and *Earth Education*. Van Matre's experiential approach *integrated* learners' feelings for the earth with an understanding of how ecological systems sustain life—in a way that led his learners to responsible action. I apprenticed under Van Matre and became Senior Trainer for the *Institute for Earth Education*. I lived simply because it was the most direct way to live my new values. Besides, that's how most eager but low paid environmental education educators lived.

In 1977, *CoEvolution Quarterly* featured three articles on “Voluntary Simplicity” that provided a name and set of principles that validated my new way of life. In one, the authors envisioned simple living as a major social movement. They claimed that up to 90,000,000 Americans would adopt simple lives by 2000 and that “the emergence of voluntary simplicity could represent a major transformation of traditional American values.” Focused on that possibility, I happily lived in camp trailers and teepees and made do with few possessions. Although one of the *Co-Evolution* articles questioned whether the other's had missed the difference between a movement and a fad and over-estimated the numbers of simple livers, I ignored their assertions. I was full of righteous pride about the changes I'd made and helped others make.

Cracks in My Certainty

My first clue that those changes might not last came during a one-year return to high-school teaching. In class, I raised issues such as pollution, population, and over-consumption. The students became aware; they became concerned. However, they *didn't* change their

behavior. *Why?* When I queried a trio of my better students, one said, “You know, sir, all this environmental stuff is great for sure, but it depresses the hell out of me.”

Shocked, I asked, “Why?”

“It's too much,” he said. “I don't know what to do. It makes me feel useless.” He shrugged, then continued, “I like your classes and all, but when they're over, I have to go to my car and smoke a joint just to calm down.”

My god! I'd thought I was helping these kids develop environmental responsibility. Instead, I was driving them to drugs. Awareness alone, I realized, did not translate into value shifts and changes in behavior. I also had my first inkling that focusing on problems does not motivate people. It depresses them.

I left the school and joined the *Action Studies Institute*, a think-tank focused on developing generic, high-order skills for initiating and carrying out action in any setting. There, I combined Earth Education and generic character skill building (initiative, resilience, creativity...) in a summer wilderness program called *Earthways: Experiences in Personal and Environmental Exploration*. It was a huge success. Kids loved it. Parents loved it. Everyone made changes. I was invited to help found the School of the Environment at the prestigious Banff Centre. I felt on top of the world. I lived a simple, yet rich and fulfilling life and, with the generic skills model, thought I had discovered the key to effective environmental education, self-creation, and simple living. Then I moved to Vancouver to teach teachers at a university and my life took an unexpected turn.

Too Much Talk, Not Enough Walk

In the city, I found it difficult to practice what I preached. Instead of teaching, cutbacks left me supervising student teachers. I hated it. I came home tired and frustrated. As joy and meaning in work went down, spending went up. Going to a restaurant or sending for pizza was easier than cooking. Buying a bottle of wine, a record, or a book would ease my bad

feelings for a few days or hours. No longer forced to “make do, do without, or do something else” as I’d done on a low income, I bought pleasures rather than created them. While I *espoused* simple living, the trajectory of my life swung away from *acting* on my values.

Why, I wondered, did I have so little control over my own actions?

Although I’d realized that insight without action led to little, I didn’t know yet that lasting change requires more than surface changes in behavior. I didn’t know that success requires a structure—a framework—that aligns choices and actions in support of key values. Nor was I aware that my own life structures caused me to oscillate between the twin desires of simplicity and success. For, example, I preferred dressing simply and cheaply. However, to impress the power-dressing Director who assigned teaching positions, I bought an expensive new suit and all the accessories. Although I valued conserving energy, I drove a hundred miles a day as part of my job. Although I could have returned to the Rockies and done more Earthways-like programs, I was obsessed with what I called “making it in the Bigs.”

My lack of integrity frustrated me. Unaware of the structures guiding my behavior, I re-read my simple living books. They sparked my motivation but I couldn’t build momentum. I’d try, make progress, and then slip back. I used willpower, guilt, and positive thinking to *force* myself to practice what I preached but I felt as if I was swimming upstream. *Why, I wondered, could I not consistently walk my talk?*

Then, as a new decade dawned, I noticed changes in others and in society.

Into the Eighties

In the eighties, I watched as former simple lovers enrolled in MBA programs and traded VW vans for Volvos. Old friends nattered on about networking and passed out newly minted business cards. The School of Environment I’d helped start became a School of Resource Management. The US Office of Environmental Education shut down. Simple living articles

disappeared from periodicals. It looked as if the “movement” *had* been a fad, that the “transformation” was not as close as the pollsters had predicted.

Frustrated, but determined to be true to my own vision and values, I left the university. I spent the winter on an island, writing. I did handyman work in exchange for a cabin and lived on \$500 a month to show myself that I *could* live simply. I felt better for the experience but wasn’t very handy. So, I dragged myself back across the Rockies. There I found friends and associates more interested in speculating on housing than exploring simplicity. Although I resisted most of the excesses of the eighties, my conscience regularly reminded me that I wasn’t practicing what I preached. A dark haze of hopelessness settled over me.

From Problem-Solving to *Creating*

To counteract my despair I rejoined the Action Studies Group as a part-time associate and began to explore self-creation strategies. *How*, I wondered, *can we consistently act on our best intentions? How can we walk our talk even when things get difficult?* Mostly, I focused on the question, *How can we reconcile competing values?*

While I lived these questions, I experimented on myself by directing the start up of a new Mountaineering and Leadership school. I noticed that I produced better results if I focused on creating, i.e. *bringing into being* what I wanted, rather than solving problems, i.e., getting rid of (or relief from) what I did *not* want. This led me to study the creative process. *What*, I wanted to know, *were the basic processes underlying the ability to create?*

Many experts described “creativity” as an inborn attribute, a gift from God to a special few. Others believed it was a breakthrough to higher states. Some associated it with mental illness. None of these explanations satisfied me. My understanding of generic skills convinced me that there must be basic *skills* and *principles* that could be applied to any situation. When I discovered *The Path of Least Resistance* by Robert Fritz, the title put me off. However, the subtitle, *Principles for Creating What You Most Want to Create*, intrigued

me enough to part with twenty dollars. I was delighted to find that it was *not* about taking the easy way out. Nor was it about “creative thinking,” “brainstorming,” or “creative problem solving.” It was about the *act of creating*. It showed how, by using a common structure—an organizing framework and set of generic skills—creators consistently bring into being real and lasting results—in spite of problems, circumstances, and complexity.

Structure: The Key to Real and Lasting Change

Just as water follows a path laid down by the shape and structure of a streambed, showed Fritz, our own energy and action follow a “path of least resistance” laid down by the *structures* underlying our lives. Some structures lead to results; others don’t. Some oscillate; others advance toward desired results. Life structures result from the way we arrange the relationships between our ideas, values, beliefs, desires, fears, and external reality itself. If we’re not aware of these relationships, it’s easy to get stuck in structures that don’t support our most important values and desires.

Either/or structures, for example, give rise to oscillating patterns of behavior. Most problem solving structures, because they focus primarily on reducing the intensity of a problem, produce only temporary relief from the feelings associated with the problem. Taking aspirin, for example, gives us relief from a headache. However, not only does it not lead to real changes, relief allows us to keep doing what caused the pain. By mastering the basics of *creating*, Fritz said, we can create structures in which energy and action naturally and consistently flow toward what we want to create.

Fritz’s structural approach clarified what had been missing from my approach to simple living and self-creation. I saw that the problem-focused structure I’d unconsciously adopted led to a seesaw pattern of better, then worse, then.... No matter how hard I tried to will or guilt myself to change, the underlying structure eventually reasserted itself and my behavior

reverted to old patterns. With Fritz's approach, I wondered, *would it be possible to create a simple, yet rich, engaging, and successful life—and sustain it?*

Over the next nine years, I studied and worked with Robert Fritz. I taught his approach to thousands of participants and hundreds of organizations. I based my coaching strategy on it. Using the principles of creating, I found it easier to *transcend* the either/or, problem-driven strategies that underlie so many quick-fix self-help and simple living approaches.* I was able to do things I had been unable to think or force myself into doing. I finished a manuscript. I invented an executive challenge program. I started a coaching and consulting practice. I began to write the articles and booklets that became the basis for this book.

Most important, as I worked with workshop participants and coaching clients, I discovered that almost all of them struggled with the same dichotomy of desires that I had struggled with. All wanted to be successful at what mattered to them and to live a rich, materially comfortable life. However, all of them felt that their efforts to achieve such a life led to uncomfortable levels of complexity, stress, and depression. They all wished their lives could be simpler and less complicated.

As the eighties gave way to the nineties, I noticed that people were showing a renewed interest in simple living. Paul Ray published a report saying that 24 percent of US adults—44 million people—are already “Cultural Creatives,” strong advocates of self creation, spirituality, ecology, and simpler lifestyles. “The transformation,” he claimed, “is happening right in front of our eyes.” I hoped he was right. I remembered the enthusiastic but faulty predictions of earlier pollsters. Would the growing interest in simple living be sustained? Or

* Fritz's principles are not trendy, here-today-gone-tomorrow ideas. He has taught these principles for twenty-five years. They are applicable to all areas of life and living. Peter Senge, director of Organizational Learning and Systems Thinking at MIT's Sloan School of Business, and author of the best-selling business book, *The Fifth Discipline*, says, “The principles and approach presented in *The Path of Least Resistance* have become a cornerstone in my work to help leaders and managers deal productively with complexity and change.” (Quoted in *TFC, Inc.*'s promotional material.)

would it again ebb away on a changing tide of public interest? *What could we do to ensure that a rich yet successful kind of simplicity became an enduring way of life?*

Transcending the Limits of Current Approaches

Most readers don't realize that success is governed by the life structures that underlie and give rise to their day-to-day behavior. Nor do they realize that they create such structures themselves. They don't see, for example, that positioning simplicity and success as opposites sets up a seesaw-like structure that causes them to oscillate between one value and the other. Moreover, most don't know how to create structures that embrace conflicting values and guide their actions in the direction of what truly matters.

Why not? Because, as Robert Fritz says, "no one showed them how because they didn't know how either." Although most simplicity books are inspiring and thought provoking, most focus primarily on surface behavior. However, unless readers change the life structures that give rise to it, surface change will almost always be temporary and incomplete.

Simplicity and Success will show readers that they always follow a path of least resistance. Just as the flow of water in a stream follows the path laid down by the shape and structure of the streambed, individuals follow a path laid down by the structures that underlie their day-to-day behavior. Such structures are formed by how we arrange our desires, aspirations, beliefs, and fears in relationship to each other and to reality itself. Some structures lead to success; others don't. This book will show readers how to deliberately create structures that guide their energy and actions in the direction of what matters to them, and to create what they most want to create.

Toward A New Approach to Simplicity

Although many excellent simplicity approaches have helped numerous people simplify, interest in simplicity oscillates, individually and collectively. This, I began to realize, is

because even many of the best approaches see simplicity as a *solution* to problems and complexity. As I studied the range of simplicity approaches from a structural, I realized that the problem solving focus and other shortcomings in current approaches unintentionally contributed to simplicity seeker's oscillating behavior. I also realized that unless simplicity seekers overcome the shortcomings that underlie most self-help and simplicity approaches, this wave of simplicity seeking could also ebb away on a changing tide of public concern. I realized that to ensure that it becomes more than a passing fad, we must ask and answer some challenging questions.

- Why is it so easy to espouse simplicity yet embrace its opposite? Why, in spite of the all the books, magazines, and workshops available to simplicity seekers, do so many tell pollsters one thing and then do another?

Examining these questions led to deeper more generic queries, such as:

- Why doesn't problem solving lead to the results we *most* want? Why does a focus on getting rid of (or relief from) problems and complexity so often result in worse problems and more frustrating complexity?

And most important:

- How can simplicity seekers learn to embrace complexity and rise above problems? How can they integrate vision, values, and actions so that they more naturally walk their talk? How can they create simplicity *and* a rich, sustainable, satisfying version of success?

Simplicity and Success will help readers live comfortably without easy, quick fix answers to these questions. By providing them with tools and framework for creating what matters, it will help them live their way into their own unique answers. It will help them transcend the limits of current approaches and create richer, more enduring forms of simplicity. As they craft consistently simple yet engaging lives, others will join them. Because their success will be built on a more solid platform than problem solving, simplicity will become a more consistent force for change. The transformation predicted by

the pollsters will more likely become a reality. But, first, we have to overcome the shortcomings in current simplicity and self help approaches.

Four Shortcomings in Current Approaches

Interest in simplicity is more widespread now than ever before, thanks to the efforts of simplicity self-help authors. However, four shortcomings in current approaches prevent readers from recognizing and transcending the limits of their own life structures and actions and taking simplicity seeking to a higher and broader level.

1. Most simplicity/self-help books do not address conflicting values, nor do they explore the life structures that give rise to swings in behavior.

Overwhelmed by stress and clutter and seeking relief, readers tend to cut back, clear out, and get rid of what they *don't* want. They *feel* better temporarily. However, when simplifying gets in the way of success, many refocus on striving. Then, when striving becomes stressful, they revisit simplicity. Back and forth they swing, afraid that they lack discipline and commitment. Frustrated by such confusing oscillations, many abandon the pursuit of simplicity.

Simplicity and Success will help readers understand that oscillating between competing desires does *not* result from personal weakness. Such behavior is a result of life structures that they have unconsciously set up. They'll see that success is not achieved by choosing one desire over another or by trying to balance values. They will see that to transcend value conflicts such as *simplicity* vs. *success*, they must consciously create life structures that integrate their primary and secondary values. By designation simplicity, for example, as their primary value, they can organize other deeply held values (such as challenge, engagement, and achievement) so that efforts to achieve those values also support their primary value. This way they are more likely to produce both simplicity and success.

2. Most books do not integrate the *whys, ways, and hows* of self-created simplicity.

Most authors provide readers with *either* a heady philosophical discourse on the “whys” of simplicity *or* a long list of practical “how-to’s” for cutting back. Readers who appreciate philosophy usually find the “how to” books *too* simplistic. However, sentiment without action, as Ed Abbey cautioned, can lead to ruin of the soul. On the other hand, readers who love checking off lists often fail to see the deeper purpose of their actions. Thus, they lack the motive power to keep going in the face of setbacks and adversity. Moreover, both “how to” and “why to” approaches often fail to provide readers with a systematic *way*—an overarching framework—in which to bring into being what they do want. Only one simplicity approach attempts such a *strategic* approach—Joe Dominquez and Vicki Robin’s *Your Money or Your Life*—and it is fast approaching the million selling mark.

Simplicity and Success will stretch beyond current approaches. It will unify philosophy, strategy, and action. It will show readers how to integrate the *whys* and *hows* of simplicity by mastering the most powerful *ways* we know to produce real and lasting results—the skills, structures, and strategies of *creating*.

3. Most simplicity books target those who have achieved material success and who have the social and financial capital to choose significantly simpler lifestyles.

Richard Gregg (who coined the phrase “voluntary simplicity” in the 1930’s) said, “Simplicity seems to be a foible of saints and occasional geniuses, but not something for the rest of us.” However, the transformation touted by the pollsters will come about *only* if a substantial number of “the rest of us” create and sustain simple yet rich, engaged, and rewarding lives.

Hope for some of us could lie in *downshifting* (living on a less to achieve more time and less stress). However, downshifting is often a temporary response to circumstances. Few downshifter go on to a more lasting “voluntary simplicity.” By helping them align vision, values, and action in support of what matters, *Simplicity and Success* will show downshifter how to simplify without backsliding. Furthermore, it will show those of more modest means

(young people, for example, and retirees without substantial nest eggs) how to redefine simplicity and success. Doing so will enable them to craft a simple yet successful life within the constraints of their income and consistent with their most important values.

4. Most important, because even the best-intentioned authors do not take a *creating* approach to simplifying, most approaches produce the simplicity on *this* side of complexity.

Like “Lose Weight” advocates and “Fix Your Life” gurus, too many authors see simplicity as a *solution* to life’s complexities. In *Living the Simple Life*, Elaine St. James uses *fourteen* problem-focused phrases such as “get rid of,” “reduce,” and “eliminate” to define simple living.

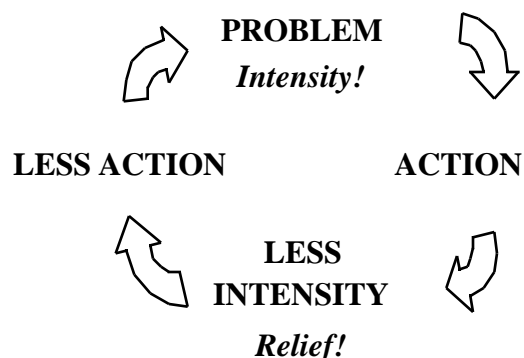
However, life does not have to be an endless problem-focused struggle. Most of life’s difficulties are *not* problems to solve; they are challenges to embrace, mysteries to explore, and opportunities to create. Instead of giving readers one more way to get rid of what they *don’t* want, *Simplicity and Success* will show them how to create what they truly *do* want. In doing so, it will also show them how to change involuntary complexity into voluntary complexity. It will show readers that creating makes the complicated simple. They will see that developing a *capacity to create* will enable them to transcend problems in favor of results that matter.

Readers will see why problem solving is a reactive strategy. They’ll see that it is driven not so much by the problem itself (or by a desire for results) but rather by a desire for *relief* from the *intensity* of the problem. Because problem solvers focus their energy and actions on getting rid of (or relief from) the pain, conflict, and frustration associated with problems, focusing primarily on problems can actually prevent them from creating lasting simplicity and success.

Taking aspirin, for example, is a strategy that many use to “solve” the problem of headache pain caused by stress. However, because that strategy focuses only on the pain, when the relief wears off, the pain returns. Taking aspirin does nothing to change the stress

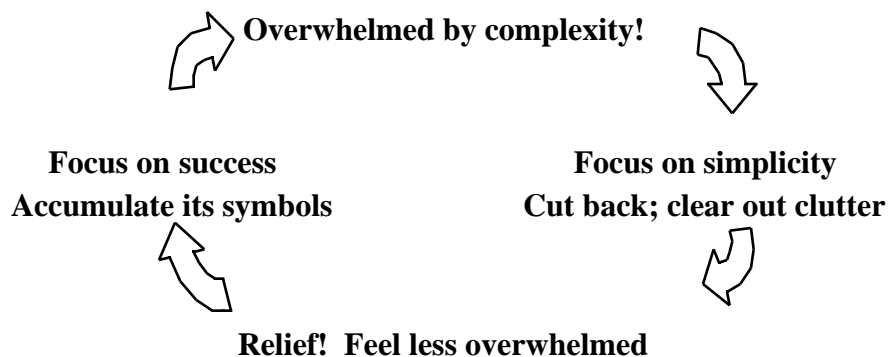
that caused the pain. Moreover, the relief it provides allows a sufferer to keep doing what caused the pain in the first place. It does nothing to help a sufferer create effective, stress-free life or work strategies.

The diagram below shows how relief-seeking problem-solvers oscillate between worse, then better, then worse...



In such a pattern, action is taken, precious life energy is spent, and relief is generated but real and lasting results are rarely created. Over time, this kind of problem solving results in more stress, chronic problems (such as ulcers), or even, as research shows, acute breakdown.

The same pattern occurs if simplicity seekers fail to integrate their values.



Desiring *both* simplicity and success but unclear about which they value most, simplicity seekers oscillate between first one value and then the other. They downshift, then upshift, then downshift.... Eventually, many give up in frustration thereby contributing to the tidal-like ebb of interest away from simple living.

So, why does this happen? And what are simplicity seekers to do?

Simplicity and Success will show readers that such behavior patterns are caused by focusing on life's challenges as if they were problems. It will show them how misplaced problem solving leads not to success and desired results, but to increased stress, a sense of helplessness, and to the despair that accompanies Thoreau's "lives of quiet desperation."

Moreover, *Simplicity and Success* will show readers how to focus on *and* create what most matters to them—in *spite of problems, circumstances, and complexity*. It will show them how to embrace and transcend dichotomies of desire such as *simplicity vs. success*. It will show them how to craft the simple yet successful lives they long for, creation by creation. The following exercise taken from a *Simplicity and Success* workshop will demonstrate the difference between a focus on problems and a focus on creating results.

Solving Problems *or* Creating Results: A Sample Exercise

By problems, I mean aspects of personal or interpersonal life that you don't like, don't want, and are desperate to get rid of. I do *not* mean challenges that engage and excite you.

To start, please take a deep breath and close your eyes.

Think about your worst problem, one that upsets and frustrates you. Focus on this problem for a few moments. See it in detail. . . . Then note how you feel.

Now, relax, take a deep breath, and clear your mind.

*Take another deep breath, and, this time, focus on something that you would **love** to see in your life but doesn't yet exist. Don't worry whether it is possible, or whether you have what it takes to produce it. For now, just imagine that it does exist. Focus on this creation, fully completed. See it in detail. . . . Then note how you feel.*

When people in *Simplicity and Success* workshops focus on problems, they feel uptight, down, depressed, even helpless. Even those who prize technical problem solving skills report feeling this way when they focus on intransigent personal and interpersonal problems.

However, when participants focus on *creations* that they'd love to see exist, they all feel excited, energized, and ready to act. In which approach do you think readers would prefer to live and work?

Involuntary and Voluntary Complexity

Finally, readers of *Simplicity and Success* will see that there is a critical difference between involuntary complexity that is forced upon them and voluntary complexity that they freely choose to embrace as part of their creative process.

Driven by problems and circumstances, *involuntary complexity* leads to distracted effort and to stress and struggle. It confuses, even overwhelms people. Involuntary complexity involves all those messy life problems and circumstances that simplicity seekers don't like and don't want and waste precious life energy trying to get relief from. However, even if they succeed at getting rid of such complexity, the result is the reactive, temporary simplicity on *this* side of complexity. Complexity is part of life; there will always be more of it to deal with.

Voluntary complexity, however, is freely chosen and focused. A potter throwing a thin-sided pot, a writer crafting a poem, an entrepreneur growing a socially responsible business, and a mother embracing a "good enough" strategy toward parenting all experience complexity. However, because it is freely chosen, that complexity brings a focused simplicity to their task and to their lives. By embracing life's complexity in this way, simplicity seekers can *create* the deep, lasting, and satisfying simplicity on the *other* side of complexity.

Although it is a more complex process than problem solving, *creating* makes the complicated simple. Readers of *Simplicity and Success* will see that the creative process, freely chosen, is senior to problem solving. It is a more powerful life structure because it includes yet transcends problem solving. Solving problems is, sometimes, a part of creating. However, in the creative process, problems never drive the action. Clearer, compelling visions

of desired results drive the action. Moreover, the enduring results on which civilization rests (art, music, literature, architecture, science, etc...) were *not* solutions to problems. They were *creations* that someone loved enough to bring into being.

“All the great things,” said Robert Frost, “are done for their own sake.”

A Timely Offering

Simplicity and Success comes at a critical time. Readers hunger for strategic, *integrated* ways to transcend the daily complexity that comes from dealing with jobs, careers, children, ambitions, fears about retirement, and the desire to leave a lasting legacy. Within that complexity, they face dichotomies of desire that lead to misplaced problem solving and oscillating behavior. This book will speak to those who want to create autonomy *and* connection, personal fulfillment *and* remunerative work, challenge *and* grace. It will also speak to those seeking to integrate spirit *and* soul into their personal and work lives. Many are intuitively moving in this direction. For example, while browsing my local bookstore, I was surprised to find books on money displayed beside best sellers on simplifying life and enriching the spirit.

“What kinds of people,” I asked my bookseller, “buy these different books?”

“The same people,” she said, smiling sweetly.

I must have looked perplexed, because she touched me gently on the arm and said, “There’s a convergence of interests, dear, a kind of shared vision emerging.” *Simplicity and Success* will be a 70,000-word book (75% completed in draft form) that will help readers realize this shared vision. It will unfold in four parts.

- Part 1: *Simplicity and Success* will introduce the notion of the simplicity on the other side of complexity and distinguish it from the more simplistic forms of simplicity that come from struggling against complexity.

- Part 2: *The Limits of Problem Solving* will outline five flaws that prevent problem solving from producing lasting results.

- Part 3: *The Skills and Framework of Creating* will outline the skills and structure that underlie the creative process, and show how, by embracing the creative tension that arises out the creative process, readers can transcend emotional tension. It will show them how to apply the creative process to life and work, and how to resolve creative tension in favor of what matters.

- Part 4: *The Practice of Creating* will show readers how to develop a day to day practice of creating. It will also show them how to sustain the results they create in the face of adversity, setbacks, and other difficulties. It will also show they how to embrace what is—to love what they have even as they stretch for what they most want to create.

Aimed not just at the millions who buy simplicity books, this book will also appeal to the millions of self-help readers who are are “lost in therapy” and tired of problem-focused “victimology” approaches. Above all, it will appeal to category-crossing, mainstream readers who would *love* to create a simpler, saner, and more rewarding life, if only someone would show them how to do so.

Readers, from dedicated simple lovers to the rest of us, will be attracted to the simple yet practical vision of *Simplicity and Success*. They will come away from this book able to:

- Understand the difference between the simplicity on this side of complexity and the simplicity on the other side of complexity,
- Understand why the latter is a more elegant and enduring form of simplicity;
- Appreciate the difference between problem solving and creating;
- Recognize the five major flaws in problem solving approaches;
- Understand how life structures give rise to day-to-day behavior;

- Understand why creating's simpler structure produces more elegant and lasting results than problem solving's reactive structure;
- Set up a personal organizing framework for aligning daily choices and actions in support of purpose, vision, and values;
- Appreciate the difference between creative and emotional tension;
- Set up and resolve creative tension toward desired results;
- Apply seven creating skills that can be used to create almost anything;
- Embrace and navigate complexity successfully; and
- Learn from experience, overcome adversity, and sustain results regardless of circumstances.

Equipped with these skills and structures, readers will be able to overcome the shortcomings in current simplicity books and approaches. They will be able to deliberately and consistently:

- Transcend conflicting values and oscillating patterns of behavior in favor of life patterns which consistently lead to desired results;
- Integrate simplicity and success into one easy-to-manage life-creation approach;
- Connect philosophy and action through strategies that support what matters;
- Downshift without backsliding by sustaining both simplicity and success;
- Transcend a self-defeating reliance on problem solving by mastering strategies for clarifying, creating, and sustaining results in all areas of their lives; and
- Live more easily, comfortably, and creatively in spite of life's ever-present complexity.

Simplicity and Success comes at the perfect time to reinvigorate and broaden the simplicity movement. It might even help elevate simplicity seeking to a new level of mainstream interest. This book will provide next steps for millions who have downshifted and millions more who contemplate doing so. It will provide simple livers *and* “the rest of us” with a practical way to align vision, values, and actions so that we naturally and organically walk our talk. Moreover, it will show readers how to create results that honour who they are even as they strive to become who, in their most perfect moments, they imagine themselves to be. *And to enjoy the process.*

About the Author

I am both expert and experimenter in this field. In my sixteen years of experience as a coach, consultant, and trainer I have helped thousands of individuals and hundreds of businesses and organizations master and apply the skills of creating to producing results that matter. More important, I've also struggled personally with the challenges of shaping and sustaining a simple, yet rich and focused life for twenty-five years. I know what it means to walk my talk, and not.

I've described ways to meet these challenges in hundreds of workshops, seminars, and speeches across Canada and the US. I've discussed them on CFCN-TV in Calgary, *The Morning Edition*, *Noon Show*, and *Drive Home* on CBC-Radio in Vancouver, on electronic forums such as the *Center for A New American Dream's* "Conversation on Consumption." Producers of CBC TV's *The Nature of Things*, *Man Alive*, and *Country Canada* have interviewed me.

As well as contributing briefing notes to Peter Senge's bestseller, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, and contributing to Steve Van Matre's *Sunship Earth* and *Earth Education: A New Beginning*, I have published articles in national magazines such as *Simple Living Quarterly* (now *Simple Living Oasis*), The Simple Living Network's on-line *Newsletter* (200,000 subscribers), *Gripped*, *Explore*, *Queens Quarterly*, and *The Journal of Experiential Education*. I have also published in local and regional magazines such as *PIQUE*, *Connections*, *Synchronicity*, *The Higher Source*, *Whole Life Journal*, *Island Parent*, *Canadian Camping*, *The Gulf Islands Guardian*, and the *Banff Crag and Canyon*. Articles describing my approach to life and work have been published in the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, *Victoria Times-Colonist*, *Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, the *Calgary Herald*, and the *Calgary Albertan*.

I have degrees in Sociology and Education. I did graduate work in Sociology of Education and Environmental Design. I taught at the University of Calgary and at Simon

Fraser University in Vancouver. I helped found the Banff School of the Environment and was one of the first faculty members of the Environmental Decision-Making for Managers program. I studied the creative process and Structural Consulting with Robert Fritz, author of *The Path of Least Resistance*. I was the first Canadian certified to administer the *Adversity Response Profile* by Paul Stoltz, author of *Adversity Quotient*. For five years, I was the senior trainer for the Institute of Earth Education and conducted workshops, training's and gave speeches throughout Canada and the US.

As well as currently offering *Simplicity and Success* workshops that receive rave reviews from participants, I conduct Strategic Design and Planning workshops for corporate executives and managers through my consulting firm *Summit Strategies*. Clients range from *Fortune 500* giants like *ALCAN*, *Motorola*, and *Ciba-Giegy* to university faculties, high tech start-ups, non-profit organizations, and community groups.

About the Competition

Most simple living books fall into one of four categories:

- **Philosophical and inspirational tomes that espouse a vision of the simple life.**

Voluntary Simplicity, by Duane Elgin (William Morrow and Company, 1981), *Simplicity*, by Mark Burch (New Society, 1995), and *Timeless Simplicity*, by John Lane (Green Books, UK, 2001) are important because they inspire people to consider simplicity, but none shows readers how to actually make the shift from where they are to where they want to be. Recent books such as *Nothing Left Over*, by Toinette Lippe (Tarcher-Putnam, NY 2002), *Simple Days* by Marlene Schiwy (Sorin Books, Notre Dame, IN 2002) and *Epicurean Simplicity* by Stephanie Mills (Island Press/Shearwater, Washington 2002) add memoir to inspiration and ground the authors' ideas in their own daily practice. However, none goes deeper to examine the structure out of which that practice arises.

- **Prescriptive, 101-ways-to-simplify primers that list specific action steps.**

Most simple living books fall into this basic but surface-level, how-to category. Elaine St. James and Sarah Ben Breathnach's books, *The Simple Living Guide*, by Janet Luhrs (Broadway Books, 1997), *The Circle of Simplicity*, by Cecile Andrews (HarperCollins, 1998) and *Choosing Simplicity*, by Linda Breen Pierce (Gallagher Press, 2000) are excellent at helping readers cut back clutter, get relief from stress, and think more clearly about what matters to them. However, they do not help readers change the life structures that give rise to stressful, cluttered lives.

- **Academic analyses that examine current reality as it relates to simple living.**

Bill Devall in *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends* (Gibbs Smith, 1988), and *Living Richly in an Age of Limits* (Gibbs Smith, 1993) adds the principles of the deep, long-range ecology movement to the argument for simple living, but his tomes and others like them appeal mostly to students and academics. So does Jerome Segal's intriguing tome on the philosophy and

politics of *Graceful Simplicity* (Henry Holt, NY 1999). The market for these kinds of books is limited.

• **Strategic Skill-Based Books that Cross Categories**

Two great books offer systemic approaches based on strategic skills. The philosophy of *Your Money or Your Life* (Penguin Books, 1992), a best seller by Joe Dominquez and Vicki Robin is similar to that of *Simplicity and Success*, but not as systematically spelled out. Nor are its steps integrated into a generic framework for creating results throughout one's life. Philip McGraw's best-selling *Life Strategies*, (Hyperion, 1999) integrates strategy and action to help readers "do what matters." He offers excellent suggestions for taking action but does not integrate vision, values, and actions into a dynamic organizing framework. However, neither book addresses the effect of the underlying life structures on behavior, nor spells out the difference between solving problems and creating results.

Simplicity and Success will fill a critical gap in the literature. No other book:

- *Helps readers recognize and shift the structures that guide surface behavior and actions,*
- *Shows readers how to integrate conflicting desires and values into a fulfilling whole,*
- *Addresses the differences between problem solving and creating,*
- *Helps readers embrace and transcend complexity rather than fight against it,*
- *Provides a framework for organizing and creating your own way of living simply.*

Only *Simplicity and Success* offers readers the skills and framework with which to integrate intention and action, and a systematic, skill-based strategy with which to create and sustain both the simplicity and success that they so deeply long for.

About The Market

Best-seller lists regularly include such category-crossing books as *Your Money or Your Life* or *Simple Abundance*. Their success indicates a wide market for *Simplicity and Success*. *Book of the Month Club*, *Quality Paperback Book Club*, *Psychology Today Book Club*, and *One Spirit Book Club* regularly feature books dealing with simple-living and self-creation

Forty-four million cultural creatives are said to have “person-centered and green values,” and to advocate simple, sustainable, lifestyles. With its emphasis on *creating* results, *Simplicity and Success* will attract this core audience, most of who are avid book buyers. It will also attract the millions of environmentally aware individuals who belong to such organizations as the Sierra Club (550,000), Environmental Defense Fund (250,000), National Wildlife Federation (1.3 million), Audubon (600,000), and Natural Resources Defense Council (170,0000). Increasingly, such readers prefer creativity to confrontation.

The “down-shifting” trend has not yet crested. This market includes well-established, leading edge boomers as well as readers in their twenties and thirties who want to redefine success. It also includes younger, middle class boomers who are worried about their financial futures. *Simplicity and Success* will help readers in all three categories to clarify their values, develop the capacity to create results, and master the skills with which to do more with less.

National simplicity magazines such as *SIMPLYCITY*, *Simple Living Oasis*, and The Simple Living Network’s on-line *Simple Living Newsletter*, as well as women’s magazines like *Rebook*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *Elm Street*, *Chatelaine*, and *Rosie* will want to serialize parts of this book. Given such broad appeal, this book could be featured in the self-help section of every general bookstore in North America. Libraries will want it on their shelves. It will be snatched up by the thousands of book clubs and simplicity study circles that meet throughout the country. College and university professors already use early drafts in courses such as environmental studies and cultural change.

Finally, its focus on *integrating* simplicity and success will make this book appealing to millions of business book buyers who are desperate to go beyond simplistic, stress-reduction approaches to life and work. With the publication of Meg Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers' *A Simpler Way* (1996), Edward de Bono's *Simplicity* (1998), Jack Trout's *The Power of Simplicity* (1999), and Bill Jensen's *Simplicity: The New Competitive Advantage in a World of More, Better, Faster* (2000) creating simplicity through focus is fast becoming an important trend in the corporate world. As society globalizes and corporations shed more workers, increasing numbers of people will search for the tools and skills with which to create simple, yet rich and fulfilling lives.

Because of its structural strengths, its transferable creating skills, and its friendly personal style, *Simplicity and Success* will likely sell well initially and be a consistent backlist performer.

About Promotion

I have successfully promoted my own businesses for twenty years. I will devote significant time and effort to promoting *Simplicity and Success* and hope to work closely with the publisher's sales and publicity team. I will be willing to travel, speak, and promote anywhere in Canada and the US at the publisher's arrangement.

There are at least seven ways that I will promote *Simplicity and Success*:

Self-Publishing

I am publishing a "print on demand" version of *Simplicity and Success* to use as a promotional vehicle for my own coaching, workshops, and speaking engagements.

Endorsements and Testimonials

I will ask Robert Fritz, author of the *Path of Least Resistance* to write a Foreword for the book. I will ask well-known simplicity authors such as Vicki Robin, Linda Breen Pierce, Duane Elgin, Marlene Schiwy, and Mark Burch for endorsements.

I will also ask authors who are friends and associates for endorsements: Bill Kittredge (*Who Owns the West*), Christopher Childs (*The Spirit's Terrain*), Paul Stoltz (*Adversity Quotient*), Derek Lundy (*The Godforsaken Sea*) and Guy Dauncey (*Stormy Weather*).

Lectures and Workshops

I am a professional speaker and workshop leader who has presented keynote addresses in Canada and the US. I will commit to working full time to promote *Simplicity and Success* in the year following its release. I will present lectures and workshops through such organizations such as the BC, Oregon, and Washington *Cultural Creatives* groups, *Business for Social Responsibility* in the US and Canada, *The Northwest Environment Institute* in Seattle, *The Institute of Earth Education* in West Virginia, *the Canadian Environmental Network*, as well as at conferences sponsored by educators, business, and other organizations.

Writing

I will query feature editors at newspapers in Toronto, Calgary, Victoria, Vancouver, San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland, offering them articles on *Simplicity and Success*. I'll also query *O, Rosie, Redbook, Whole Earth, Utne Reader, YES!, Mother Jones, Mother Earth News, New Age Journal, Psychology Today, SIMPLYCITY, Elm Street, Chatelaine, Simple Living Oasis* and *The Simple Living Network's on-line Newsletter* to arrange articles, reviews, and interviews.

Media Appearances

I have appeared on TV and radio discussing the ideas in *Simplicity and Success*. I will contact talk shows in Toronto, Calgary, Victoria, Vancouver, San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland. I will also contact bookstores in these areas to arrange readings.

Direct Mail

I am skilled in direct mail promotion. As well as mailing postcards and flyers to my own lists of several thousand names, and to members of groups to which I belong, such as Business for Social Responsibility, the Institute of Earth Education, the BC and Canadian Environmental Networks, and the Association of Experiential Education, I will also secure additional lists of members of environmental and social change groups.

Internet

I have web sites for **BruceElkin.com** and my consulting firm, **Summit Strategies**. *Simplicity and Success* will be featured prominently on both sites. As well, I am developing a new site dedicated specifically to promoting *Simplicity and Success*. I will also promote the book, workshops, and speeches on numerous discussion lists and through articles, ads, and announcements on the 200,000 member Simple Living Network, Cultural Creatives lists, the NS2 (Natural Step) List, and numerous other lists that appeal to potential buyers of *Simplicity and Success*.

