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**LIFE DESIGN**

**(An application of the “PLanguage Method”)**

**BY**

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**LIFE DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

1. If your life goals are unclearly specified, you are unlikely to reach them.

2. If even one single life goal is unclear then it is that goal which will be your problem.

3. Life plans should be implemented evolutionarily so you can adjust to them when you get unexpected results in practice.

4. A life plan will allow you to take the maximum advantage of desirable opportunities and it will help you to avoid problems.

5. You have a choice; plan your life -- or be pushed around by it.

6. Happiness is reaching your goals; a systematic plan will improve the probability of reaching your goals, as well as helping you find realistic goal levels and plans.

7. Ideals cannot always be reached and plans cannot always be kept, but "life planning" will improve your chances of achieving both of these things.

8. Life is too complex to follow a formal design perfectly but life is so vital to us that its very complexity insists on a formal plan.

9. If you don't plan to control your life, then your life will control you.

10. You are the only one who can plan your life: if you don't, then other peoples plans will mess it up.

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**CHAPTER 1 A ROAD MAP FOR LIFE:**

**HOW TO DESIGN YOUR WAY**

The most important thing in your life is your life. Some people define their lives in terms of themselves -- their own health, wealth, and happiness. Others derive their primary satisfaction from the happiness of the people with whom they interact -- their family, friends, or co-workers.

Few of us can remember having a conscious will to be born. Thus we may conclude that we had no control over our lives from the outset. We may feel that life just happens to us.

Some of us may take control of our lives at various stages by making decisions about our education, employment, or personal relationships. Sometimes we find that these decisions are not right for us. Other times we find that a decision that made sense one or two years ago no longer represents what we want or need.

In those cases, we may feel trapped by our earlier decisions. By waiting too long before we constructively alter the course of our lives, we may increase the pain of necessary changes.

For example, we may want to switch careers or end an unhappy relationship. But we aren't sure exactly what will happen if we make those moves. We are afraid of the unknown. So we tend to stay where we are, which only adds to our unhappiness.

Life Design will show you how to evaluate the important areas of your life in a formal, written way. The techniques in this book will enable you to decide what aspects of your life you truly want to change, and will help you formulate a step-by-step plan for making those changes.

You may find that you have used many of these techniques in an informal, sporadic way. The tools in Life Design have been used by professionals in the data processing field to design computer systems. They work. But keep in mind that their effectiveness depends entirely on the effort you put into using them.

You may not have the power to perfect your life, but you can make it much better. The first thing you have to do is define your objectives in measurable terms. This is more complex than it sounds.

**IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTIVES**

An objective is a physical, mental, or emotional experience you want to have. Life Design is based on the principle that to have the life you want, you must be clear about your short-term and long-term goals.

This book will teach you how to clarify your objectives. The Life Design process will enable you to carefully examine what you want -- and think you want -- out of life. It will then provide you with a rational basis for deciding whether you are willing to put forth the effort and make the sacrifices necessary to achieve these objectives.

Briefly, Life Design will teach you how to formulate a list of your objectives. It will then show you how to formulate a separate list of the methods you can use to achieve those objectives. This is not always as simple as it sounds. It requires honesty, openness, and a willingness to take a hard look at yourself and what you want out of life.

We often find that as we examine what we will have to do to achieve our objectives, we often go back and change them. We find that the price we would have to pay -- in terms of time, money, and effort -- is too high.

The important thing to remember is that making these discoveries and changing your objectives is not a step backward. Rather, this process of elimination is a way of clarifying what you really want. It is a way of setting yourself free. You no longer have to wonder, "Should I have tried to become a doctor?" or "What would have happened if I seriously looked into moving to California?".

One of the mistakes people frequently make when they try to change their lives is confusing objectives and solutions. Objectives, as we mentioned, are physical, mental or emotional experiences you want to have. Solutions are the means you can use to achieve those goals.

It is easy to see why people confuse objectives and solutions. Once you have adopted a solution, it does become a kind of objective in itself. In addition, you may be using ideas about solutions to express ideas about your objectives.

Let's look at an example. We'll examine an issue that will also enable us to look at how you can use a series of questions and answers to clarify your objectives and distinguish clearly between objectives and solutions. Let's say you have listed earning additional income as an objective. If asked why you want to earn extra money, you might reply, "Then I could travel more." Money is clearly the means, travel appears to be the goal.

But let's say the questions continue.

"Why do you want to travel more?"

"To learn foreign languages."

"Why do you want to learn foreign Languages?"

"I am not really sure. I just know that I have wanted to since I was a child and couldn't understand the Polish boy who moved in next door."

When you really examine the objectives and solutions in this case, it seems that learning languages is the real goal. Money and travel are merely the means.

Notice that the key question here is Why? Some friends have told me that the single most powerful thing I taught them about these Life Design methods was asking this simple question. The answers help us identify our long-range objectives, and also provide some guidelines for the solutions we can use to achieve them.

Sometimes we state an objective in terms of a solution because we are absolutely sure that one particular solution is the only way of reaching the goal. However, this practice dangerously limits our chances of achieving what we want. Even if you can not think of more than one solution as you list your objectives, state your objectives clearly in measurable terms. Do not include possible solutions on this list. By dealing with solutions separately, you keep open the possibility that you or someone else will come up with a more appropriate solution at a later time.

Remember that any solution can be discarded as soon as you think of a better one -- that is, one that represents a better way to achieve your objectives. It is important to clearly differentiate between the ideas that represent your most cherished goals and the ideas that represent merely solutions, which you would be glad to relinquish if you found more appropriate ones.

**FORMULATING OBJECTIVES**

To redesign your life, you must carefully define each of your objectives. The more clearly you articulate what you want, the more likely you are to get it. The best way to define each objective is to make it specific and measurable. When you express objectives this way, you help yourself in three ways.

First, you make it much easier to formulate solutions. Once you have expressed your objectives in a measurable way, you can create a reasonable, structured plan for reaching those objectives.

Living the life you want is no longer a vague, remote fantasy. It is something you can achieve simply by developing a logical, step-by-step set of solutions.

The second way you help yourself when you define your objectives is that you create a self-imposed discipline. When your objectives and solutions are measurable, you have fewer excuses for procrastinating. You can not say, "I want to be happier, but I don't know what would make me happy", or "I know what I want, but I have no idea how to get it."

This discipline enables you to work toward your objectives continuously -- little by little, one day at a time. As you will see, this is the easiest and most effective way to go about reshaping your life.

Discipline also helps you cope with the stress that occurs when you change your behavior and attitudes. People have a certain inherent resistance to change. This is because they give up a great deal of security when they institute change. You may be unhappy with the way things are, but at least everything is familiar. There are no surprises; you have learned to cope with your life and the people involved in it.

When you change one aspect of your life, others may change, too. You may find that your attitudes and priorities begin to shift. People you care about may react to you differently. This can be disconcerting and sometimes frightening. The temptation to retreat, to go back to the way things were, can be overwhelming, even if you know these changes are for the best.

Discipline can enable you to continue moving toward your objectives, even though you're feeling uncomfortable or a little afraid. Discipline can give you the will and the energy to keep moving forward until the feelings of fear and discomfort pass.

The third way you help yourself by setting measurable objectives is that you establish a way to objectively evaluate your solutions.

You will be able to see whether your solutions are enabling you to move toward your goals effectively. If they are not, you can modify or discard the solutions without wasting time and effort.

Shown below are some examples of measurable objectives:

**- Eliminate smoking in three months.**

**- Lose thirty pounds in one year.**

**- Learn to type 80 words per minute in six months**

After you have made sure your objectives are specific and measurable, you must do one other thing: you must write down your objectives. This book provides a structured approach for changing your life. It is designed to enable you to rationally and objectively evaluate the way in which you live. In order to do this, you must use the formal methods presented here. One of the most important Life Design techniques involves writing down your objectives and solutions. This gives you a tangible, written record of where you are going and how you are going to get there. It will help keep you disciplined and on track.

If you don't want to follow these procedures, put this book back on the shelf until you are ready to use this structured approach. Sometimes people need to feel a certain desperation or exasperation regarding their lives before they are motivated enough to make this kind of formal effort.

**ESTABLISHING A HIERARCHY OF OBJECTIVES**

As you work on your list of objectives, you must also establish a hierarchy of objectives. This is an important basic principle. If you tried to make a list of all the possible objectives for your life, it might include hundreds of items. Such a list would be useless.

It would be helpful to look at a specific example. Let's say you have decided living a satisfactory life is your primary objective. Next you must clarify what comprises a satisfactory life for you. Let's say you decide the components are a sufficient income, a job that you like, a good family life, good relations with friends and co-workers, and good health. You have now subdivided your primary objective into five categories. Each of these can be subdivided further. For example, under good health you might list giving up smoking, losing weight and exercising regularly as sub-objectives.

It is important to keep subdividing your objectives until they become so simple and so specific that you can take little steps toward accomplishing them every day. It is very important -- physically and psychologically -- that you not try to do everything at once. If you decide you are going to stop smoking, completely change your eating habits and exercise an hour every day -- all starting tomorrow -- you are setting yourself up to fail. You are not giving yourself a chance to adjust to these changes. You will find it takes tremendous effort to sustain this new way of life, and it will be easy to become tired, uncomfortable, and discouraged.

It is much better to institute these kinds of changes slowly. That means subdividing your goals until you reach a point where each individual step is small and relatively painless. That means that you will be working on achieving those objectives every day, but you won't be miserable while you are doing it.

Let's look at this in detail. You've already decided that living a satisfactory life is your main objective. You subdivided that, making good health one sub-objective. You went further, and decided that good health meant you wanted to stop smoking, lose weight, and exercise regularly.

Let's continue the process. You might decide to stop smoking by consuming one fewer cigarette a week.

You might decide to lose weight by gradually changing your eating habits. There are many ways to accomplish this. You might begin by eliminating one type of junk food from your diet each week. Replace it with something more healthful, such as a piece of fruit or a serving of vegetables. This way you'll be eating the same amount of food, so you won't be hungry. You also won't be denying yourself everything you like all at once, so you won't feel deprived.

These same principles apply to exercise. You would want to begin slowly. You might start by taking a brisk 15-minute walk every day for a week. Increase the time to 20 minutes the second week, and 30 minutes the third. Then begin jogging five minutes and walking 25 minutes. Do this for another week. Then try jogging 10 minutes and walking 20 minutes. Continue to alternate jogging and walking until you are jogging 30 minutes. Then start increasing the time that you jog. But continue to do this gradually -- five minutes a week.

The process of subdividing your objectives accomplishes several things. First it helps you to be realistic. As you subdivide your objectives, you begin to get an idea about the time and effort that will be required to achieve them. You will be able to see whether some objectives are unattainable, or in conflict with more important objectives. You will also get an idea about the time frame involved,and whether it is acceptable. You may find that an objective that seems very important to you will simply take too long to accomplish.

Subdividing your objectives into the smallest possible components will also help you formulate solutions. It is much easier to work out simple, straightforward plans for reaching small objectives than to come up with one grandiose, complex plan to reach a major goal. Having a series of sub-objectives that will lead to a major objective will enable you to come up with a very specific set of solutions. You will be able to develop a logical, systematic approach to making your life what you want it to be. On the other hand, trying to develop one grand plan to reach a major goal often leads to frustration. The plan becomes increasingly involved as you try to take all the factors into account. You may find yourself getting off track. You waste time and energy, and it's easy to become frustrated and discouraged.

Subdividing your objectives also has important psychological effects. It makes each goal seem more attainable, and the effort involved more manageable. You set up your journey to a happier life as a series of milestones. Each time you reach one of these milestones, you feel successful. This gives you more encouragement, and more energy to continue your journey.

On the other hand, if you set up one massive plan, you don't give yourself a chance to get any feeling of accomplishment until the end of your journey. You make these changes a huge chore, and you don't allow yourself any chance for encouragement along the way. This is a set up for failure.

As stated earlier, subdividing your objectives also minimizes stress. Redesigning your life is much easier if you do a little each day. It's important to keep in mind that any change -- no matter how positive, no matter how much you want it -- produces stress.

When we change things -- even things that make us miserable -- we are facing the unknown. How will this new experience affect us? How will it affect the people closest to us? Will we be strong enough and smart enough to cope with unexpected difficulties that may arise as a result of these changes?

These are serious issues. It is obvious that if you give yourself time to work them through slowly, you will have an easier time and a much greater chance of being successful.

You might compare the effect of changing some aspect of your life to what would happen if you has to travel from Arizona to Canada in the winter. If you went by car and spent several weeks on the road, you would have a chance to gradually get accustomed to the change in temperature.

As you traveled north, you could spend time looking for appropriate clothing. By the time you reached Canada, you would have adjusted to the cold and would have acquired the garments you would need to live comfortably in this new place.

On the other hand, if you flew from Arizona to Canada, the 60- to 70-degree drop in temperature would be a tremendous shock. You might find you had not brought adequate clothing. Regardless of what you had brought, you would undoubtedly need time to adjust to the cold. During that period of adjustment, you would probably be miserable -- shivering, disoriented, and constantly tired from the constant exposure to such a different climate.

There are objectives, however, which require major long range planning. These include educational and career objectives. While these objectives are major, Life Design enables you to break down the solutions into small steps. In this manner, the major objectives are easier to obtain.

The Life Design approach enables you to move into your new life slowly. The transition from one type of behavior to another is gradual, and there is plenty of time to become accustomed to new attitudes and priorities. In addition, you have a chance to think about these changes as they are happening, and to congratulate yourself for each step you take.

All these factors greatly increase your chances of success, and minimize the difficulties you might encounter as you proceed down the road toward a new life.

**OBJECTIVES IN CONFLICT**

So far, the Life Design process may seem simple. You make a list of specific, measurable objectives and write them down. You then subdivide these goals until you have a set of sub-objectives that you can work toward each day.

However, the process is more complex than it seems. Several factors will affect your decisions. For example, some of your objectives and sub-objectives are bound to be in conflict. You will find that you do not have the time, money, or energy to fulfill all the objectives you originally list. Or you may find some objectives would require changing jobs or residences, which might create more problems than you're facing now.

If this happens to you, it's important not to view it in a negative way. It represents not a step backwards, but a step forward. The fact that your objectives are in conflict means that you have been psychologically and emotionally in conflict regarding how you want to spend your life. This conflict in itself can cause feelings of hopelessness, desperation, confusion, and depression. Many people have these feelings, but never figure out what has caused them. Listing your objectives can enable you to get in touch with these feelings and then do something about them.

Once you find your objectives are not compatible, you have the opportunity to sit down and think clearly and rationally about what you want to do with your life. You can decide which objectives are worth the time and effort they will take to achieve and which are not. What is so liberating about using Life Design is that you are setting the priorities. You are deciding -- through a formal, logical process -- what you want to do. And you are free to change those decisions whenever you wish.

Another factor that will affect your Life Design process is the influence of the people in your life. Some of your objectives involve changing relationships. You may want to get closer to your spouse and children. You may decide you want to end an unhealthy relationship. Whatever the situation, you can not make decisions concerning other people unilaterally. You are going to have to discuss them with the people involved.

This too, can cause conflicts. You may find that your ideas for improving a relationship don't coincide with those of the people who would be affected. For example, you may feel you can get closer to your children by setting aside each Saturday morning for them. However, your children might tell you that they have set aside Saturday mornings to play with their friends. They might say that they would rather spend a little time with you each day.

This, in turn, may conflict with other objectives you have. Perhaps you had planned to take evening classed at a local college to qualify for a promotion.

The most effective way to resolve this type of problem is to discuss the issues openly. By talking over the situation with your children, you can reach a compromise. This might involve your spending three nights a week with them and two nights at school.

The most important thing to remember is that when conflicts arise in the Life Design process, they should be viewed in a positive way.

Conflicts can enable you to establish genuine communication with family and friends. They provide you with an opportunity to discuss -- in an open, honest way -- what you want out of life and relationships. Some people feel this kind of honesty is threatening. But in fact, it can be just the opposite. One reason these discussions can be helpful to everyone involved is that they are based upon an examination of specific, measurable objectives, not vague complaints. This means there is much less chance that the conversation will degenerate into bitter generalities about how bad things are and whose fault this is. Instead, you will be talking about real issues and how to resolve them.

During these discussions with family and friends, one technique can be particularly helpful when you are trying to clarify your goals and arrive at reasonable compromises. It's called establishing the best and worst cases.

We can see how this technique works by looking at an example used earlier -- the objective of establishing a closer relationship with your children. As mentioned earlier, you may decide one of your sub-objectives is to spend Saturday mornings with them. Your best case is to spend every Saturday morning with them. Your worst case is to spend no Saturday mornings with them.

Your children, however, don't like this plan. They want to spend Saturday mornings with their friends, and they want to share weekday evenings with you. Their best case is to spend time with you every evening of the week. Their worst case is not spending time with you any evening of the week.

One of the most effective ways to resolve this conflict is to set up a schedule that represents the middle ground. You might spend three evenings a week and every other Saturday morning with your children. A schedule such as this means everyone gives up something to gain something.

It is best to write down the best and worst cases when objectives are in conflict. Doing this in a formal way makes it much easier to discuss the issues involved. The limits each person has set are clear, and compromises can be reached more easily.

As you work with your family and friends to clarify your objectives -- and their objectives -- you may find that the process has unexpected benefits. People who have used Life Design have said that one of the most important things they accomplished in working out their objectives was learning about what the people they loved were really like, and what they really wanted and needed.

Many people discovered things about their spouses, children, and friends that they had not been aware of. They said it enabled them to explore their relationships in completely new ways -- ways which would never have occurred to them without frank discussions about how they wanted to change their lives. Rather than driving people apart, discussions about Life Design goals brought them together.

**CHAPTER 2 IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS**

Once your objectives have been clearly stated, you are ready to begin the search for specific solutions. Allow sufficient time for this task since many of our ideas rest in our conscious minds. Your memory and imagination will be a vital part of this task.

One approach to finding solutions is to have a brainstorming session with a confidant. During this process, write down as many ideas as possible without being too critical. A critical evaluation of a solution at this point might result in the elimination of a winner. You might say this is the phase where you are looking for solutions with strong positive contributions to major goals.

Other techniques for identifying solutions include reviewing "how to" books and holding discussions with friends, particularly those who have achieved solutions to similar objectives. When discussing ideas with friends, be certain to specify the measurable objective for which you require solutions.

For example, "Can you think of any ideas which would help me reduce my smoking by at least half this year and eliminate it within a year?" The best way to stimulate productive solution ideas is to keep reviewing your objectives.

By now, you should have a fairly reasonable set of ideas from which to sculpture a suitable answer to your objectives. The following chapters will help you analyze the rough set of solutions you have developed. You will see the need to add to and delete from your initial list. Don't worry about whether your list is good enough now. It is probably not as good as it will be and probably never will be perfect. The important thing is that it is better than what you had before you started.

**ORGANIZING SOLUTIONS**

When you and your advisors have run out of ideas, it's time to organize your solutions into groups. About three to eight major groups are good for a start. The more detailed the group, the more effective is the hierarchical explosion of the solution. For example, if the objective is to become an American History teacher in four years and some solutions include enrolling in a liberal arts college, reading books on American History and teaching techniques, and traveling to historic sites, the list might be organized in the following way:

**1. EDUCATION IDEAS**

1.1 COLLEGE Enroll in liberal arts college which offers teaching degree in American History.

1.2 READ Review at least six comprehensive books on American history and teaching techniques in three months.

1.3 TRAVEL Take a two-month trip to various historical sites during the Summer.

You can now refer quickly to 1. Education Ideas, or 1.1 College, or 1.2 Read, or 1.3 Travel.

To explore the solutions for 1.3 (Travel) in more detail, do the following:

**1.3 TRAVEL**

1.3.1 TRIPS Visit Washington, D.C., the Liberty Bell, and at least four other historical sites this Summer.

1.3.2 STYLE Living and traveling will be as simple and economical as possible.

1.3.2.a TRANSPORTATION

Transportation will involve hitch- hiking, walking, cycling, rail or boat when necessary.

1.3.2.b LODGINGS

Lodgings will consist of tents, YMCA's, and home invitations.

1.3.2.c FOOD

Food will be store bought and home made. No restaurants will be frequented.

Notice that STYLE is defined at yet another level of detail. The deeper we go into detail, the easier it is to see how well the ideas will support meeting our objectives. We can better see how much the ideas will cost and how our learning process might be affected.

**SOLUTION ATTRIBUTES**

Every solution idea is associated with a set of attributes such as time, cost, prestige, impact on health, and risk. These attributes cannot be avoided, but may be manipulated to a limited degree. Don't bury your head in the sand and refuse to consider them.

When you derive a solution, jot down the important attributes. One reason for doing this is to ensure they are not forgotten, and are available for quick reference. Another reason is to place your assumptions out in the open where partners in your life design can help you explore their validity. It isn't any fun to discover that some of our cherished beliefs are untrue. We have, however, the choice of discovering early on paper that our assumptions are incorrect or learning the hard way through experience. (I had no idea that taking a boat actually costs more than certain airplane fares.)

You can keep notes about attributes together with the solutions.

**Example**

LODGINGS: Tents only

Cost: $6.00 to $10.00/day average.

FOOD: Home Cooking

Cost: lowest $5.00/day; time; 60 minutes/day;

health; best control

As you can see, attributes play a key role in evaluating solution ideas. What may have seemed like a marvelous solution initially, may not stand under the scrutiny of its attributes. Be very thorough when building your attributes list. The more comprehensive it is, the more likely it is that you will select solutions which are appropriate to meeting your objectives.

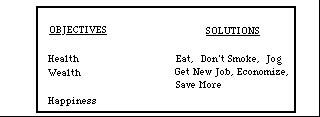
**CHAPTER 3 UNCOVERING WEAKNESSES IN YOUR LIFE DESIGN**

Now that you have specified your objectives and solutions, it's time to review your Life Design for weaknesses. Since the human mind is not perfect, it is easy to have overlooked addressing one objective or to have addressed a short range goal but not a long range goal. We overcame these elementary weaknesses in various ways.

**THE SOLUTION CHECKLIST**

A solution checklist is used to determine that there is at least one planned solution for every objective.

**Example**



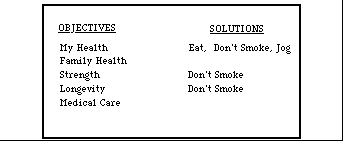
**Sample Solution Checklist**

**Illustration 3.1**

It is apparent that this checklist is incomplete, since no solution has been specified for the objective of "happiness".

The preceding example presented three major high level objectives. While this example provides a complete overview, it may hide some interesting facts. To find out more about the quality of our plans, we can magnify the table into several dimensions. Let us explode the objectives into various sub-objectives such as My Health, Family Health, Strength, Longevity, and Medical Care.

**Example**



**Sample Solution Checklist**

**Based on Sub-objectives**

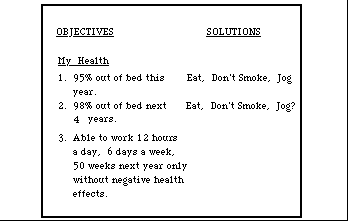
**Illustration 3.2**

When analyzed, this checklist shows a lack of planning for the family and medical care. It is clear that some additional solutions in the area of Health are required.

**EXPANDING THE ANALYSIS**

If we take a sub-objective such as My Health a step further and break it down into still greater detail, we will create an expanded checklist to determine whether solutions have been specified for all sub-objectives.

**Example**



**Sample Expanded Solution Checklist**

**Based on Detailed Sub-objectives Illustration 3.3**

In the preceding case, goal three is not supported by any solutions and goal two is not very convincing. We probably have to do something more than we did for goal 1, or at least present a convincing argument that we don't have to.

**IMPACT ANALYSIS**

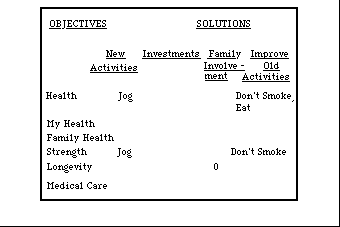
It is quite common that a single solution has an impact on several objectives at the same time. This means that one solution may apply to several sub-objectives. The question is "how significant does the solution impact be before documenting it on the table?" One can assume that only solutions with significant impacts are to be included.

Each solution probably has a number of insignificant impacts on most of the objectives. We are not trying to document all impacts on the checklist table. We are, however, concerned with highlighting weaknesses in the design, so the solutions we choose are capable of meeting the objectives set. The exact borderline for "significant" is not critical and is a matter of intuition and personal judgement at this stage of the Life Design process.

**LIFE AREA ANALYSIS**

We can increase our understanding of the weaknesses of our initial design by stretching our view of life into several categories. We should choose categories relevant to our particular design.

**Example**



**Impact Analysis Table**

**Sample of Expanding the Weakness**

**Analysis by Life Areas**

**Illustration 3.4**

In the preceding table the life categories are "New Activities", "Investments", "Family Involvement", and "Improve Old Activities". Notice how the blank intersections between "My Health" and "Family Health" scream out at us. Try to think of an idea, any idea at all which would be a solution that would fit in that intersection. The first things that spring to mind are:

**Family Diet**; agree on healthier family meal diet (categories could be "Family Involvement" or "Improve Old Activities").

**Group Jog**; involve other family members in the jogging

(categories could be "New Activities" or "Family Involvement" ).

**Smoke Fine**; establish a money fine for each smoke lit

up in family presence (categories could be "New Activities" or "Family Involvement" ).

If we make use of objective and life area terms that describe a blank intersection, then we will be stimulated to think of additional life design ideas and uncover weaknesses in our plan. If you think there is no possible solution or no necessary solution for meeting your objectives at a particular intersection, then document your viewpoint by placing a (0) at the intersection.

You should continue working systematically through the blank intersections until there are no blanks. If you want to obtain added insurance against weak Life Design, you can explode your objectives into more detail. When you are finished, you will have a stronger Design with fewer obvious weaknesses.

**CHAPTER 4 EVALUATING YOUR LIFE DESIGN IN RELATION TO YOUR OBJECTIVES:**

**Impact Estimation Table**

How good are the ideas you get for meeting your objectives? Even if they are good in many respects, are they good enough to allow you to meet your objectives exactly or will they fall disappointedly short of the planned level of the goals you have set? On the other hand, we might well ask of our solutions are they too elaborate for satisfying our goal statements. If they are too elaborate,then maybe they will cost us too much time and money and will not be worth it.

We also need to ask ourselves about the possible undesirable side effects of solutions. Will the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? These and similar questions require more than an emotional and instinctive guess. I think you will find that the things to consider are so numerous and complex that it would be difficult to handle them in your head. A more formal approach described in this chapter provides a clear picture of your own design ideas. This approach involves placing an impact number on the solutions to your objectives. This is neither easy to do, nor does the number imply exact knowledge of any kind. It is simply a better tool for communicating whatever we think we understand about those solutions.

**THE GOAL QUOTA**

You can and should use any number scales or ideas which seem natural to you in relation to any particular objective. If the objective is measured by time, then use hours, days or weeks as appropriate. But, since the Life Design process we are using is based on many different types of competing objectives, then I can offer you a universal measure which you can use for all objectives.

It is based on the idea that:



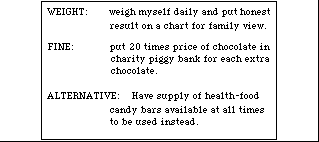
The objective in an ideal life design would be to reach 100% (the planned levels) of all the desirable goal ideas and not exceed 100% for all the constraining goal ideas (time, money, etc. ). In business terms we would say that we wanted to meed sales goals without exceeding the cost budgets this year. The universal estimating number is centered on meeting 100% of planned goals and variations in the number represent ideas of reaching more or less than our planned goal.

**A SIMPLE EXAMPLE OF ESTIMATION AND CALCULATION OF TOTAL IMPACT**

For example, I have the following objective:

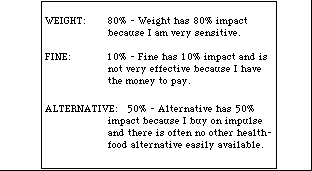


I might suggest the following solutions:



How would you estimate the effect of these ideas on the CHOCOLATE goal?

Let us say that in your situation you gave the following estimates:



The most obvious thing here is that no one solution solves the problem alone. We might like to search until we find one such solution. (Try "fifty lashes of the whip for each extra chocolate." It might be effective but the side-effects are obviously outside of what we probably want in other parts of our life.) This is very often the case, that no one solution alone will do the job and a combination of several solutions will move us towards the goal.

We might evaluate the estimates above like this:

Let me drop the "FINE" idea as relatively ineffective. I could raise the fine to some ridiculous high level but then I couldn't or wouldn't pay it. I think I'll combine "WEIGHT" and "ALTERNATIVE". They have a little bit of the good old "carrot and whip" idea and together they might get me there. Their combined independent effect is estimated at 50% + 80% (130%).

**UNCERTAINTY OF YOUR ESTIMATE**

Why did I estimate exactly 80%. Well, in most cases we are not expecting to be able to estimate the exact effect of the method. Actually this is impossible because the result of the method chosen is highly dependent on a number of other things like your health at the moment, the weather, problems at work or school and many other factors. What we are trying to arrive at, if possible, is the right order of magnitude. If the real effect is going to be less than 10%, then I hope your estimate is somewhere between 1% and say 15%. If the real effect is going to be nearer to your plan, then you should hope to be able to get an estimate somewhere in the range of 50% to 200%. Remember if our planned goal is 100%, then an estimate is both lower and higher than that figure.

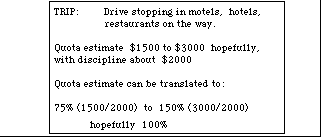
In many cases, the accuracy of the estimate is not critical. But in other cases we might feel the need to express our uncertainty about a solution. This direct expression of uncertainty can lead to an improved Life Design when we try to find additional solutions which result in a reduction of the uncertainty.

**For example:**

**OBJECTIVE:**

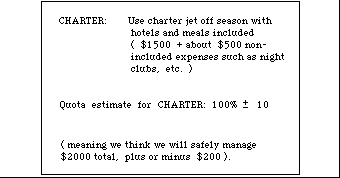


**FIRST SOLUTION:**



In an attempt to reduce the risk of more expenses then we want, we find another solution idea.

**SECOND SOLUTION:**



In this case, it was explicit estimation of uncertainty in the first case which stimulated us to find a solution with obviously less uncertainty.

Don't be afraid to express uncertainty in writing, however big it is. Only by being open about it to yourself and your advisors will you be motivated to beat it by improving your solutions.

**IMPACT ESTIMATION TABLE**

The table shown here in Illustration 4.1 may, at first glance, seem difficult to understand since numerous numbers are presented on it. For this reason I'm going to walk you through the table step-by-step so you will have a clear understanding of its purpose. To begin with, the rows represent objectives or goals in a Life Design plan. The columns represent solutions which we know are important in meeting the objectives. The boxes represent the specific impact of a particular solution on a particular objective. What we don't know is the extent of the solution impact on each objective. Here's where the numbers become important.

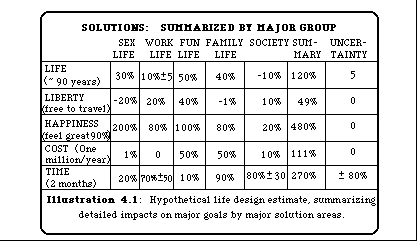
For example, in the first box we see that sex life has a 30% impact on living 90 years. In the second box of the first row that work

life has a 10% ± 5 impact on living 90 years. If we look at the

next to the last column entitled "summary", we see for each row the totals of all solutions for a specific objective. The last column reflects the uncertainty factor. A zero in this column specifies that there is no uncertainty factor for achieving the plan. A plus

or minus 80% indicates that there is ± 80% uncertainty in

achievement of the plan.



**SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES OF IMPACT**

1. The *impact* of any solution on the planned level goal of any objective area can be *expressed* as a numeric estimate. For example as % of achieving a planned goal.

2. The *uncertainty* of the estimate can and should be

*expressed* with a number, to encourage acceptance of the uncertainty or to encourage better design to reduce it.

3. An impact estimate can be used to *summarize, very roughly,* the impact of any set of solutions on a goal's planned level.

4. An impact estimate can be used to give you a systematic picture of the *side effects*, the good and the bad, which solutions have on any set of goals. It can be used to prevent nasty surprises.

5. The impact estimate does not pretend to be accurate. It does most certainly give a clearer and richer picture of the total impacts of a complex life design, than mere words. The important point is really to encourage us to be *more systematic in our thinking* than we would be without the challenge of making the estimates in each intersection of the table.

6. You can have *several levels* of impact estimate tables. The more detailed ones can support the numbers which are used in higher level tables (such as the high level table in the illustration above).

7. The primary use of the impact estimate is to *spot weaknesses early.*

**CHAPTER 5 COMPARING MAJOR LIFE ALTERNATIVES:**

**Impact Comparison**

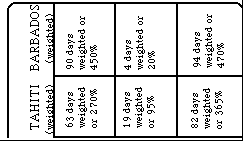
We frequently need to make a choice between two or more mutually exclusive alternatives. Only one can be chosen, no matter how good the others are. For example, you would probably find it impossible to take a weeks vacation in both Barbados and Tahiti at the same time.

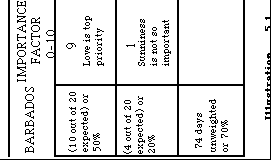
Illustration 5.1 shows how to add up impact estimation numbers for each alternative to arrive at a decision. Our two objectives shown on the illustration are love and sunniness. We see that Barbados wins at love and loses at sunniness. But when we add the importance factors of 9 for love and 1 for sunniness, we arrive at weighted figures\* which show that love is nine times more important than sunniness. Therefore, while the weather may be better in Tahiti, Barbados is the winner since weather is not the top priority.

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Weighted figures are the original numbers

multiplied by the importance factors.







**HOW CAN THIS IMPACT COMPARISON BE USED IN**

**MY LIFE DESIGN**

The major way to select alternatives is to evaluate the measurable objectives. If any alternative is worse than one objective's worst case, get rid of it. If you have one alternative which is clearly superior to the others in meeting the planned levels, use it. But sometimes the choice is not at all clear. Additionally, there may be political dissent among family members for reasons they are not willing to spell out. It is such situations that an impact comparison, even if it is very quick and simple, provides a better basis for open discussion among the people involved. All the factors are in the open and the weighting factor becomes a basis for discussion and compromise. Not everybody is going to be overjoyed with the final selection of an alternative. But it can be very important to their acceptance, support, and positive attitude

to see how the alternative was selected. Also, it enables them to feel that they were given a real chance to influence the decision.

**CHAPTER 6 INSPECTIONS**

Inspection is a quality control engineering process for checking the consistency of your design against your objectives. It involves the use of other people who act as reviewers of the design. I am going to suggest the use of inspection in a modified and simplified form for your life design. It should be noted, however, that judgement must be exercised to determine whether to use it at all. The basic test of its usefulness is simple. If you think that part of the inspection process is providing useful ideas, you will continue to use it. If not, don't bother.

Inspection provides a formal method for getting other people involved in problems that interest you. For example, if it has been difficult to get your husband and children to sit down and have a serious talk about moving to a new city or perhaps taking a family vacation, inspection provides the formal method to review the ideas and initiate a discussion.

Here are some of the basic rules of inspections:

**1. WRITTEN BASIS**

All inspections are carried out on the basis of a written document. If it is written down, it can be more easily understood. The rule is that if the objective or solution is not written down, then it is considered not to be there.

**2. COMPARISON PROOFREADING**

Inspections should always be based on at least two sets of written documents. In theory, it is strictly a proofreading exercise to determine whether the two documents are consistent with each other. In practice, since it is your life we are talking about, you can choose to bend this rule to allow all types of informal discussions and arguments. The reason for this rule is to avoid misunderstanding and fruitless emotional arguments based on personal attacks or attacks on ideas that get taken personally. The objective of inspection is simply to help improve the Life Design by pointing out clear inconsistencies in the design which need fixing.

**3. CLEARLY STRUCTURED DOCUMENTATION**

Experience has shown us that the clearer the documentation is the more chance people have of discovering inconsistencies and problems. This is the reason we have developed a series of documentation methods for your use in the earlier chapters.

**4. CHECKLISTS**

Inspections are more productive if the inspectors make use of a written checklist. A checklist is simply a guide to things the inspectors should be on the lookout for. But it will definitely liven up the inspectors' involvement. Sample checklists are presented in Appendix A.

A SIMPLE CHECKLIST FOR OBJECTIVES

a. Is there one objective for every critical (dangerous, threatening, vital, important) aspect which could cause the new Life Design to fail?

b. Have you included constraining objectives and attributes for money, time, space and equipment?

c. Have all objectives been specifically defined and have measures for attainment of the objectives been indicated in writing?

d. Do all objectives have at least a worst case and a planned level?

e. Is a date for achievement specified for level (as a group and individually)? Are both short term and long term objective dates specified?

f. Are high level goals exploded into sufficient detail for real control over success?

**5. SPECIALIST ROLES**

Each inspector should be given his special and exclusive role to play. The important thing to remember is that each role is different and that they stimulate better analysis of design. For example, Tom might be asked to concentrate on the economic aspects and Henry on the long term effects, while Jill is asked to look at the design from the children's point of view. This specialization encourages more fruitful activity then would otherwise be gained and ensures that nobody remains passive.

**6. PREPARATION ALONE**

Before any inspectors' meeting, the inspectors should be given 15 minutes to half an hour alone to examine the documentation and make their own notes. This quiet independent thought process will improve the quality and productivity of your inspectors' meeting.

**WHAT HAPPENS AT AN INSPECTION MEETING?**

One member is appointed Secretary. The Secretary has two main duties:

1. Prepare written note of all problems identified by others.

2. Keep participants' minds on finding objective defects in the written material and not allowing too much debate.

The inspections meeting should be time limited in advance ( a half hour to an hour ). If you need more time to get through a lot of material, then schedule a new meeting.

The major objective of the meeting is to brainstorm, as freely as possible, a list of defects ( inconsistencies, missing ideas ) within the design. The Secretary is the guardian of this productivity. For example, there is, in brainstorming, NO CRITICISM rule. Nobody is allowed to say "That's not a defect" or "That's a stupid idea". This is because such criticism would threaten the impulse to mention the next idea which might be more important. It is better to have too many defects noted on the list than too few. The view is that if ANY MEMBER OF THE INSPECTION TEAM THINKS SOMETHING IS WRONG, THEN IT IS WRONG. If only because it was not formulated clearly enough for a ten year old to understand it, as well as the adults.

**WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE INSPECTION MEETING?**

Have a snack or drinks together and let the conversation flow. Also let the arguments blossom. This might be the most productive session of all.

The Secretary assigns the defects list to one person -- probably the person who did the original design. This person is asked to go through the list and clean up the written design so the defects disappear and people will not misunderstand the intent of the design again.

If you feel like it, have another inspection meeting. Most likely you will not need to because the cleaned up document will probably pop up in another inspection meeting at a later, more detailed stage of your Life Design process.

**WHAT IF YOU CAN'T GET MORE THAN ONE PERSON TO INSPECT?**

One inspector is better than none. He or she motivates you to make clear, consistent plans and gives you some feedback and ideas. Two heads are better than one, so modify the inspection process to fit the help you have. In fact, if you really get stuck for help, play inspector alone with the checklists.

**CHAPTER 7 DECIDING WHEN TO CARRY OUT THE CHANGES IN YOUR NEW LIFE -- The Evolutionary Way**

Let us assume that you have a reasonably satisfactory design to solve the problems you have indicated on your statement of objectives. Your design might be so big that although it is the best you can come up with, you hesitate. It is a big jump; perhaps you will be committed for years and must invest a lot of money. You do not want the dishonor of failing with your great plan. There is a method for reducing the scope of this problem and solving some other Life Design problems at the same time. It is a fairly simple and natural method which you have been using more or less consciously all your life.

I call it the evolutionary method. It simply means that we are not going to commit ourselves to carrying out the entire plan at once. Specifically, we are going to learn from the hard experience gathered from the early steps of the implementation of our Life Design plan. We are going to reserve the right to re-plan, or to plan later, the subsequent steps so that we can get the maximum benefit from the experience we gain initially.

We are even going to reserve the right to throw out our entire Life Design after we started implementing it, and start anew. One of the related principles here is "scientific experimentation". Even an experiment which produces very different results from those expected, is successful -- if those results represent new knowledge, something closer to the real truth..

The fact is that so many of the "good ideas" which work admirably for other people, other times, other places, will not work for us here and now. There seems to be only one sure way to know -- DO IT! Perhaps we can call this phase "life research". You can avoid the psychological impact of "failure" by simply declaring each small evolutionary step failure to be successful research. Now that you have the experience, you know what not to do with your life, and perhaps, have some insights into potential problems with parts of your Life Design that have not yet been activated.

**HOW DOES EVOLUTIONARY LIFE DESIGN WORK?**

A little step forward towards your objectives each day is much better than dreaming of some fantastic coup in the future which might never occur or which might fail. Of course, it is also an advantage if those small daily steps are parts of a larger, long range plan so that they all add up to your dreams.

Evolutionary Life Design means evolutionary experience of the ideas you have, early experience and hard-knocks resulting in real-word experience. It means learning the hard way whether you will like your plans and whether your plans will be kind to you. It means tasting the soured milk and spitting it out -- resolving to refrigerate and look at the milk date stamps next time.

Evolutionary design means that we believe "SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL". The smaller a plan is, the better it is because we can quickly try it out and easily dispose of it if it does not work. It means that any solution idea which can more easily be taken in small doses, even if we are unhappy with it, is preferable to grandiose plans which bind our time and money.

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A SIMPLE EXAMPLE OF SOLUTIONS WHICH ARE EVOLUTIONARY AND REVOLUTIONARY

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REVOLUTIONARY EVOLUTIONARY

Entire family takes 1. Each member has his own

pre-paid charter to budget and can do what they

Florida for four want with it.

weeks.

2. Basic framework for family togetherness on a voluntary

and flexible basis (if things

go well, one can choose more)

1st week: cheap charter to

Isle of Ilvar (Yugoslavia) all

together if all agree.

2nd week: extension of the

charter in advance for those

who want it. (probably the 3

oldest boys). Smallest boy on

Scout Canoe trip. Parents take

relaxed working schedules

alone at home.

REVOLUTIONARY EVOLUTIONARY

3rd week: Offer of maximum

boating on Fjord. Bathing,water

skiing, and wind surfing as

weather permits to family members and guests. For less

sunny weather; tennis, short

swims, outdoor concerts, play-

ing with personal computer.

4th week: Some continue with

Summer Jobs, parents take 1 day's swim, summer concerts.

Offer mountain hike to those

who want it.

**EXPLODING SOLUTION IDEAS INTO FLEXIBLE DETAIL**

As you can see from the family vacation example, the basis for an evolutionary plan is laid by means of a flexible and a detailed solution outline. With the revolutionary example, the 4 week charter to Florida binds everyone in time and place to other people which might be great for a week but if vacation lasts for an entire 4 week vacation period there is a high risk of conflicting needs and wishes.

The alternative plan allows for more variation. It splits the risks of anything going sour and having to be endured for a long time. Unlike the Florida Charter monolith, different individuals get to do things they especially like. They can sample things and change their mind. They can decide if they wish to spend more or less time with each other. Since the implied objective is that the individual family members will enjoy their vacation, it appears to be obvious that the better solution is to use an evolutionary plan.

By the way, we carried out the evolutionary plan this year and I think the family has been very happy with it in comparison with the monolithic four-weeks in one place we tried last year.

The key idea is that you need to take the trouble to explode a vague plan to design into a number of specific sub-solutions. These sub-solutions should be capable of being started up independently of each other. The sub-solutions should also be capable of producing some of the measurable progress towards your stated objectives. So, you should be able to learn and to change your plans. You should be able to change the sequence of the steps. And, you should be able to change the content of the steps as you learn what is going to be best and worst for you.

Note that you cannot necessarily expect to get an evolutionary plan by simply splitting up your current solution idea (Charter 4 - weeks to Florida). I find that I most frequently have to get an entirely different and inherently more flexible solution idea; one more capable of diversity, change and evolution. Only then, begin to explode it into evolutionary steps.

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**COMPARISON OF THE TWO PLANNING METHODS**

REVOLUTIONARY EVOLUTIONARY

- you have to live - you can discover mistakes

with mistakes. early and minimize them.

- you may have to wait - you can begin to taste

long for results. fruits earlier.

- risk of total failure - hardly any possibility

is high. of total failure.

- you cannot back out if - you can change and back

circumstances change out easily if external

too late. circumstances change

later.

- forces compromise on - allows diversity for

a group (family) individual needs.

**CHAPTER 8 CHECKING THE QUALITY OF YOUR IDEAS**

There are many ways to check the quality of your Life Design ideas. We have examined some of them in detail in the previous chapters and will review them here. The reason for all this checking and double checking is quite simply that it is much less painful and costly than making a mistake in your real life.

**WORST ACCEPTABLE CASE**

The worst case specification in a goal you set serves as a tool for helping you eliminate any idea that does not meet those criteria. This is the most basic check on an idea. I have seen one danger in practice here -- unfortunately some really good ideas get thrown away too early because there is some misinterpretation about what the solution idea's attributes are or could be with minor modifications to the idea. If an idea looks really fantastic in regard to many other attributes, then be extra careful about eliminating it on the basis of a single worst case attribute.

**PLANNED LEVEL CHECKING**

Solution ideas, which do not help you get reasonably close to most of the high priority planned levels you have set, should be doomed to rejection. This is especially true when you have specified at least one idea which will get you to that planned level. So, the planned level specification is a rough checking guide on the ideas you come up with. In fact, it is the whole point of this design process -- coming up with solutions which meet the planned levels.

**SOLUTION CHECKLISTS**

Simple solution checklists (Illustration 3.1) help you to check that you have made some attempt to design something for each and every objective. This list is more powerful at checking if you have a long list of interesting goals.

**THE IMPACT ANALYSIS TABLE**

Impact analysis (Illustration 3.4) are an extension of the solution checklist concept. We "magnify" the "life area" dimension out of the checklist so that we are more likely to see gaping holes in our design solution thinking.

**IMPACT COMPARISON**

The concept of impact estimation can be used together with importance weight to check two competing alternative solutions and to identify the most promising one.

**INSPECTIONS**

Inspections are structured meetings where others review your Life Design.

**EVOLUTIONARY IMPLEMENTATION**

The gradual real life application of the ideas (early and evolutionary) is the best final check of all. It does require more expense and commitment than the "paper analysis" methods, discussed previously, which can be done earlier.

**IMPACT ESTIMATION TABLES**

Impact estimation tables show the extent of impact various solutions have on meeting specified objectives. The column headings reflect the solutions and the rows reflect the objectives. Percentages are used to indicate the extent of the impact.

**CHAPTER 9 FEEDBACK AND CORRECTION TO YOUR PLAN**

TO BE SUPPLIED

NOTE: DEC 2003

SOME OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS HAVE NOT QUITE SURVIVED 20 YEARS OF PC SOFTWARE AND I HAVE NOT WORKED ON THIS BOOK SINCE IT ORIGINATED, BUT I HAVE WORKED ON THE METHODS CONSIDERABLY. SEE [WWW.GILB.COM](http://WWW.GILB.COM) AND AMONG OTHER THINGS SEE’PRIORITY MANAGEMENT’ ( BOOK MS ) AND COMPETITIVE ENGINEERING 9 POSSIBLY RETITILED ‘PLANGUAGE HANDBOOKS) FOR THE LATEST VERSIONS OF THESE METHODS. SEE ALSO MY 1988 BOOK PRINCIPLES OF SOFTWARE ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT

I HAVE NO PARTICULAR PLAN TO IMPROVE ON THIS TEXT SO IT IS GIVEN AS IS.

TOM

DEC 2003