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

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"What is it you plan to do with this one wild and precious life?"
— Mary Oliver

Hi Folks,
Greetings from Saltspring Island, BC. Although it's lovely and sunny again, we've had the wettest September on record here on the southwest coast of Canada. I'm really hoping for a sunny October. However, as the song says, "Que sera, sera." When it comes to the weather, whatever will be, will be.

This issue features an article adapted from my book *Simplicity and Success*. In it, I lay out the differences between creativity and the act of creating. Although similar, they are two different things and I think it's important to recognize the distinction.

We now have 1780 subscribers. If you like what you read, please forward the intact newsletter to friends and associates. It helps us grow and ensures the viability of the newsletter. Thanks to all those who forward the last issue.

If you reading this for the first time and would like to receive the newsletter regularly, please e-mail me at belkin@saltspring.com or go to <http://www.BruceElkin.com/newsletter.html> and sign yourself up.

You can also remove yourself at anytime at the above URL.

Enjoy!

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1. QUICK TAKE: CREATING WHAT MATTERS MOST

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One of my favorite folksingers from the sixties Kate Wolf wrote, "Find something that you care about and live a life that shows it. "

I've always loved that line and I use it as a primary guideline for my own life. However it's not always easy. There are always problems, adversity and difficult circumstances that threaten to derail the creative process.

The two biggest challenges to creating the lives and work that we most want are, first, the temptation to see reality as a problem that must be solved rather than the raw material of creating. The second is focusing too much on being creative and not enough on the actual act of creating the results you want.

The way to deal with the first challenge is shift from a problem-solving stance to the stance of a creator. Don't judge difficulties and challenges as problems. See them simply as the way things are. Describe them accurately and objectively. Then you can use reality as the foundation on which to create what most matters to you.

The way to deal with the second challenge I will outline in detail in the following feature article.

If you can master these two challenges, it'll be much easier for you to find what you truly care about and then live a life that shows it.

2. FEATURE ARTICLE: Creativity or Creating Results?

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When I began to do research on what skills and structure underlay the capacity to create desired results, I discovered that most experts focused on creativity and creative thinking. Very few focused on the act of creating. I wanted to know how creators actually brought their creations into being.

In my explorations, I discovered that the word "create" comes from the Latin *creare*, meaning to produce, to make. My compact edition of the Oxford English Dictionary defines "create" as "to bring into being, cause to exist, esp. to produce where nothing was before, 'to form out of nothing'."

There is no entry in my four thousand-page Oxford for "creativity," but my concise edition of the OED defines it as "inventive and imaginative." Most people I ask define it as "doing things differently."

The word "creativity" refers more often to style than substance, as in the case of an advertising account executive complaining that "we need more creativity in this approach."

What often passes for creativity is merely the same old stuff done up with a different twist or dressed up in a new package. In the corporate world, creativity is often an add-on, something imaginative or inventive that is sprinkled on after the fact to "spice up" a product or service.

Creators are sometimes—but not always—creative in the way they bring things into being. They may think imaginatively or inventively. They may come up with unusual things.

Mozart, for example, envisioned and heard complete symphonies in his head while out walking and then went home and wrote them out in ink. His composition books are pristine.

Other creators are more linear and conventional in their approach. Beethoven's notebooks are black masses of scribbles and corrections. He labored long and hard to craft his majestic works, even using a slide rule to work out the mathematics of his harmonics.

Still others, like experimental performance artists, can be wildly unconventional, inventive, and imaginative. Most creators, however, combine a variety of approaches, seeking whatever process best serves the result—the creation—they want, indeed are driven, to bring into being.

The drive to create—the deep, persistent urge to bring into being something that you love and want to see exist—is a different factor than creativity. The drive to create says Stephen Nachmanovitch, is what sets creators apart from individuals who are merely creative.

"The drive to create ... characterizes someone who is driven to do something from the depths, something that he or she feel must be done regardless of whether it's popular or well rewarded by society. This inner compulsion to realize a vision depends on creativity for its fulfillment, but it is not the same as creativity. The inspired poet or musician may in fact be less creative, less

clever, adept, or original than the designer of an advertising campaign, but he is motivated by a life-or-death need to bring the vision into being.”

Although creativity is often an important component of creating, it is a mistake to see it as the whole of the creative process. You rarely, for example, see groups of painters, sculptors, or poets “brainstorming” different ways to approach their canvas, stone, or blank page. And when you do, such as when aspiring writers workshop a new piece, or musicians “jam” together, it’s just one of many steps, not the whole process of creating.

Because of its association with doing things differently, creativity is often confused with the unusual, unconventional, or even the outright bizarre.

In a creativity course Robert Fritz told me about, participants dressed up in chicken suits and jumped around making clucking noises to help them “free their creative spirit.”

Other popular approaches to creativity recommend that you whack or kick yourself (metaphorically, of course) in vulnerable body parts. Can you imagine Margaret Atwood clucking like a chicken? Or Georgia O’Keefe? I doubt that Robert Frost whacked himself upside the head to shake loose the lines in “The Road Not Taken.”

Although creators do come up with imaginative processes and unusual results from time to time, the unusual is not the essence of the creative process.

A creator’s end result is usually predictable. A novelist usually ends up with a novel, a painter with a painting. Architects see buildings take shape as they were envisioned.

The essence of the creative process is that it causes something that the creator desires to come into being—a creation. Although the path may vary from straight to crooked, from up and down to a rising spiral, the essence of the creative process is that it leads step-by-step to the outcome desired by the creator.

You can see this complex combination of predictability and creativity by comparing Picasso’s original sketch for his famous painting *Guernica* with the painting itself. Picasso knew what he wanted to achieve; the sketch contains much of the final form. However, the finished painting includes a great deal of detail that the painter had to work out through a further progression of sketches and studies.

“Picasso,” says John Briggs in *Fire in the Crucible*, “was not stating a contradiction but plain fact when he said that a picture ‘remains almost intact’ from its first inspiration and yet ‘is not thought out and settled beforehand.’”

Even those who insist that their creating is unplanned and spontaneous usually end up with predictable results. For example, a woman in a summer college workshop I did, a poet, claimed she never wrote with any end in mind. “I can’t,” she told us, “It would stifle my creativity.”

“So how do you create a poem,” someone asked her.

“I just go quiet and it comes to me,” she said. “Then I write it down.”

“But,” I asked, “isn’t it inevitably a poem? Not a novel. Not an essay. Not a ceramic pot or a screenplay. Isn’t it always, predictably, a poem?”

“Yes,” she said cautiously, then added, “But each poem is amazingly different.”

“Fair enough,” I said, “But isn’t a poem what you set out to produce when you go quiet? Isn’t a poem the end, the final form, that you have in mind when you write it down?”

“Well, yes,” she reluctantly agreed, “I guess it is.”

“So,” I asked, “would it be fair to say that you intentionally create a space—a framework or a field of possibilities—in which poems can spontaneously come to you?”

"Ah!" she said, smiling as if a light had gone on inside her head, "That is what I do."

A Fundamentally Different Approach

Creating is a powerful process because not only does it generate surprise and novelty, but also because it does lead reliably lead to the end results envisioned by the creator.

When someone asks, "How can I live my life, do my work, or produce my product more creatively?" they miss the point. The question implies that creativity is a kind of magic pill you take to make things better. Such an approach smacks strongly of problem solving.

However, creating is not about fixing what doesn't work. Neither is it about merely doing things in stylistic different ways. It is not positive thinking, visualization, or brainstorming (although it might include all of these elements). Moreover, it is not a trendy form of life planning designed to superficially change the way you do things.

Creating is a fundamentally different way of approaching what you do. It is a way of envisioning then bringing into being what matters. It is a process that embraces and transcends problems, circumstances, and complexity. Yes, it is a process, but its purpose is to serve desired results.

In the next issue, we'll take a closer look at the distinction between process and results and see how both are necessary in the creative act.

3. SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: Creating the Life You Long For [Trafford, 2003]

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Reviews for my book *Simplicity and Success* continue to be great:

- "Wonderful!" says Greg Seaman, Editor of Eartheasy on-line Magazine
- "Highly Recommended!" says David Heitmiller, co-author of *Getting A Life*
- "I've read this book twice and each time I've learned so much about how to create what truly matters to me. I'm sure I'll read it again and again."
- Donna Nicolson, Seattle, WA

DISCOUNT FOR SUBSCRIBERS:

Simplicity and Success subscribers get a 22% discount on my book.

If you'd like a personalized, signed copy of *SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS*, send me: Canada: \$18 plus \$4.00 S&H; or US: \$14 plus \$4 S&H.

Cheque, MC or VISA. Deeper discounts on orders of three or more.

For more information about *SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: CREATING THE LIFE YOU LONG FOR*, go to: <http://www.bruceelkin.com/simplicity-book.html>

5. ASK THE COACH OR COMMENT ON THE NEWSLETTER

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Q: When I look to what I want to create next in my life I am excited, afraid and anxious to try. However, what I want to create next would look a lot different from the way my life was and in some ways still is. I get scared and don't try. What should I do?

A: It's fine to have a vision of what you want to create that is substantially different from your current reality. The gap between them will set up creative tension, which will generate the energy needed to power your actions.

To set up creative tension, start by separating vision from current reality.

First, get clear about what you want to do and why. Your visions of the results you want to create need to be compelling and clearly envisioned.

Second, be honest and objective about what's good and not so good in current reality. Describe reality; don't judge it. By making current reality neutral, you ensure that your vision drives the action.

Once you're clear about vision and current reality, hold them in your mind together to set up creative tension. Then experiment (in your head and in action) with ways to move from where you are to where you want to be. Learn from both success and mistakes. There is no failure in creating, only feedback.

Don't jump in with both feet. Ease your way into creating.

You will probably want to continue to do some of the things you now do. Do so slowly at first. Gradually move toward what you most want to do. It doesn't have to be a big jump. In fact, it's best if you take it step by step. It's easier, more exciting, and more effective.

Moreover, it makes the whole process much less scary.

SEND ME A QUESTION: I love questions and comments. Please feel free to send me questions, suggestions and feedback on the articles. Some I'll reply to in the newsletter, others I'll reply to by e-mail. Send your questions to belkin@saltspring.com

6. MY BASIC COACHING PROGRAM

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" I'm telling everyone that I've got the best coach in the world. Working with you is one of the best things I've ever done. Thanks!"
Danna LaPierre, Montreal, Canada

"Bruce is a unique and special person, with a varied and eclectic background that equips him with a unique and effective viewpoint of life planning. As my coach, he has had—and continues to have—a huge impact on my life."
Jim Fitch, College Administrator, PA, USA

I'm interviewing now for new clients for October to December.

I help you set up an organizing framework in which you can create what your heart truly wants and accept and transcend your current circumstances as you do. I help you integrate life and work and create results that make them both simple and successful.

My basic 8-week coaching program is a great launch platform for independent professionals and for those starting new businesses or wanting to integrate their business and/or career needs with their greater life goals and plans.

It is useful for anyone in mid-career who is stuck or stalled, not living up to what they know is their potential but don't know what do or where to go next.

It is also a great resource for those trying to reinvent themselves and their lives, or in transitions of any kind

If you would like more information about my Basic Coaching Package, send me an e-mail at belkin@saltspring.com with "Coaching Package" in the subject line.

FR*E 30 MINUTE COACHING CONSULTATION:

You can also e-mail me to set up a 30 minute coaching session to help you clarify whether

coaching would help you create what most matters to you. There is no charge, no pressure and no obligation.

7. THE LAST WORD: Quotable Quotes

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" Learn from the Past, Plan for the Future, but Live in the Present."

- Con Hurley

"Each day and the living of it, has to be a conscious creation in which discipline and order are received with some play and pure foolishness."

May Sarton

" If we keep focusing on what we don't want, we'll have more of it. The first step to creating any change is deciding what you do want so that you have something to move toward."

- Anthony Robbins

8. THE SMALL PRINT: Copyright; Getting On and Off the List

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

— Kate Wolf

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