



Self Direction 2011:

If you have a somewhat cloudy view of the future this process may help you. A cloudy view of the future may seriously hinder your ability to be at your maximum level of productivity or may be an obstacle to achieving your full potential. One way you can change this is to get clear on who you want to be, separate from what you do and the roles you hold.

The question here is who are you becoming? This is a question that few people ask themselves. Let's start looking at who you want to be in the future. Who do you want to be in terms of the thinking and actions that affect all your choices in life?

We always start with thinking and actions because they are the only things about ourselves that we can control. Some questions that may help you follow below. Write down your answers in brief notes or bullet points.

- When am I happiest now at work and in my personal life? What am I thinking and doing when I am happiest? What gives me the greatest satisfaction?
- Who do I know that has the kind of happiness and/or satisfaction I want and what is it that I think makes them happy? What are the thinking and actions that supports that happiness and satisfaction?
- Is there a person or people in public life who I admire? What are the thinking and actions that attract me to them?
- What do the leaders I admire think and do? What are the attributes that I see in others that I can put to work in my life?
- What would I be thinking and doing if I was living up to this picture I am creating?
- Can I do this now: live **as if** I am there already?
- What will get in the way of my living from this picture now?

What follows are examples of self-direction targets that two of my clients created for themselves. They are written as if they are already true and achieved, even though neither of these people would have said they had arrived at who they wanted to be at the time they wrote these statements.

I am always a leader. I lead in every situation. Even when I am following others I am keenly aware that I must lead also. I lead by sharing whatever may support others, me and my organization to be successful. I speak up and take stands and risks. I listen intensely. I create balance in my life, spending time with friends and family away from work. I exercise on schedule and eat healthy foods. I pursue spiritual practices that support my sense of wellbeing. I love adventure and seek it out in every part of my life. I am very honest with myself and others, making clear choices based on who I want to be in the long run.

Another client wrote the following:

I am quiet and centered. I am a witness to whatever happens but untouched by the craziness of my world. I exude peace and tranquility. I listen with a perfect ear to hear what others really mean. I clearly observe what is going on around me. People calm down and become centered when they are in my presence.

You can format this statement into bullet points and work on one of the points at a time.

- *I am quiet and centered.*
- *I am a witness to whatever happens but untouched by the craziness of my world.*
- *I exude peace and tranquility.*
- *I listen with a perfect ear to hear what others really mean.*
- *I clearly observe what is going on around me.*
- *People calm down and become centered when they are in my presence.*

Self-Direction is the dimension of thinking and feeling that is the picture you hold of yourself in the future. It is the image of who you are becoming. People who have a strong clear positive picture of themselves in the future are far more likely to have the energy and self-discipline to reach their goals.

Without this picture of who we are becoming we are adrift in the open ocean, out of sight of land without a compass to guide us. The characteristics that describe who we want to be are our compass. Although you may know what you want in

the future, you may not be clear about who you have to be to achieve what you want.

My son and daughter-in-law were looking for a day care center to take care of their son when they met an extraordinary four year old boy at one of the centers and schools in their neighborhood. The thing that struck them was that he seemed to be a naturally born leader with a high level of intelligence. One of his distinguishing characteristics was that he wore a suit and tie to work every day. He projected a powerful character. When they had a chance to briefly talk with him the little four year old informed my son and daughter-in-law that he intended at some point in his life to be the President of the United States. This is the perfect picture of self-direction – a strong mental image that is so powerful that he is already living the part, even though he is not totally prepared to do so. This little guy sees himself as President, even before he achieves the position. He will act Presidential and he will be driven by the energy and self-discipline to meet his goal.

Will this little boy's commitment last? Maybe not. But even if he changes direction in the future to become a Nobel Prize winning scientist or an Astronaut, during this "Presidential Period", this little boy will learn from his experience and will develop and work from a high level of achievement and personal vision. And when he shifts to the role of Scientist, he will learn and achieve more of his goals.

This is self-direction in action; a level of proactivity driven by a clear vision for yourself – even if that vision is temporary or changes.

You can work proactively to develop a vivid vision of yourself – a picture of who you are becoming that defines your roles and your actions, not only in the future, but in the present, as well.

In this process I ask you to create a written picture of yourself for the future. Create a journal in your computer or choose one to write in by hand that is your Self-Direction Road Map.

Answer the question, "Who do I want to be?" Examine the list you made earlier in answer to the questions at the beginning of this process. You can look at role

models, people you admire who embody some or all of the thinking, behaviors and motivations of who you want to be. You might read a biography or two. You may explore on the internet brief stories and articles about the people you admire. List the things that strike you as important to their success. Make notes about their attitudes and actions. Draw on your memory of people you have met and add some of their traits to your list.

If you have no references to guide you, or if you are just plain lazy, or if you just choose to, make it all up. Your life is the ultimate creation. You get to paint your own picture with any pallet of colors you choose. You have already created who you are. Create someone by building on this powerful combination of strengths who is already you, and expand on your capacities through this process. Get started by collecting some data or just by starting to write.

The following suggestions may help you: Close your eyes and imagine yourself as the person you want to be in the future.

- What would you be thinking if you were that person?
- What would you be doing if you were that person?

Write down your perceptions of these images in the finest detail you can create.

Some things you should be aware of in your self-direction statement:

- Write **as if** you are already who you want to be.
- Share the feelings and passions you experience or imagine you will experience when you are living from this vision of yourself.
- Be specific about the behaviors you are applying. .
- Share your thinking.
- The key words here are: **As If**. Although you may not be able to do and be all that is required of this new vision, you can start with what you can do.
- Another and critical ingredient is the assumption of success. Think in terms of what a successful person will be thinking, feeling, and doing.
- Now write your own description of who you want to be coming from the power of “AS If” and describing what you would be doing, thinking and feeling if you were the successful person you want to be.

- Please write this as if your life depended on it, because it does. This is one of the critical keys to a fulfilling life. It contains the spark that ignites the fires of possibility, turning them into actions and results that are meaningful to you.

What vision do you want to live from, even if it is temporary? Describe it in the most vivid detail you can. Take your time and explore it for days and maybe even weeks. Sometimes people avoid committing to a particular vision because they may want to keep their options open. Although writing down your self-direction is like a contract with yourself, you can renegotiate in the future who you want to be. Life is an ongoing development process and you are allowed to change and recreate yourself whenever you please.

Can you truly own your vision and what would that look like? Ownership is generated internally. You are not in control of all the things that can put you in the position you want to be in, but you are in total control of yourself, what you think, what you want, and the actions you take to get what you want. There will be many obstacles in your way to achieving what you want. You do not have to figure out how you will overcome those obstacles at this time. The key here is to get a clear picture of who you want to be so you can take the next steps to get there. Without the picture you will wander on the ocean forever.

Make a commitment: You can write this description in great detail and take weeks to do so. I suggest you set a deadline for yourself, work at it every day until you have a satisfactory picture and then send it to me. You can send me a drop dead date when you intend to have it done, so you have someone who will hold you accountable for its completion. No charge for this accountability service.

What is next after you write this description? Refine it to the point that it is clear and concise and you can easily put it in on one page. If you have written a paragraph rewrite the description in bullet points, one trait to a line.

Listen to Yourself: If you can, record it on a CD or a tape and play it each day in your car, from your computer and/or when you wake up in the morning. As you listen to this recording in your own voice, turn it into an image in your mind, a

picture show of yourself being who you want to be. Imagine it in vivid color or black and white.

Task List: Create a recurring task that says **self-direction** in your computer so it shows up each day and you can read it. If you do these things, listen, read and imagine in pictures, you will be using all the modes of learning and this picture will take a greater place in your thinking.

Screen Saver: Choose one trait you are working on and make it your screen saver.

Repeat: Listen and read this description for at least 90 days, every day, even on weekends.

Meditate: If you mediate, listen and read it immediately after a meditation session.

Practice Every Day: Choose one trait from your bulleted list and focus on achieving that characteristic. At the end of each day, at the beginning of each day or both morning and night, review how you did with that trait during the day and what you are committed to for the next twenty four hours. Ask these questions:

1. Did I embody this trait today?
2. How was I successful today in achieving this view of myself?
3. What worked and what did not work.
4. What can I improve? What are the alternatives in my thinking and behavior that will get me closer to who I want to be?
5. What will I do today or tomorrow? Make a commitment.

Maintain a written journal or a computer file.

You can start being that person right now, even if you are not fully knowledgeable or capable based on your experience. Define those things that you can start doing now without further investment in money, education, tools, or others resources. This is about your thinking and actions. Each time you are faced with a task to do, of any kind, ask the question: **If I were the person I want to be what would I think and do in this situation?**

Ask this question over and over again each day. Act from your description of who you want to be.

Proactively Learn: Take charge of you own learning. If you need more education, research and plan what the next steps are to get that education and take those steps:

- Explore what you are missing that you need to inhabit fully to achieve your chosen self image.
- If there is something missing in the way of experience or support define what you need.
- Make plans about how to get it.
- Ask others for their support.
- Take steps to go into action.

Continue listening to your recording and reading your description.

There are three important steps to creating a new behavior:

- **Reframe:** The process I have described above is a formal reframing of who you want to be. If you follow these step it is probably enough to support you in the world of reframing.
- **Relate:** Get a coach, a friend or a group who believes in what you are trying to create for yourself and have them encourage you to stay in the game. This can be a spouse, a parent, a friend or a formal group of people who are committed to the same thing. Make commitments to these people and have them hold you accountable. The man who is considered the most successful business coach in the world, Marshall Goldsmith, has a friend who calls him every night to ask him some simple questions about what he has done each day in the context of exercise, personal development and relating to his family.
- **Repeat:** Unless by pure luck, no one gets what they want without repeating, over and over again, actions and thinking that support their goals. If you begin by repeating the listening of the descriptions you have written of yourself and you do this religiously and then start taking the steps described

above, you will be well on your way. New positive habits need to be reinforced and the only way to do this is by repetition. Once you are acting from who you want to be, keep reinforcing it with repeated listening, repeated actions that produce results, repeated thinking that supports who you want to be.

Recommit: If you fall off the wagon recommit. Change and new behavior are hard. Your old habits will attract you to go in different directions. Other forces will tempt you. You will go get off target. Do not beat yourself up about it. Just recommit and start over. Listen, read and ask the key question and move ahead.

Practice: The development of a new self image requires that you commit to a practice. Your practice is becoming who you want to be. It is a practice like practicing medicine or practicing law. As you engage in it, you learn more that you apply to be more of who you want to be, so that you will learn more and apply it to being.....on and on and on. It never stops and you never get there. A practice is forever, because it is not a goal, an event or a place that you arrive at. The practice is an end in itself, a long continuous, never ending journey. All things you commit to can be considered a practice.

Experiment: View the process as an experiment. If you take an action and observe the result, you have data on which to base future improvements. You are not in a hurry. Take your time and learn from experience.

The development of this self-image is critical. It will lead you to a positive future.

Whatever you choose to focus on in developing your self-image, this is your singular developmental purpose. You can commit to other things, but this is the big one. It is about being who you want to be. Do not scatter yourself among all the possibilities that exist for you. Get focused. Think and take action.