

Clarifying your purpose

In the preceding chapter we looked at creating a compelling vision to transform your organisation. But there will be some who are reading this who will feel that such vision is not for them. Do you feel that way? Do you feel that 'great purpose' is a nice concept, but wholly impractical for you?

Perhaps so, perhaps you feel that you do not have such freedom. The biggest barrier to purpose is lack of freedom.

But the biggest cause of lack of freedom are the walls we build around ourselves. Are you free? Or do you have self-imposed limits which you have ceased to question, challenge, or even to recognise?

In this chapter we look at this question, and how, if we do have such limits, we can identify them and break through them. We will look at:

- the concept of paradigms, and how they can cause us to limit our thinking
- Why-How charting, and how it can help us to identify hidden rules and limits in our lives
- Why-How dangers - why you might not want to do this
- congruence - what you might achieve if you do.

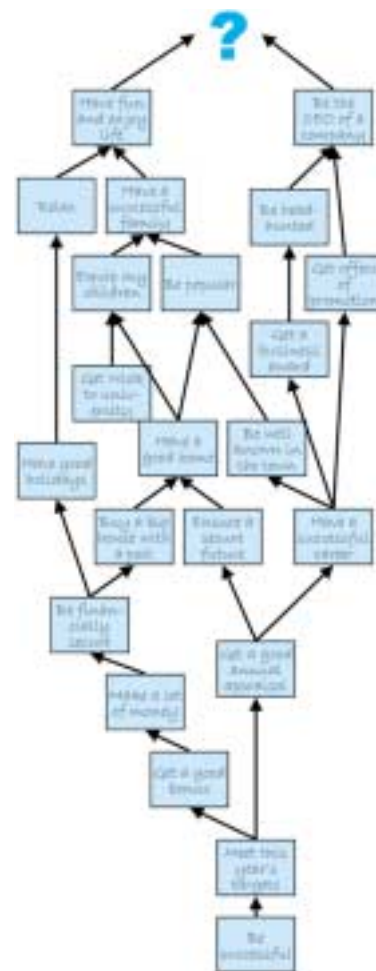
The concept of paradigms

There is something called 'pike syndrome' after a story of a pike placed in a large tank with a glass partition half way along it. After a day of constantly banging into the partition the pike changes its swimming patterns to avoid it. Then the partition is removed, but the pike swims as though it is still there. For the pike, the other half of the tank has simply ceased to exist.



Why, in all the plenitude of God's great universe do you choose to fall asleep in this small dark prison?

Rumi



Chapter 17

The small crumpled sticky-note arced across the room to hit the far wall, and join a number of similar yellow balls around the base of the waste paper bin.

Richard did not see it complete its trajectory. He did not care if it was inside or outside the bin. He was too wrapped up in the frustration that was his own personal Why-How chart.

The clock on his windowsill showed the time at 2am, and the sheet of paper in front of him was littered with the rudiments of a Why-How chart. Two seemingly unlinked triangles had grown on the page.

The small crumpled yellow balls had been Richard's repeated attempts to bring them together. The two halves of the diagram, barring one or two sparse lines, were defying all efforts to bring them together under one purpose. As far as Richard could see, he was essentially two totally different people. One, the right-hand-side triangle, which made business more efficient and sustainable. The other, the left-hand-side triangle, which provided for his family and endeavoured to develop Nicholas into a good person. And nowhere, in either of those two people, could he really see anything that made him 'him'.

Who on earth was he? What made him who he was? What was his purpose? Why? Why? Why?

Richard banged the table in frustration. Was he really just some machine that made the world go round? Was that it? He hated the thought that it might be.

He pushed the paper to one side. It was so late. Perhaps that is why he could not think straight. Resignedly, he got himself ready for bed, and crawled in beside Laura. He was so tired.

And yet sleep would not come. He had questioned his own identity, and now his mind was frantically searching everywhere for an answer. For a brief moment, he envied those who could simply say their life was about 'serving God', but since he did not believe in God, that would not work! And even if he did, he still saw the answer as a cop-out.

Pike are fairly dumb creatures. Humans are far more intelligent, and so our glass partitions have become more sophisticated, even to the extent of renaming them 'paradigms', but they work the same way. The problem with the walls of our personal prison is that we do not even realise they exist.

But we can see them in other people, and we recognise them in phrases like 'I can't do that!' or 'That's not me!' or 'I'm too...!'

That is not to say we should not recognise boundaries and obstacles. But in the case of boundaries and obstacles we make a conscious choice based on judgement, and we can re-evaluate them when conditions or aspirations change. They play an explicit part in our goal setting and in our values, and as such they provide guidance rather than limitation.

Paradigms on the other hand can limit our thinking without us even realising that it is happening. Essentially a paradigm is an unquestioned pattern of behaviour or thought. Often this pattern has developed as a helpful framework for dealing with something, for instance organising a meeting or handling an argument. They can provide familiar routine and comfort in the face of uncertain, complex and important tasks, and as such they can be extremely valuable.

The danger comes when they become the only way to tackle that task; when they become ritual rather than reason; when they become an alternative to thinking rather than a means to support it.

Unchecked, paradigms allow a sense of community to become racism; objectivity to become bigotry; faith to become superstition; and past wisdom to become the walls of our current prisons. Paradigms can be very useful; they can stop us continually banging up against obstacles that



An exercise in paradigms

Without taking your pen from the paper, join all nine dots with 4 straight lines.



But there had to be an answer somewhere. There had to be some goal which would make both halves of his life meaningful. The question cycled endlessly in his mind, and gradually there came a dawning realisation. At first he fought it, rejected it, it was too heinous to contemplate. But once conceived, it could not be unthought, and it kept coming back, stronger and more forceful with each encounter. Richard physically shook his head as if to throw it from his mind, but he could not. It hammered on the doors of his conscious, and eventually, too weak to resist, Richard gave it entry, and sat looking balefully at it.

One reason underpinned both sides of his Why-How chart. It had remained hidden for years, because it loved the darkness. But Richard had demanded it make itself known, and now it stood there four-square in Richard's mind, defying him to do anything about it.

The one thing that held his life together was... His own selfish vanity!

Richard fought frantically to unseat the conclusion. And he challenged it with the things he had done for Nicholas. The thing sneered at him. "Why?" it asked. "For him? Or for you? Was it not so you could be proud of him, and boast of him to others? Was it not so he would love and admire you?" And as Richard thought back over the last year or two, he found it almost impossible to identify one thing that he had done solely and simply for Nicholas. Even his choice of Christmas presents had been things that he felt would develop Nicholas's mental abilities above those of his contemporaries.

As Richard thought of Nicholas and what he wanted him to be, he saw Nicholas growing to be like him, and he knew the thing was right.

He did not even attempt to challenge it with regard to work. Even he could see the fingerprints of 'his vanity' smeared all over it.

In despair, Richard conceded the truth. The one thing that was truly 'him' had emerged, and Richard hated it. He fell into a black sleep, with his last thoughts being that he really had grown into the sort of person he least admired.



He awoke with a start on Monday morning, his pulse racing, and a sense of panic rising within him. He felt strangely uneasy, as if waking from a bad dream, but if there had been a dream it had slipped irretrievably from his memory.

are still there. But when they continue unquestioned, beyond the point when the obstacle should be removed, they become a liability. They become the main limitation to you identifying and pursuing your true potential, and thus your real purpose.

But paradigms are rarely seen from the inside as such boundaries, even though they are. They are more often areas where we have given up thinking and exploring. They are often expressed as objectives or goals (often not very specific ones) where the reasoning behind them is not fully thought through. Examples that are most common, and you may therefore recognise in your past, are:

- I want to be rich
- people need me to guide them
- promotion and advancement is always good
- being proved wrong is bad
- I have got to win people's admiration
- I want to know everything
- be totally independent.

Of themselves, the principles may not be wrong. But the problem comes when they become an unquestioned, and even unconscious compulsion; something that we don't even realise is driving us.

Personal Why-How charts

Undertaking a personal Why-How chart helps you to identify these paradigms, and to question them, and, where appropriate, to move on past them. Mapping out the Why-How chart for yourself is very similar to the process we covered for the organisation in Chapter 2.

1. Start by listing out, on individual yellow sticky-notes, your current personal objectives. These are the things you want to be or achieve



An exercise in paradigms

If you are struggling with this exercise, it may be because your paradigm is causing you to think the solution is within the box created by the nine dots.



Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value.

Albert Einstein
German Physicist

And then he remembered last night, and, unbidden, a phrase he had read some time in the past stole into his mind: 'I have seen the face of the enemy, and the enemy was me'.

A sense of hopelessness and depression overtook him. His insides felt leaden, and he had a strange urge to burst into tears. But he resisted, and mentally shook himself. His mind sought for something to fix the breach, to eliminate the unwanted disturbance in its routine. "What is a soul anyway?" he asked himself. "And you don't believe in God, so phrases from scripture clearly have no relevance!"

For a few moments, the barrage of his self-doubts were alleviated, and he felt better. But then he realised that his rationalisations did not actually change anything. God, or no God, he had still allowed himself to become someone he was deeply disappointed in. Yes, the scripture may have been the trigger, but the conclusions were very clearly his own. He turned and buried his face in his pillow.



When the alarm went off, he was still thinking things through, but he felt calmer. He seemed to be handling the issue almost academically as he went through the motions of washing and dressing. The issue came quite simply down to this: he was no longer the person he wanted to be, and he would change! He was not sure exactly how he would change, but he was confident he could.

And yet, for some strange and obscure reason, the decision to change did not come easily to him. It was almost as though his old self retained its grip, and said "Come back to me, it's more comfortable here, and I can make your real dreams come true!"



But by the time Richard and Laura reached the hospital that morning, something had already begun to change in Richard. It was almost as though becoming aware of the problem diminished its hold on him. As though bringing it into the light caused it to weaken, to begin to recede.

He could look at Nicholas, and focus on him being a separate human being, and not an extension of himself. He could see someone with his own life to lead, his own mistakes to make. He tried to think back. Did he really see Nicholas as a reflection of himself, to be managed and developed so that others could applaud Richard's fatherhood? He was not really

across all areas of your life. They could be to do with:

- possessions and material wealth, including where you live
- attainment of certain standards, prizes or membership
- capability, skills and competence
- impact on others, and how you affect them, relationships
- impact on the environment, and changes you bring about
- spiritual goals and your personal journey.

Try and develop a balance across all areas of your life:

- yourself
- your work and career/vocation
- your family and home
- your community
- your leisure activities and clubs.

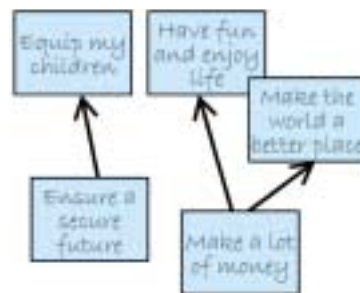
When you have listed as many goals as you can, you should group any that clearly go together, and then lay them out on a large flat wall covered with sheets of flipchart paper, so you can see them all.

2. Take the first goal that you want to work with, and ask yourself the question "Why do I want to do this?" If the answer lies in another sticky-note, then place it above the one you are working on, and link them by an upward pointing arrow. If the answer is a new goal or objective, write it on a new sticky-note, and link it by an upward pointing arrow. Then ask 'Why?' of the new objective and repeat the process. When you have got as far as you can with that chain, pick up the next sticky-note and work with that one. Challenge yourself to be clear and explicit on your goals, and do not be afraid to rip vague ones out and replace them.



No one can make you feel small without your consent

Eleanor Roosevelt
American author and humanitarian



sure, but he realised the more he thought about it, the more he seemed to be polarising his memories and recasting his history.

One thing he was sure of, was that by concentrating on Nicolas as a discrete individual, he felt the love he had for the boy rise within him. As he focused on the boy's struggle to make sense of his future, the pain and delight that he would face, and what he would need to help him get through, he felt that same love grow and threaten to overwhelm him. He loved the feeling. It seemed to give his own life a new depth and intensity, the contours seemed sharper and the colours brighter. This was what really mattered. He thought back over what his life had brought him so far, over the trappings of success that he had so eagerly pursued. And yet ...

How long was it before the Jaguar became just 'the car' or the dwelling of their dreams had deteriorated to just 'the house'. He thought of the time that Nicholas, eager to become involved in his Dad's ritual washing of the new car, had watched with joy Richard's splashing of the foamy sponge over the bonnet, and then picked up a rock and copied him. A key step in Nicholas's development, and Richard had only seen the scratches. He had favoured the emblem over the reality, the material over his son. He was wracked with the guilt his new insight bestowed on him, and he held Nicholas's hand and tears dripped on the sleeping boy's bed.

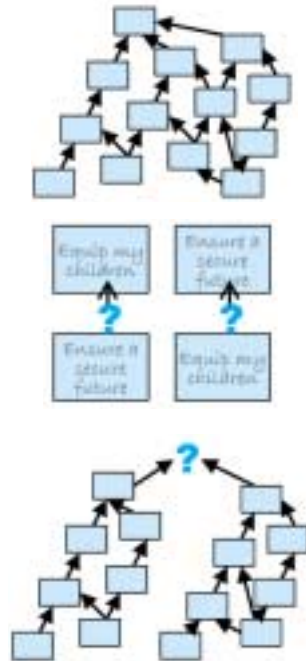


Later in the morning, back at work, he sat in his chair and looked around his office, and thought over the last six months. Was this really success? Externally, it looked like every picture he had ever had of success, right down to the sleek rosewood desk, the brass fittings and the executive trappings. Viewed from the outside he had a beautiful home, a luxury car, went on exotic holidays, and had the respect and admiration of 800 people.

Viewed from the inside: he had a house of turmoil and conflict which he never got the chance to enjoy; he had a car which he only got to drive in the dark or in the rush hour; his supposed holidays were frequently interrupted with work, or with thinking about problems; and he had the resentment and distress of 800 people.

In retrospect it seemed strange to him, but he had never really evaluated it from the inside before. Just how had he been sold this picture as success? Exactly whose screenplay was he acting in?

- Continue to work through the sticky-notes one by one, even those that are already linked together, until you have them pulled together into one diagram. Be prepared to redraw the diagram when it gets too confused.
- Enrich the diagram further, by asking "Why else do I do this?" to pull in further links. When you are confused as to which is the more important objective, ask yourself which you would give up for the other.
- Where you have separate parts of the diagram, which cannot seem to be pulled together, this may indicate that you haven't delved deep enough into your motives, and you may need to persevere with asking "Why?"
- When you have finished mapping upwards, look at some of the higher-up objectives and think about whether you could deliver them in other ways. Use this exploration to challenge some of your earlier objectives. Ask also, whether the lower-down objectives really do supply all that is needed to achieve the higher-up objectives, or whether other things are necessary.



Dangers of personal Why-How charting

But please be warned that developing a personal Why-How chart is not easy. Some paradigms protect us from aspects of ourselves that we literally don't want to face. If you think you are really not ready to be honest about your motives, then please do not attempt the Why-How chart. If you do, you may either unearth something you will find difficult to handle, or more likely you will fudge certain parts of the chart to make them more palatable, and you will waste your time on an exercise for some mythical being who is not really you.

We must not cease from exploration. And at the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot
English Poet

He physically shook his head in disbelief that he could walk this far down a blind alley without realising it. Did he really think that it got any better further along? He closed his eyes, sighed deeply, and slowly, almost imperceptibly, shook his head again.

So where had it gone so wrong? Had it always been like this? Was there never a time when he was really successful?

He thought back. There was a time when he had really enjoyed work, a time when he had been merely a design engineer for Ektracom. Sure, even then he dreamt about getting promoted, getting a company car, what he could do with the money. But they were not the things that had driven him most. What had made him happiest, and most content, was the feeling of making a real difference within his team. Of cracking a difficult design problem, and seeing his colleagues' faces delight in moving forward and doing something worthwhile. He remembered the highlight that he treasured most, of being in a shop and hearing a customer ask for the specific product he had designed because: "... I know somebody who reckons this thing has totally changed the way he does business." Wow! He lived on that for months!

It was strange. He had not felt successful then, because he did not earn enough money; he had a second-hand car and other people got to tell him what to do, even when they were wrong. But work was fun then, he shared it with friends who wanted the same things he did. And the car may have been second hand, but Laura and he had had such good times in it, they had been everywhere. He could still remember that Escort storming over Ditchling Beacon, and the time it had left that MG for dead at the lights. That was some car, you could do superb handbrake turns in the snow. Even Laura loved it. Mind you she had loved everything then, and so did he. They had talked for hours about things that really mattered, and how they would like to make them change. Looking from the inside, that felt far more like success than this did.

Sure they had had tough times, but they had got through them together, whether it was with the team at work, or Laura at home. They got through the tough times because they had a common goal. They were going to make things better. It did not matter whether it was a new product, a different way of working, helping their friends through a tough patch, campaigning against hospital closures, or dreaming of a family. They were going to make things better. It was the joy of fellowship, in that goal of making things better, that had been the springboard for so many happy times. That was success!

If a Why-How chart does not cause you to wrestle with yourself then you probably are not being fully honest in your answers.

However, you are a lifetime project, and you do not have to complete the plans in one evening. Work through the Why-How chart at a pace that suits you, and do not worry if it remains incomplete. The objective is not to complete the diagram; the objective is to develop new insights and understanding, which will help you to refine your values and your purpose, and to open up new opportunities for achieving them.

Publishing your personal Why-How chart

Once you have completed your personal Why-How chart, you may be tempted to share it widely with other people, perhaps by pinning it up on a wall.

Don't do it!

Your personal Why-How chart is exactly that - personal.

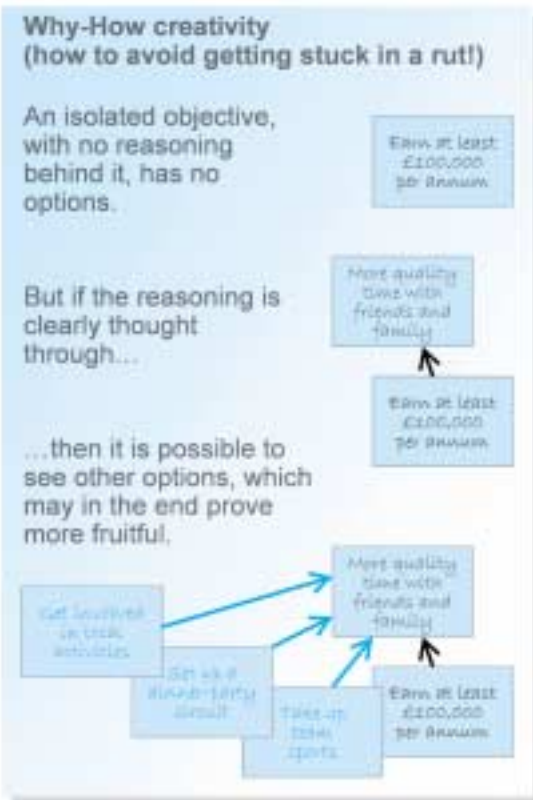
Other people will be unlikely to see or interpret it the same way you do, and any thought that you may at some time share it could limit your openness and honesty in completing it.

Congruence

Probably the best way for testing your Why-How chart is to work through it with a good friend. Somebody you trust, and who is not afraid to say "Hold on, how does that fit in with what you said last week?"

In this way we can be tested for congruence. Congruence is achieved when what

The fearful Unbelief is unbelief in yourself.
 Thomas Carlyle
 Scottish essayist and historian



He felt quite light headed thinking about it. But he could not live in the past, and bringing his thoughts back to the present had quite a sobering effect on him. He could not just jack it all in and go back to being a designer. And anyway, Laura would never go back to living in a flat. His shoulders sagged a little. Laura, Laura, Laura, what happened to you? What happened to us?

And then he smiled, quite unexpectedly, as a thought suddenly popped into his head. "Is this a mid-life crisis?" It was almost as though part of him had been detached observing his thinking from a distance, and posted the question. He was amused to think of himself as experiencing a mid-life crisis. He was only 34! Is this what they felt like? Is this why men jacked in job, wife and family and ran off with a student to become a beach bum in Marbella. For the first time he could see the attraction. He thought of making love to Lucy on a deserted beach in the setting sun, with no concerns for any business plans or school fees. And sighed a deep contented sigh.

Surely that would feel like success. Wouldn't it?

But no! Not really! Not for long! Richard was beginning to think that people either put into the world, or they took out of it, and if more people took out than put in, then the world got worse. He had responsibilities. He was just getting to grips with addressing himself as a vain glory-seeker; he was not going to fall into the trap of being an, equally shallow, pleasure seeker. No, whatever he was going to do now needed to be something that would enable him to feel that his life had value. That in some way shape or form, the world would not have been a better place without him.



When, late in the evening, he at last pulled his personal 'Why-How' back in front of him, he felt far better equipped to complete it. He felt foolish placing at the top of his chart 'to make the world a better place', but it was what he truly wanted to see himself doing. It was for him, a better sense of his identity; of who he really wanted to be.

He looked at the words he had placed at the top of his chart, and inwardly squirmed. He felt embarrassed by them. They seemed naive and unsophisticated. He imagined how embarrassed he would be if anyone else saw them. He wondered whether to strip the newly written yellow sticky right back off the chart, and replace it with something that appeared more deeply insightful, and less open to cynicism and ridicule.

we believe is entirely consistent with itself, and entirely consistent with our behaviours. An example of a congruent person is one who thinks a healthy body is key to enjoying life, has reconciled that to match up with their models of what they really enjoy doing, and who gets pleasure out of healthy eating and regular exercise.

Congruence can be achieved in all areas of our lives and congruent people tend to be immensely powerful and persuasive. They walk the talk and believe in what they are saying.

Is that important to you? Almost certainly, if you want to lead a congruent organisation. Part of the transformation of your organisation is the logic that we have covered in the preceding chapters. But a far bigger part is the leadership of someone who is absolutely clear on what is to be achieved, why it is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved, and has fully reconciled his or her life and behaviours to making it happen.

Leaders are leaders only if they have followers. Followers become followers because they are inspired and enthralled by a clear picture of the future, which they fully believe will become reality. They are attracted to people with vision and energy. And, vision and energy come from developing a well thought through purpose, and resolving clearly how it is to be brought about.



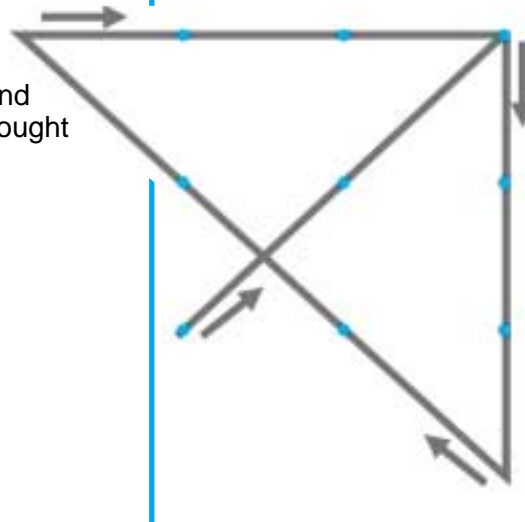
Anyone can change the world. All you need is faith and a plan of action.

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara
Bolivian Radical



An exercise in paradigms

One possible solution to the nine dots exercise is mapped out below:



But what could he replace them with? The truth of the matter was, that no matter how twee it sounded, he really did want to be someone who made the world a better place. It was as simple as that.

He considered ruefully, how easy it was to wrap self-centredness and materialism up into sophisticated intellectual language that gave the author an air of wisdom. But that anything to do with simply 'being good' sounded foolish and uneducated. It was almost as though language itself was stacked in favour of him retaining his darker side. Perhaps it was simply that 'goodness' did not need to hide behind intricate arguments and sophisticated concepts. And anyway, why did he need it to sound sophisticated? Exactly who was he trying to impress? Was this not just 'vanity' trying to get in through the back door?

The more he thought about it, the more content he became with the simple straightforward words that left him nowhere to hide. He would just have to brazen it out.



The next day at work, he was even more confirmed and confident in his chosen path, and he had begun to work out the implications it had for his role in Cylek UK.

Richard had concluded that to make things better, really make things sustainably better, he needed to make himself dispensable. If the bits of 'betterness' depended on him being there, then they would stop when he stopped. There had to be something residual in 'adding value', or you couldn't be sure that you really had. He reflected on this for a while, and felt this was more like he would like to be. Developing the company so it could almost run itself.

Maybe he would not make himself fully dispensable, just dispensable for holidays, weekends, and the hours between 5 pm and 9 am. That would suit him just fine. Then in the hours from 9 to 5 his role could become one of developing structures and approaches for others to run the business, rather than to run the business himself.

In hindsight, he felt that the QFD his team had already developed would take him a long way towards this, but that he needed to develop his role with each member of his team to enable him to take a position that was commensurate with his new strategy. He would start with Susan.