



YOUR LIFE AS A STRATEGY CIRCLE

Transforming obstacles into building blocks.

Dan Sullivan

Cartoons by Hamish MacDonald

Six Ways To Enjoy This Strategic Coach Book

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Cartoons 30 Minutes	You can also gain a complete overview of the ideas in this book by looking at the cartoons and reading the captions. We find the cartoons have made our Strategic Coach concepts accessible to readers as young as eight years old.
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Your Life As A Strategy Circle

Many people who encounter obstacles on the path to their goals are stopped in their tracks. But I've discovered that the very obstacles that seem to oppose our goals are actually the raw material for achieving them. They give us specific information about how to transform opposition into action that lets us attain our vision.

The Strategy Circle is the fundamental concept that launched The Strategic Coach Program. This simple four-step process will help you work through any problem or strategize any goal in every aspect of your life, wherever you choose to use it.

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Cartoons by Hamish MacDonald.

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If you would like further information about The Strategic Coach® Program or other Strategic Coach® services and products, please telephone 416.531.7399 or 1.800.387.3206.

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Introduction

The Day Everything Clicked

You now realize that everything you thought was outside of yourself is actually inside your own imagination and experience.

In July of 1982, I found myself in real trouble.

I'd been asked to present writing and artwork for a project I was creating for the federal government in Ottawa. But on the day of the presentation, I had nothing ready to show the cabinet minister.

I walked down the hall to the meeting where the cabinet minister and four or five members of his team were waiting for me. And I told them that instead of talking about the project, I wondered if I could tell them about an idea I had.

I addressed the fact that there was an enormous amount of complexity in what the cabinet minister did, and I asked him, "What are some of the things you want to have accomplished while you're here? What would make you feel great about all of the work you've done?"

A "fascinating process."

I wrote down his answers and then asked, "If we were going to prioritize these, what would that look like?" And we arranged the list of accomplishments in order of priority.

I explained that the next steps were to identify all the obstacles that were currently in the way of those goals and then to work through each one until it was transformed into a strategy for achieving them.

The minister said this was a fascinating process I had

taken him through and asked what I called it. I drew a circle around the goals, obstacles, and strategies and decided then and there to call it “The Strategy Circle.” He said he wished I’d been there his first day in office.

I realized as I left that meeting that my whole life, including all the projects and experiments I’d done in the market-place, had just clicked. I now had a structure that could work for anything.

Trapping myself, then escaping.

The great thing about the structure was that it required no homework on my part. I could simply set up The Strategy Circle, and I would never get trapped like I’d gotten trapped in that presentation situation.

It wasn’t just that I had solved the problem of that particular incident—it seemed that a door to the future had opened for me, and I now had a simple way of approaching the rest of my life.

I suddenly knew that every time I felt trapped, I could use my imagination to create an immediately bigger framework for taking liberating action.

Creating a new, bigger game.

Before that meeting with the cabinet minister, I was coaching, but only one-off situations. I didn’t have a process, and I didn’t have a structure.

In that hour, I felt that I’d done the best work I’d ever done, and it was going in the direction that I really wanted to go in my coaching life.

The cabinet minister had mentioned that day, after we'd made the list of priorities, that it was easy to get lost in complications and complexity. The Strategy Circle was a way to cut through all of that, and I saw that it could work for anyone in any situation.

In any circumstance and at any time, with The Strategy Circle, you always have the capability to create a new, more successful, satisfying, and significant way of operating in the immediate future.

You never have to be in the position of not knowing what to do.

Entirely new way of thinking.

Simply by using your brain in a way you already have the capacity to do, you can now experience your entire life in a transformative way.

The first step is choosing a future result that you want to accomplish and putting a deadline to it, making it a measurable goal.

The next step is to identify and write down all the obstacles that are currently preventing you from achieving that desired future result, and then put them in order of priority.

Finally, you consider each obstacle and transform it into the action required to achieve your goal.

A self-contained growth process.

It might be that you've spent years searching outside of yourself for your best opportunities and solutions, but with

this process, you'll always have available to you everything you need to grow.

It's a totally self-contained growth process where you simply take advantage of what you already aspire to in the future and use that as the starting point. Then you identify everything that stands in the way of that vision of the future, and by allowing the opposition to be stated, you legitimize negativity.

A lot of people try to bypass negativity by not looking at the obstacles they face. But the obstacles to your goal are unique to your vision and extremely useful. They're there for you to use as the raw material for creating solutions and growing as you move toward your goal.

Four-stage system for life.

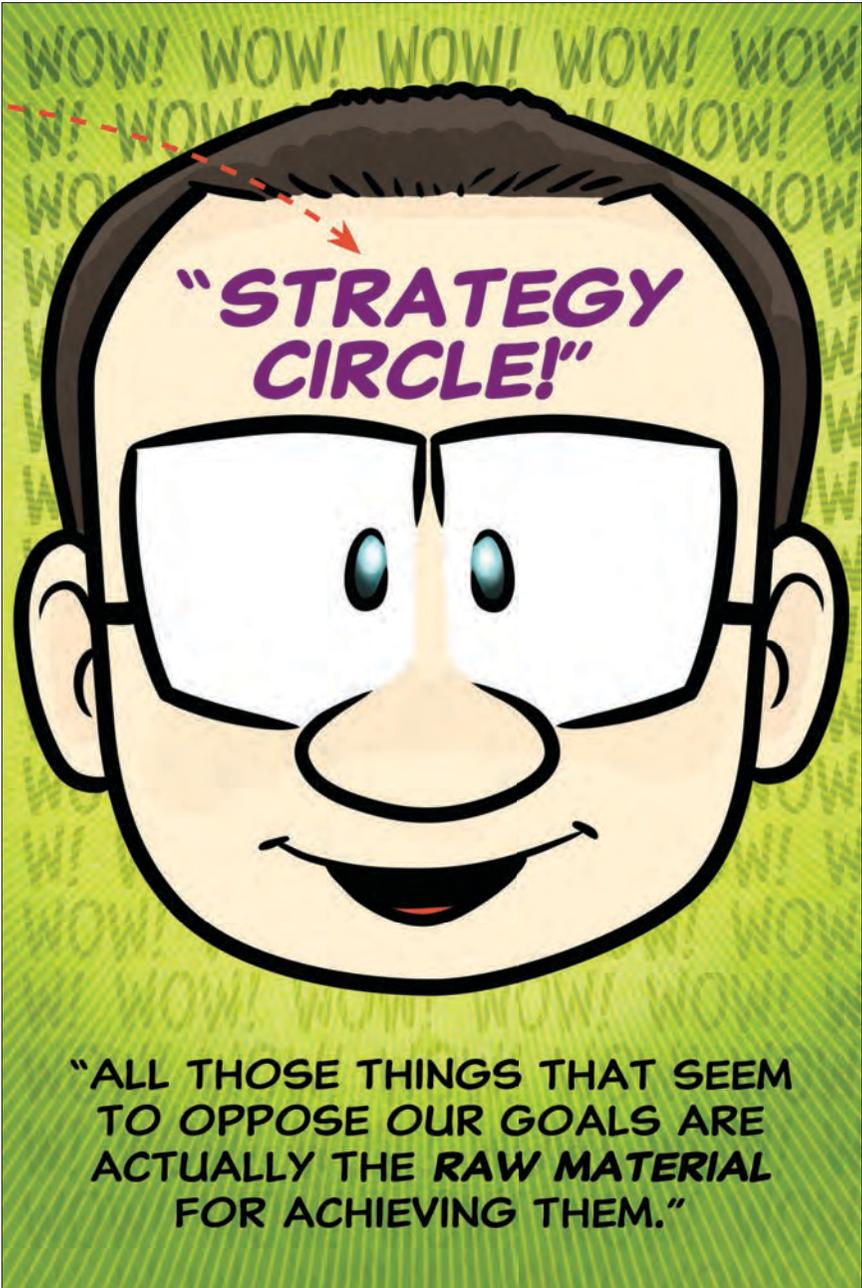
I believe that everything that works in the world works by using the four-stage system of The Strategy Circle: vision, opposition, transformation, and action (or VOTA).

When you're conscious of it working this way, it's very powerful, because everything you think, talk about, and work through in your mind is completely real and specific in relationship to the vision you want for yourself.

The creation of The Strategy Circle was really the birth of Strategic Coach, because every concept we've created, starting when I was a one-on-one coach through to today, comes from this one basic concept.

This is the birthplace of all the thinking we've done in Strategic Coach, and it can be the foundation for your own future breakthroughs.





Chapter 1

Explaining Your Success Backwards

You understand that all of your growth so far has been the result of your own four-stage transformation.

In the marketplace world that we live in, we each have our own skills and achievements, but we also have a lot of frustrations and failures.

What a lot of entrepreneurs lack is a way to see the reasons why some of their efforts worked and others failed.

When things didn't work in any area of your life, what was missing? And when things were really working, how were you thinking about it, and how were you going about it?

Why things worked when they did.

Looking as far back as I can remember at my own life, I can see that almost every occasion where things worked, I had a plan. And in every case, once I assigned a deadline to my goal and it was no longer just a wish for the future, I encountered obstacles.

There was frustration, but I succeeded in the cases where I used the obstacles instead of running from them, and transformed them into actions.

Once I had developed The Strategy Circle with its four components of vision, opposition, transformation, and action, I could go back and rethink all of the high points in my life and recognize that I was using this system at all of those times.

And in talking to many other people about it, I've discovered

that it's the same for them—anytime they've achieved and succeeded in their lives, the same four-stage formula was at work.

When I look at people succeeding all over the world, my guess is that they also have some version of The Strategy Circle working for them, maybe without even realizing it. Gaining conscious mastery of this process, however, is a transformative jump.

How everybody gets better.

This is a formula for getting better, and it's always the same. No matter what, it's only four stages.

You can use the formula to explain both your past and your future. You can take ownership of the times in your past when things didn't go well and recognize that you simply didn't approach those situations in the right way, and that you can take responsibility for things working out well for you in the future by using this four-step process.

All of the uncertainty and confusion you might have about the future can be suddenly clarified if you think about the fact that you already have the secret for improving every area of your life.

Visualize goal, create great obstacles.

You now have the ability to create a new bigger and better future anytime you want simply by establishing a new bigger and better goal for yourself, which immediately enables you to “create” the best possible obstacles.

Many people are good at goal setting, but the way they

think about the obstacles they encounter is very different from how they're viewed through the lens of The Strategy Circle.

We know that even more than just not being negative, obstacles are valuable and useful, because the obstacles that come up in response to your future vision are actually the raw material you're going to use to activate the vision.

The obstacles that are useful are specific. General obstacles have nothing to do with your particular goals. There are "false" obstacles that you conjure up just to give yourself an out so you have an excuse not to move forward.

But real, specific obstacles are ones that can actually be transformed so you can move ahead with your goals, and these only come about when you have a bigger and better goal that allows you to zero in on the specific obstacles and the particular transformations you have to go through to get there.

Your own custom-designed future.

Specific, useful obstacles will come up whenever you set yourself a measurable goal.

If your goal isn't specific, you'll feel that you can't move forward. This is because you haven't custom-designed your future. You're trying to achieve a general future, but you don't get any future except a custom-designed future.

You're the only person who can say what your future vision looks like, you're the only person who can explain why achieving this vision is so important, and you're the only one

who can put deadlines and measurements on it.

It's your custom-designing of the goal that allows you to get custom-designed obstacles that you can use in achieving your goal.

If you think back, you might find that the experiences you loved most are ones where you created your own unique progress—goals, obstacles, transformation—that bypassed how others told you that you were supposed to succeed.

This is you taking over your future rather than listening to the general narrative.

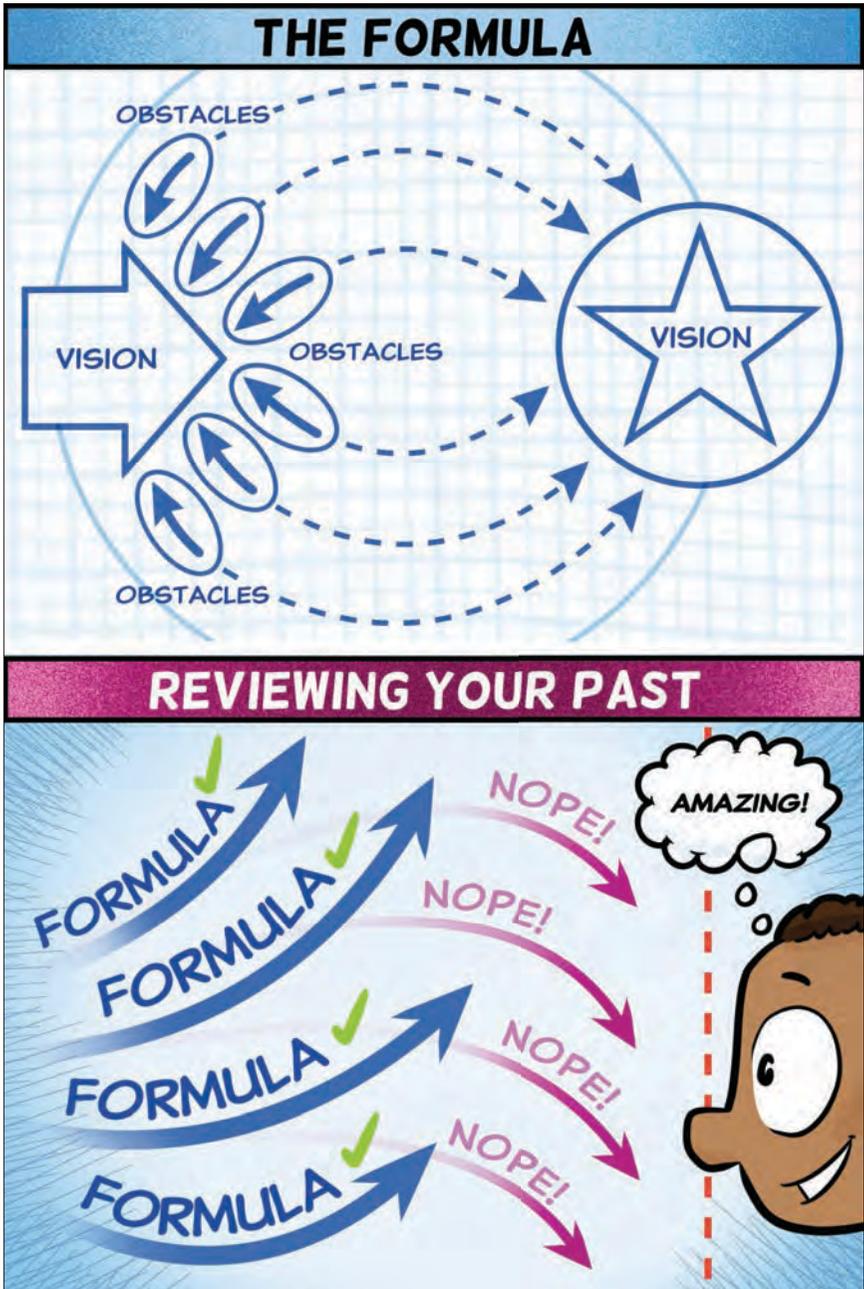
Unifying your past, present, and future.

This single approach to visualization and transformation will provide you with a permanently simple and unified way of seeing your entire life.

With an understanding of the steps of The Strategy Circle—based on The VOTA Formula of vision, opposition, transformation, and action—you now have a way of understanding why things worked or didn't work in the past, where you are right now in the present, and how you can move forward in the future so that you have a unified life.

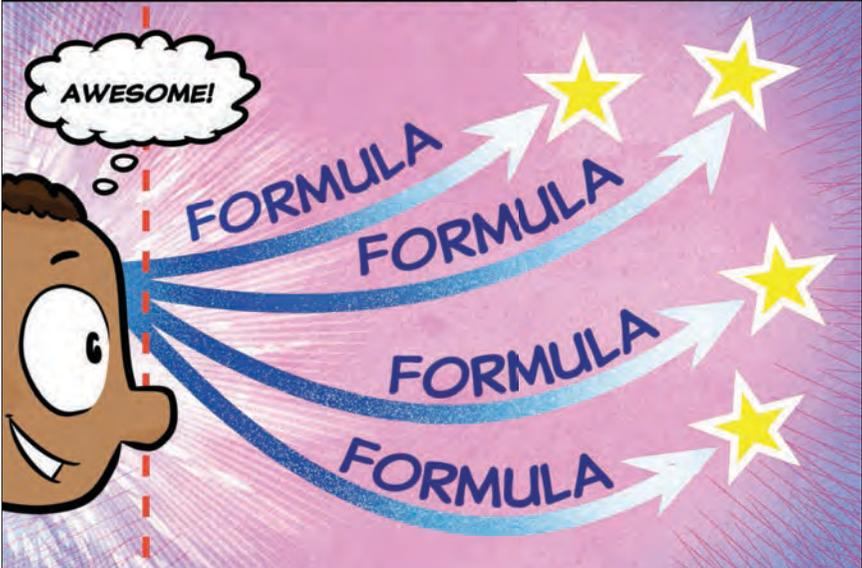
The structure and process are always the same, and it gives you clarity right up front about what has to be involved in order for you to move forward.

All it really requires on your part is a desire to be truly responsible for your own life.





CREATING YOUR FUTURE



Chapter 2

Lifetime VOTA Formula

You now realize that your whole future can be endlessly improved through a process of visualization, opposition, transformation, and action.

A lot of people make up stories to explain why things didn't work out for them at different times in the past.

You can choose to blame other people and to criticize, but the truth is that no one but you is responsible for your experiences, so it's important to let everyone else off the hook for your past failures.

When you've given into frustration and ended up failing, whether everyone else involved made mistakes or not, the central thing is that *you* weren't performing properly.

We can approach the future based on finding the difference between what worked and what didn't work in the past, and what we've done is created a way to go back and simplify your past.

And when you've simplified your past, your future always gets a lot less complicated.

Simplifying everything to VOTA.

My whole lifetime has been made up of either not using VOTA or using VOTA, whether I was conscious that I was doing so or not.

Recognizing and understanding the process now, I can go back and establish consciousness about all of my past experiences.

I avoid my future becoming complicated by having the attitude that there's a lot about the world ahead of me that I don't know, but I know that I'll always be operating within The VOTA Formula.

Everything about both your past and your future can be organized as “what you want,” “what opposes you,” “how obstacles transform into action,” and “how actions create what you want.”

Owning everything you'll ever want.

You now have a means to go from wanting something and putting a measurement to it to actually getting there. You just have to be willing to take responsibility for everything that stands between you and what you want.

In this way, The VOTA Formula enables you to take complete control of everything you want—big, medium, and small—in every single area of your life.

There will always be more for you to learn, and you'll always be running into things you've never encountered before, but you'll always have an approach you can take that will lead you to success.

The obstacles are only there because of the bigger and better future you've committed to achieving. Recognize in the moment that these are things that are going to be the raw material for the actions that will lead you to your goal. Instead of getting bogged down or dwelling on the fact that there are obstacles, you can identify them and then immediately start the process of transforming them into the best possible actions to take.

Inside control over your outside.

With the VOTA capability, inside your mind at all times is a constantly improving way to take greater control of what's happening outside of you.

We have no control over the outside world, but this gives you an inside control of how you're dealing with the outside world.

Based on what's inside of you, and how you want to see the future, you can focus on and commit to your visions of how you'd like things to be bigger and better than what you're experiencing right now.

We're all on a unique path, and if you truly want to go in this direction, VOTA is the best structure to follow. And every time you use the VOTA process that makes up The Strategy Circle tool, you expand your personal responsibility over an area of your life.

Expanding personal responsibility.

Being responsible for yourself isn't some ideal that's impossible to achieve. Rather, it's a practical way of thinking, communicating, cooperating, and achieving that automatically becomes more powerful every time you implement The VOTA Formula.

When you're being responsible, you're simply saying, "I can take control over what's happening in myself to constantly project that outward, and what I'm experiencing on the inside is what I can experience on the outside if I'm willing to go through some work."

The more responsible you are internally, the more responsive you are externally.

Once you've handled things inside of yourself, you can be much more aware of how you can be useful in the outside world, to other people. You won't contribute to other people's problems—you'll contribute to their progress.

Creating your own VOTA networks.

I've never encountered anyone who didn't understand the four-stage VOTA process of The Strategy Circle. And because it's so easy to learn, it's easy to teach to others.

You might find that not only are you totally motivated to master The VOTA Formula to transform every part of your life, you're motivated to quickly explain to other people how it can work to transform every part of their lives.

And as using The Strategy Circle for every goal you have and situation you encounter becomes a regular part of how you operate, you might start to feel a separation between those who use The VOTA Formula and those who don't.

Those people who are unwilling or unable to adopt the process themselves will become less appealing for you to spend time with.

But many *will* adopt it. And in sharing the VOTA capability with others, you'll be surrounding yourself with growing networks of individuals who are also taking complete responsibility for their own lives.

Chapter 3

Visualizing Bigger And Better

You continually grow your ability to engage with and commit to a future vision of yourself that does not yet exist.

I'm operating today the way I visualized myself operating 30 years ago.

During the time between that visualization and today's reality, I've gone through the VOTA process for various situations and goals perhaps thousands of times.

The same is true for you: who you are right now is something you visualized as bigger and better in the past, and whether you were conscious of it or not, you've gone through countless processes of transforming the obstacles to your goals into the actions for achieving them.

And while you've surely had both successes and failures in your life, you now have the tool of The Strategy Circle to always use your visualizations of the future in a way that will lead you to grow toward achieving your bigger future visions.

Growing from where you are.

Regardless of what you've achieved (or failed to achieve) in the past, The VOTA Formula provides everything you need to create fresh growth in your life anywhere you choose to focus.

There's no growth into the future except from where you are right now. The obstacles that come up in response to your new bigger and better visions of the future define exactly where you are currently. You don't fully know who you are

right now until you define who you want to be in the future.

You see the difference between your goal and your present, and that's what gives you the energy to grow in order to achieve the goal.

There's no energy for you to improve without seeing this difference between who you are right now and who you want to be. In electrical theory, you have to have a positive and a negative or there's no energy, there's no charge. So what you're doing by comparing your present with your goal is giving a charge to your future.

Leaving behind what doesn't work.

Everything you tried in the past that didn't work was simply because you weren't operating within The VOTA Formula. Indeed, all past failures have no meaning other than that.

You weren't creating the necessary energizing differentials between where you were and where you wanted to be, or using the formula to establish where you were in relation to where you had been before.

You are now an improved version of yourself compared to how you were in the past, and the only way that could have happened is by having big visions, going through some transformation of obstacles, and creating better actions.

We're proud of self-transformation, and the things in our pasts that we're most proud of are all things that we used the VOTA process to achieve, whether consciously or not.

At the same time, the things we don't feel good about

remembering aren't worth feeling bad about; it's just that we didn't use VOTA then.

Next best accessible improvements.

With The Strategy Circle in your tool belt, you're now freed up to focus on making specific, immediately accessible improvements that, once you achieve them, will make you more capable and confident.

This is a capability that means you can never be stopped, so the only reason that you'll stop is if you decide to stop.

It's important to remember to only go after goals that are accessible. Give yourself 25 years to achieve a major goal, but divide all of that time into quarters.

That way, all you have to focus on currently is the next 90 days. If you're always doing that, then all the quarters ahead of you will be bigger and better.

Measurable results with deadlines.

You want to be totally clear on the fact that for any of your future goals to be useful, they have to be measurable.

One of two kinds of measurements needs to be used for each of your goals.

The first is a time deadline, which is when you say that specific things will be achieved by a certain date on the calendar. Make sure when you're setting deadlines that they're realistic and motivating.

You can also measure by numbers (amount of sales or new

clients, for example) or by a clear-cut event that either happened or didn't happen.

The difference between imagined achievement and actual achievement is that with actual achievement, there's no way that you'll be the only one who will recognize that something has been achieved. There are objective measurements that will indicate that it has.

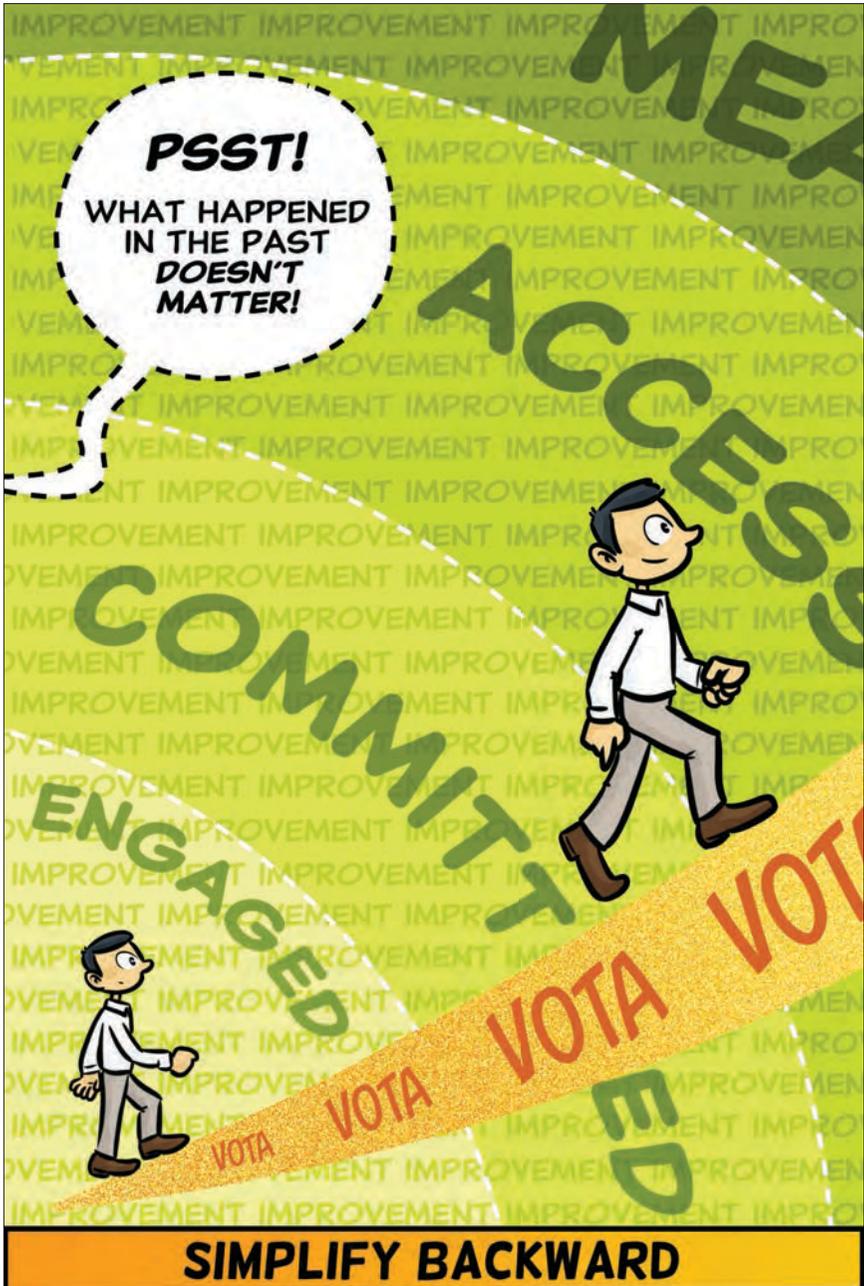
Engaged and committed.

My definition of a sale is intellectually engaging someone with a future desired result that they see as being good for them, and enabling them to emotionally commit to taking the action to get there.

What you're doing with a bigger and better vision is selling yourself on the future, and there are conditions on the sale—it has to be intellectually engaging, and you have to be emotionally committed to it. If one of those things is missing, there's no sale.

If there's something you want to do but you find you're not making a move to do it, you're missing at least one of the two factors: either you're not intellectually engaging with it and seeing why the vision is clearly better than what you have right now, or you're not emotionally engaged in making the vision a reality.

You can be confident that operating within The VOTA Formula for the rest of your life will always work because you'll always be both intellectually engaged with the specific improvements you set out to make and emotionally committed to making sure they're achieved.



Chapter 4

Obstacles Are Raw Material

You're increasingly excited by the fact that all the obstacles that seem to oppose your newest goals are uniquely valuable resources.

Even people who are willing to deal with every obstacle that comes up usually still think of obstacles as being negative.

What you now know is that obstacles will always come up as the result of a new goal you've envisioned, and these obstacles are perfectly appropriate for the goal. The obstacles are a map between where you are right now and where you want to go.

The fact that they're often experienced as negative is simply because you're missing something—you're either deficient in a particular way that has to be improved or you're off track—and the obstacles are unique information telling you what has to be transformed to achieve the goal you've set.

Your brain is providing you with all the information you need in order to get to where you want to be via the obstacles to your new goals.

Unique goals, unique obstacles.

By creating unique goals, you always create unique obstacles, which enable you to create a unique, transformative future.

All the goals you create are specific to you, and the information that the corresponding obstacles contain are unique to that vision and specific to you as the individual who set the goal. The obstacles are telling you a truth about what has to be transformed to get there.

This is all about you and what you want to create. You're a unique individual with unique capabilities and a unique outlook, and your unique goals and their unique obstacles come from that place of individual uniqueness.

“Opposition” is a great skill.

Your willingness to completely engage with the factors that oppose your biggest and best goals is going to lead to your developing a powerful skill that can be endlessly expanded with still bigger and better goals.

It takes commitment and courage to enter into this, to say, “I’m going to deal with whatever unique obstacles my imagination and visualization bring up.”

If you want the goal, you get the obstacles. It’s not something to be avoided, and it’s not worth complaining about.

The obstacles between you and your goal might cause you frustration as things won’t be created as quickly in reality as you envisioned them, but that discomfort is actually part of the process that’s going to make you more skillful. You’ll get the energy and the satisfaction at the end, but not necessarily on the way.

The journey to get to the destination is actually very different from how you thought you would get there. When you have a goal ahead of you, and you see the path, you can only see it based on some past path you’ve experienced. The path to a new goal, however, always needs to be created because it’s a path into the future. If you use a previous path, you’ll only arrive at a result you’ve already achieved.

How you've always improved.

Part of the discomfort of moving ahead on the path to achieving something bigger and better involves changing yourself, which you have to do because the whole goal involves you becoming bigger and better than you were before.

But you've gone through this process before.

You might not have previously thought of it this way, but being willing to engage with your unique goal-generated obstacles is how you've made all of your improvements in your lifetime up until now.

You can now take ownership of your past and acknowledge that you didn't get to where you are by avoiding obstacles. You got to where you are now through this process of transforming obstacles and growing yourself.

This is how you've always done it, and even though the obstacles are new with every new goal, the feeling of discomfort you go through when dealing with the obstacles should be familiar to you.

You can think of it this way: the feeling of discomfort is there just to alert you to the fact that you're going to have to learn something new because you're not yet where you want to be.

Why “successful” people fail.

You can now be totally clear about why it is that some people in your life stop growing and begin to decline and fail—they stop the process of visualizing bigger and better

goals and engaging with the unique obstacles generated by the goals.

Some entrepreneurs have the goal of getting to the point where they no longer have any fear.

But fear is one side of the coin, and excitement is the other, so if you have no more fear, you also have no more excitement. And fear is just one of the ingredients for growth.

This is one danger of having status as a goal rather than growth. Status doesn't produce growth, but on the other side, if you keep growing, status will come along with that.

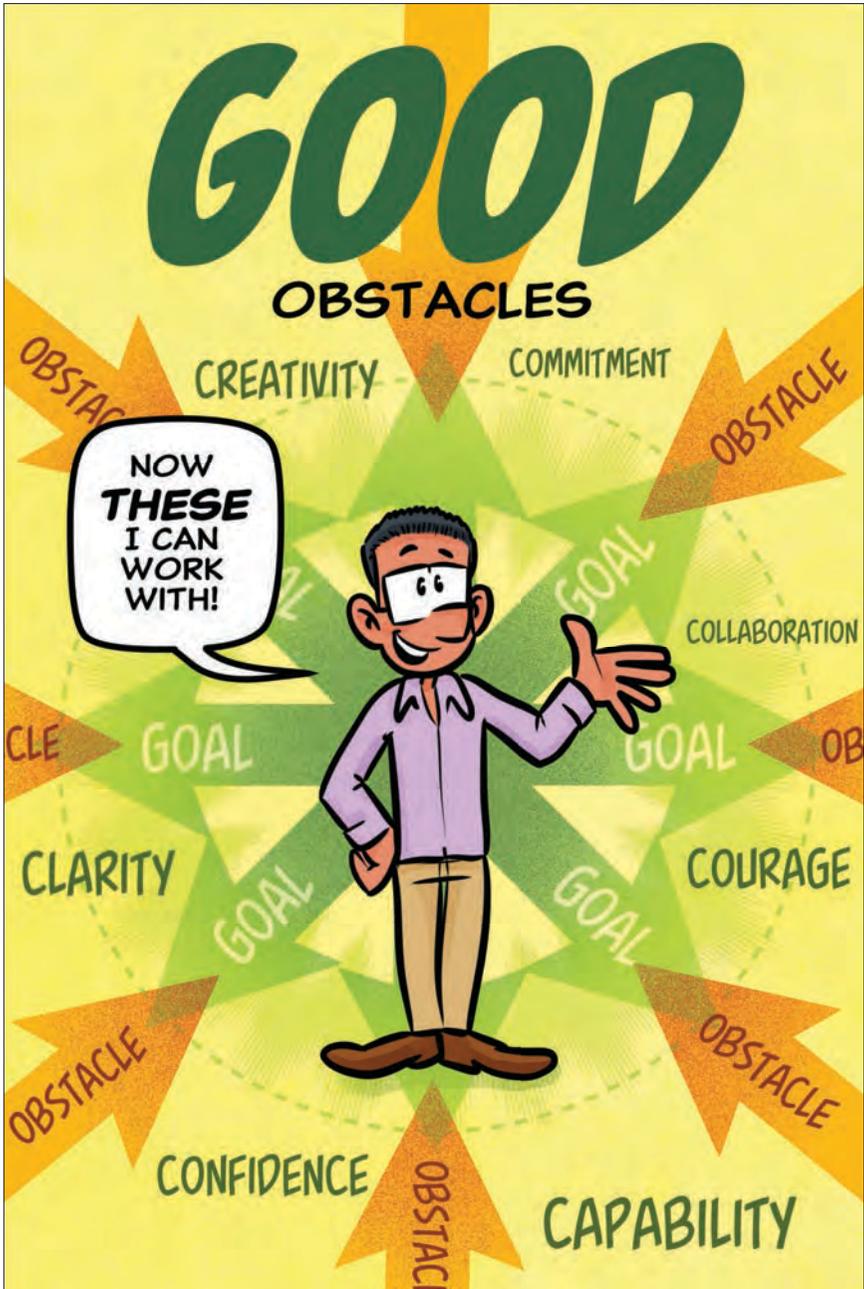
And while status is determined by other people, your growth is measured internally by how far you've come.

Raw material for transforming.

Everybody wants to be unique, and here we have an actual formula for achieving that. I'm not trying to be like anything else. I just set out to achieve what I see in my mind for myself and for my company in the accessible future.

Sometimes I'm tempted to look outside of myself, but I've operated within the VOTA framework for long enough that my muscles are attuned to it.

With The VOTA Formula, your thinking can now be permanently simplified, focused, and empowered by the knowledge that your future can be uniquely created by simply transforming the unique obstacles that are generated by your unique goals.



Chapter 5

Opposition Directs Your Growth

You now feel enormously grateful for all the obstacles your newest goals generate because each one reveals a growth step.

You can think of everything in the VOTA process as being either incoming or outgoing.

The obstacles are incoming. You can count on them to arrive consistently each time you envision a new bigger and better goal for yourself.

What happens then is all about what mindset you have: What are you going to do with the obstacles after they show up?

Now that you recognize that every single obstacle represents one step toward making your vision a reality, you'll be able to avoid discouragement and immediately move ahead on using and transforming each obstacle in order to succeed and get to where you want to go.

Uniquely created obstacles.

The obstacles are there because of the goal you've visualized.

None of them are superfluous or unimportant to what you've committed to achieving. Each obstacle is a unique result of your engaging with and being committed to the goal itself. Each obstacle is completely keyed in to the goal.

There's no hypothetical or general obstacle here but only specific, practical obstacles that need to be transformed for you to get to the goal.

When you engage with the obstacles, that's part of your commitment to the goal. And that engagement is actually what starts the whole transformational process that will end with your having measurable success.

The only one who knows.

Because you're the only one who is visualizing and engaging with your unique goal, you can be assured that you're the only person who can know what your obstacles are.

Some people have said to me that they feel isolated with their goals, and I respond, "It's not isolation—you're just engaging with something that no one else can possibly know about."

Just because no one else can see it doesn't mean that it's not real. It just means that you're in the process of creating a new reality for yourself, and the process requires a personal, individual engagement with the obstacles.

It takes courage, because you have to buy in 100 percent to what you're doing before you can expect anyone else to even know and understand what you're up to.

If you aren't willing to be alone, to engage with your unique obstacles by yourself in order to achieve your unique goal, you'll be settling for general goals, and you'll lose your uniqueness.

You could think of it this way: Being who you uniquely are is the primary reward of the VOTA process, and achieving the goals themselves is a kind of bonus.

Bypassing “general” opposition.

Simply by taking on your own goal-triggered obstacles, you can focus entirely on your own unique growth challenges. In doing so, you’re automatically freeing yourself to bypass all of the general opposition that’s experienced by people who aren’t engaging with their own unique goals.

There are a variety of reasons why an individual might not engage with their own goals and obstacles. For example, you might have heard someone say that because the economy is bad right now, they’re not going to pursue a certain goal yet.

You, on the other hand, could find yourself in a similar situation, but instead of using the economy as an excuse to not commit to your unique goals, you simply take that information into account when calculating your approach to achieving your goals.

You could see every obstacle as being an indication that your idea won’t work—or you can recognize that every obstacle is showing you how to get to where you want to go.

Progress that’s completely yours.

Since the VOTA process involves unique goals, and obstacles that are unique to those goals, all of the progress you make every time you use the formula is entirely your own.

It’s impossible for anyone else to engage with this future that you’re uniquely creating.

People will see your progress and try to copy your success

by copying the specifics of it, but this of course won't work because the specifics were uniquely created by your unique goal.

The only useful thing people can learn from the progress you make is that you use the VOTA system and that they can adopt it for themselves.

Because while VOTA is a formula, and one that anyone can utilize, the specifics of how it's applied by any one person aren't something that can be copied.

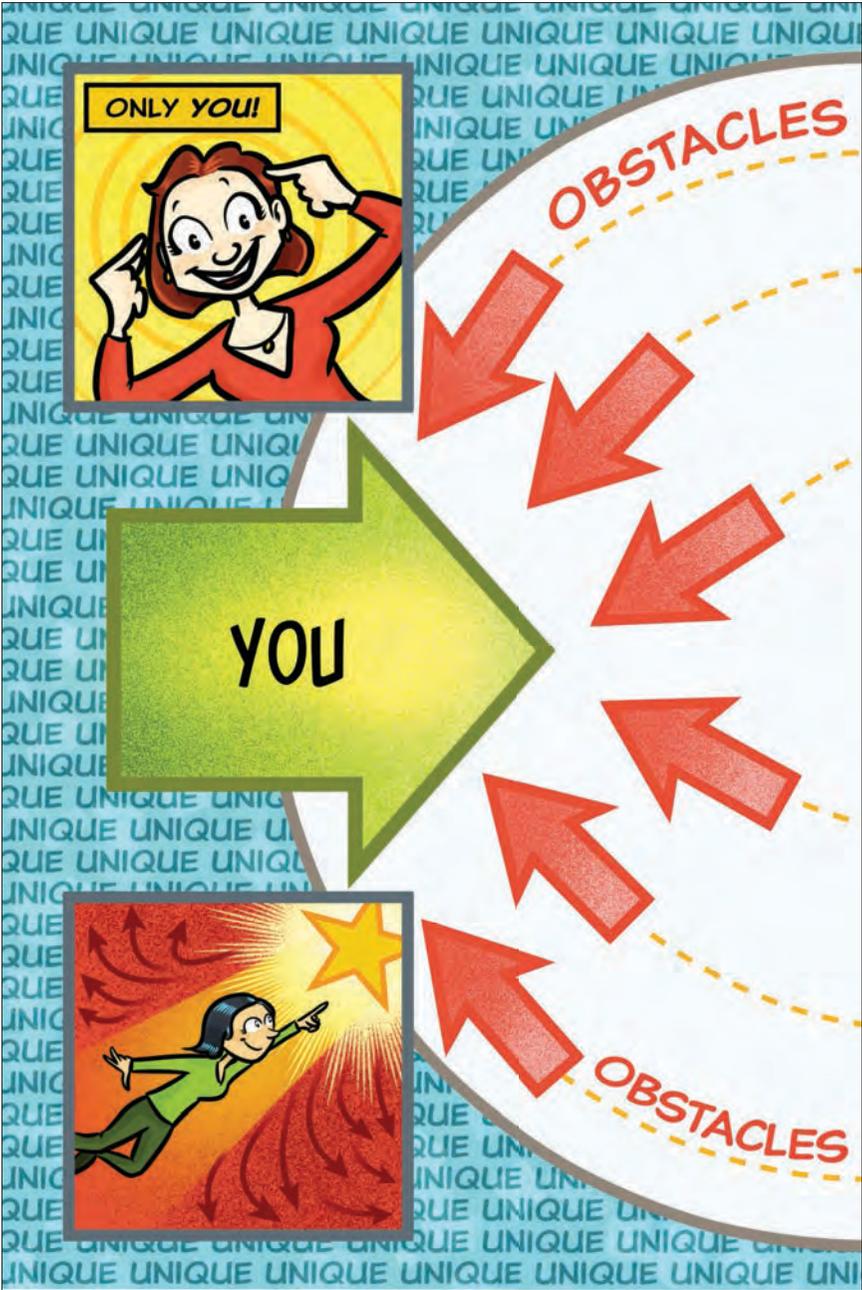
Where all transformation starts.

From the very moment you take ownership of your unique goals and their specific obstacles, your mind immediately begins a powerful and energizing transformational process.

You can only be certain of the way ahead to your goal to the degree that you take ownership of the obstacles that come with the goal. You have to have the attitude of, "Whatever comes as a result of engaging with the goal and its obstacles, I'm both up to it and accepting of it."

You have to be prepared to accept having to change your mind, to change your approach, and to change how you organize yourself.

You might find that fully accepting these possibilities is the hard part, and that after you've done that, everything else that you'll be required to do won't seem to take all that much effort at all.





Chapter 6

Using Your Transformative Tools

You confidently increase your decision-making, communication, planning, capabilities, and teamwork to transform every obstacle into achievement and growth.

There's a growth of overall intelligence, creativity, and capability that happens when you fully engage with a goal. And that's the real transformation.

You don't *achieve* your goal—you actually become the goal. You take the obstacles to the goal and use them to transform yourself. The goal is actually just a picture of yourself operating at a higher level. It's you in the future with different capabilities.

When you have that kind of goal, you become clear on which decisions, communications, plans, and teamwork are truly crucial in order to achieve your particular vision.

Suddenly clear and focused.

You have obstacles that need to be transformed, and your current situation of having the goal and the obstacles will require you to go through all of your memories and experiences, and you'll become very aware right away of what's already available to you.

Your engagement with the obstacles will enable you to see exactly what transformations will be required to identify the shortest, fastest, and easiest path forward to achieving your biggest and best goal.

A tension is created between what you want and what

stands between you and that goal, and the tension pulls forward every available personal resource, and other people's resources, in order to transform all the obstacles into actions that will lead you forward.

The obstacles are only there because of your goal, and they're showing you how to achieve your goal. You don't get the payoff for free; you have to engage with both sides.

Accessing past successes.

All of your past successes in achieving goals in your entire life, in all kinds of situations, are now available to you as lessons and indicators that point to how the obstacles to your goals can be transformed.

You don't have access to your memories unless you're engaging with your future. This is because your brain wants to take advantage of anything that even looks like it could potentially be a solution to something you're facing.

If you're not engaging with a future vision that's big enough, your memories won't come into play, and you'll feel intensely that there are serious obstacles to moving ahead. But your memories are just sitting there, and they hold a lot of experiences in similar types of situations to what you're facing now. Your brain is very good at spotting anything you've already done that might be a solution for your current situation.

There is all of this latent knowledge and wisdom already in your brain that you can suddenly access when you have a future vision of something bigger and better, and corresponding obstacles that you need to overcome.

Best intelligence and creativity.

When you're fully engaged with responding to the unique obstacles to a unique goal, you're at your smartest and most creative. Every time you go through the VOTA process, you're operating completely inside your own uniquely transformational experience that's entirely new, fascinating, and motivating.

And whenever you're in that situation, it means that all of your best intelligence, creativity, and skills are strategically focused on a bigger and better achievement.

You also need to put other people's skills to the task of transforming the obstacles to achieve your goal, and this requires strength in the category of recognizing the "what" and the "why."

What's to be achieved and why.

You have to be prepared to tell other capable people around you exactly what your bigger and better future vision looks like, and to clearly communicate to them exactly why achieving the goal is so important, not only for you, but also for them.

Since you want these other individuals to contribute their skills in order to achieve what you've envisioned, you have to communicate your goal so effectively that it also becomes their goal.

Make sure to be clear about exactly what the end result looks like so that no one finds themselves wasting time on working toward achieving something different than the shared goal.

I used to be very good at a whole bunch of “hows,” but I wasn’t very good at expressing the “whats” and the “whys,” and The Strategy Circle has been part of what’s changed that for me. The Strategy Circle has you define what it is that you’re shooting for and apply measurements to it. That’s the “what.”

It’s then the “why” that makes it possible for you to not do all the “hows” by yourself, because by communicating the “what” and the “why,” other people will see exactly what it is that needs to get done.

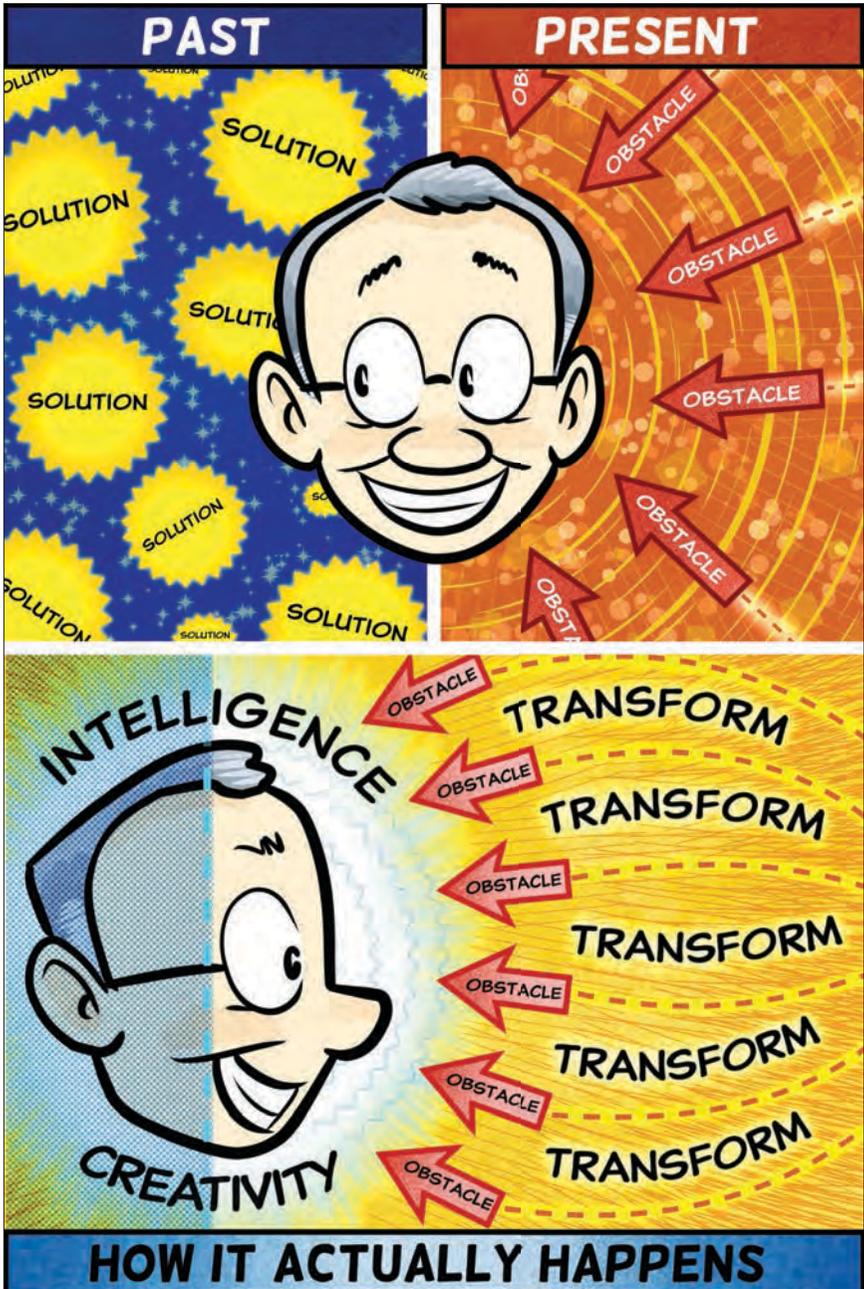
Your plan creates a team.

You now have a plan for achieving your goals that makes the best integrated use of both your best abilities and those of everyone else who launches into action, including those whose knowledge and skills are required as the project moves toward completion.

You have to put all of the right elements into place in order to get the optimum result. VOTA and The Strategy Circle set up the best possible focused, energetic environment for bringing out everybody’s best intelligence, creativity, and capability.

One of the byproducts of your continued mastery of The Strategy Circle is that you’ll keep attracting better people around you. They’ll hear what it is that you’re up to, they’ll get it, and they’ll go for it as part of your team.

The amount of intelligence and creativity in the teams that I’m a part of is incomparably more than my own intelligence and creativity.





Chapter 7

Actions Create New Reality

You totally accept that the whole purpose of visualizing bigger goals is to trigger your ability to create more powerful new capabilities.

The number one instinctual drive that all humans are born with is to expand their capabilities.

You achieve the goals, but that isn't the biggest thing you get every time you use the formula—the biggest thing is that you grow and expand what it is you're capable of. And action is how it shows up. In fact, if it doesn't show up as action, it's not reality. It's only when action takes place that transformation happens.

To the degree that the process involves teamwork—other people using their capabilities toward achieving the goal—not only are you growing your own capabilities, other people are growing their individual capabilities.

You're giving yourself and any number of other people the opportunity to expand their capabilities, and that happens as you work with the reward of the measurable goal you've established.

The goal is there to have something that's achievable, accessible, and measurable, but the most important thing is how everyone involved in the process has grown on the way to achieving the goal.

Growing greater capability.

Every time you complete the VOTA process, ending up with entirely new and focused action, it's like your muscles get bigger.

Whenever you transform vision-generated obstacles into action, you're exercising and growing your ability to commit to bigger goals, your courage to take on bigger and better things and all the obstacles that come with that, and your confidence moving forward to your next bigger and better goal.

I don't know what the meaning of life is, but I do know that this makes life a lot more meaningful!

Transforming fear and pessimism.

Confusion without capability immediately makes everything negative and makes you very pessimistic because you feel helpless. But even though there's a lot of confusion in the world, you have the formula for capability.

Whatever fears and pessimism you may have experienced before you committed to going through a new VOTA process using The Strategy Circle, these negative factors have now been transformed into positive breakthroughs.

If you don't have goals, you're going to come up against negative experiences, but if you do have goals, and you use The VOTA Formula to make them a reality, you become immune to the negativity.

Obstacles will always come up in response to your goals because there are always reasons why you haven't already attained your future vision. But you know now that there's no need to be intimidated by the obstacles. The obstacles are an essential part of the process, showing you what you need to do in order to arrive at the bigger and better version of yourself that you've envisioned.

Goals are just the start.

You can now think about goals—your bigger and better future visions—in a totally new way.

Achieving your goals no longer means the end of something but rather the beginning of a guaranteed transformative process that creates a uniquely bigger and better capability.

A lot of people wait for things to be done for them, demanding that other people provide not only the goals, but also the capability—in other words, they think that they shouldn't have to face obstacles or have to go through the scary period of having a goal but not knowing how to get there.

But that's an all-fat, low-protein diet, and that diet doesn't build muscles.

The VOTA process is never-ending, and you can't get to a higher capability unless you handle the challenges of your present goals and level of capability.

Not using VOTA means not growing.

Trying to make progress without using the VOTA process means that you're not really committed to transforming yourself and your situation.

If you want the reward but don't want to go through the process of transformation, I'll tell you now that it's just not possible. You can't become a bigger and better version of yourself if you don't go through the process that allows you to grow into a bigger and better version of yourself.

You have to transform to grow, and if you're not using the VOTA process, you don't have the experience of transformation.

When you're fully committed to and engaged with a goal, you'll be willing to take it step by step, transforming each obstacle into action, and you'll get the reward of the achieved goal as well as the growth and expansion of your capabilities.

If someone understands the VOTA process and has a goal but is unwilling to move forward with what it takes to achieve the goal, it means they aren't fully committed and engaged with that particular future vision.

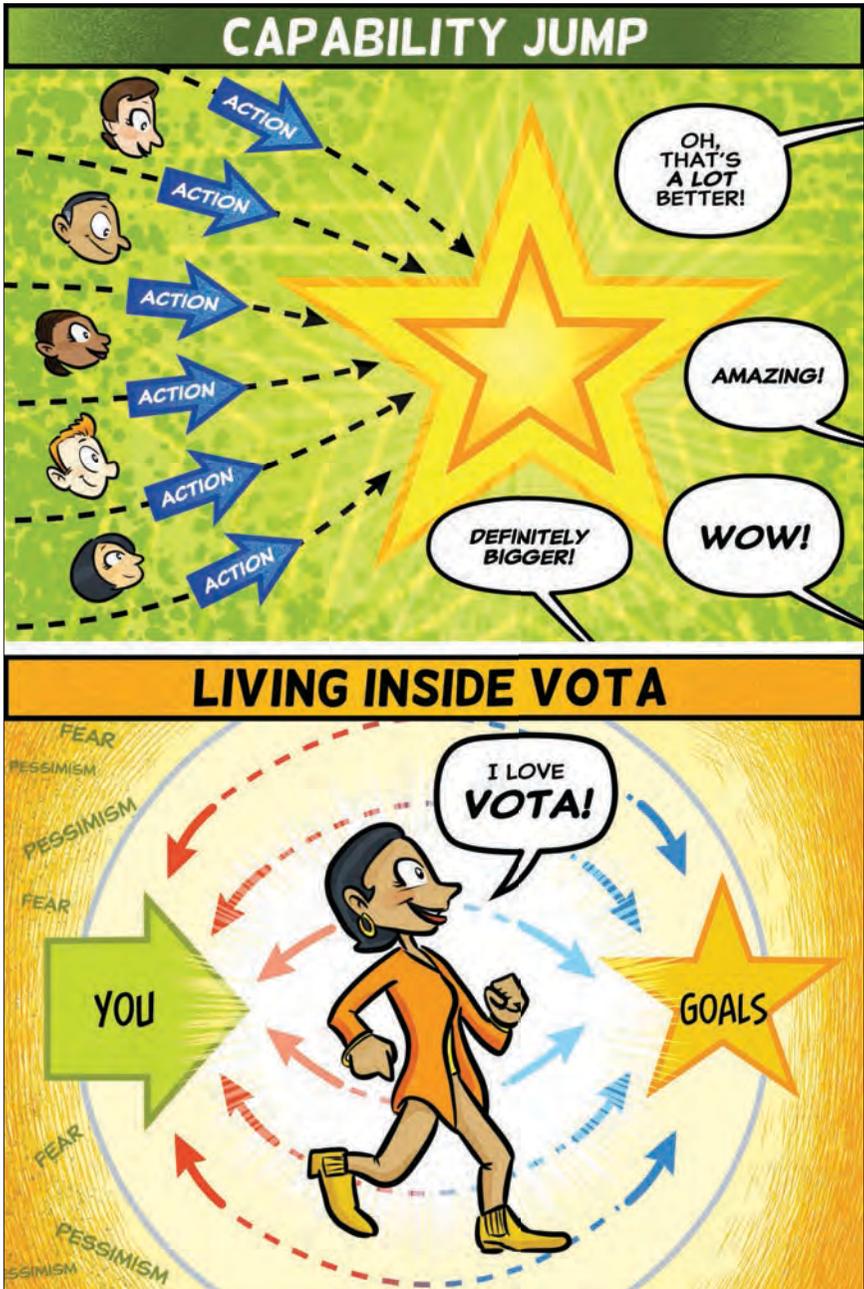
Ambition can always multiply.

Your life ahead can be an endless experience of always using each jump in VOTA capability to multiply your personal and teamwork ambition even further.

It won't always involve making more money, at least not right away. But as I've learned in my own life, the experience of learning, and in growing collaboration, is priceless.

And your growth will be defined by your own specific measurements as opposed to status goals, which are measured by other people.

As long as you complete a Strategy Circle and go through the four-step VOTA process every time you have a new goal that you're committed to and engaged with, you'll be continually transforming into a bigger and better version of yourself.



Chapter 8

Endless VOTA Expansion

You're increasingly gratified knowing that all of the even bigger and better growth in your future will be the result of repeating just four steps.

You might have thought that the key to success would be somehow more complex than a simple four-step process, but things really don't need to be complex. You decide what your measurements of success are and what the rules are of the game you're playing.

Over the course of my career, my capability has grown a great deal, but even though I'm playing the game at a much higher level now, it feels the same as it did with my first Strategy Circle client in 1982. The capability is just incomparably greater now.

Using the four steps has been the consistent factor for me. What the four steps involve is different every time because your VOTA capability is always growing, but I don't feel any different than I always do at each stage of the process.

You're happening to the world.

Most people have things set up in their minds that the world is happening to them. This is because they're reactive, not transforming—they get hit, and then they react, but they're not delivering any punches.

Rule number one is that the world you were born into wasn't designed and constructed for you. But you can be your unique self, and create, within the world.

Your automatic instinct to organize your best visualizing, thinking, communication, and action within the VOTA struc-

ture and process means that the world you operate in each day gives way to your creative forward motion.

VOTA provides you with an opportunity to commit to something bigger and better for yourself, and as you get better at it, you'll find that you'll need to include more people in the process. And what you create for yourself has to be useful to other people.

VOTA keeps strengthening itself.

Going through the VOTA process is a capability, and each time you do it, it gets better than the time before because you're smarter, you're more creative, you're better at setting it up, and you engage with the process more quickly.

Plus, your credibility outside of yourself for pulling off big things grows.

You use VOTA to bring creative and productive organization to everything you experience—so much so that your abilities of visualization, opposition, transformation, and action become stronger after each successful project.

You keep coming up with bigger and better goals, fully engage with the unique opposition, access the maximum of your own capability and experience, and then put it out into the world with the clearly defined “what” and “why” so you can attract other people's unique capabilities and transform the obstacles into actions that actually produce the goal.

And the more your capabilities are strengthened through experience, the more valuable a collaborator you'll be to other people.

Strategy Circles are specific “schools.”

With each completed Strategy Circle, your ability to acquire new, specific wisdom and develop new, specific capabilities continually takes a jump, and your growing use of The VOTA Formula frees you up from all outside education because you can now teach yourself exactly what you need next in order to engage with each specific new experience.

That sounds like a school to me, and the difference between this and any school you’ve had experience with before is that what you have here is your unique school.

I’ve had great teachers before, but it seems to me that a lot of what I was taught in school was the result of someone else’s VOTA experience and that anything I was being taught was secondary to the primary experience of discovering the process for creating new things in my life.

I’m a lifetime teacher and I’m a lifetime student, and the classroom is VOTA. I don’t think there’s a more important school out there, and all other schools are results of VOTA projects.

Others follow your lead.

In being a learner from the VOTA process, you’re also a teacher, because if you can clearly define what the process is, other people will pick up on it right away.

You’re going to become a naturally positive and dynamic leader without even having to try because your demonstration of VOTA with each new Strategy Circle project provides an increasing number of individuals with all they need to

become self-transforming with their own unique applications of VOTA.

When you're consciously using VOTA in the form of The Strategy Circle, everybody who joins you in that process can immediately learn the four-step process you're going through, and it makes everybody else's contribution that much better if they're informed and conscious of the process they're following. So in helping you to achieve your goal, they're actually becoming more capable to achieve anything they want in their lives.

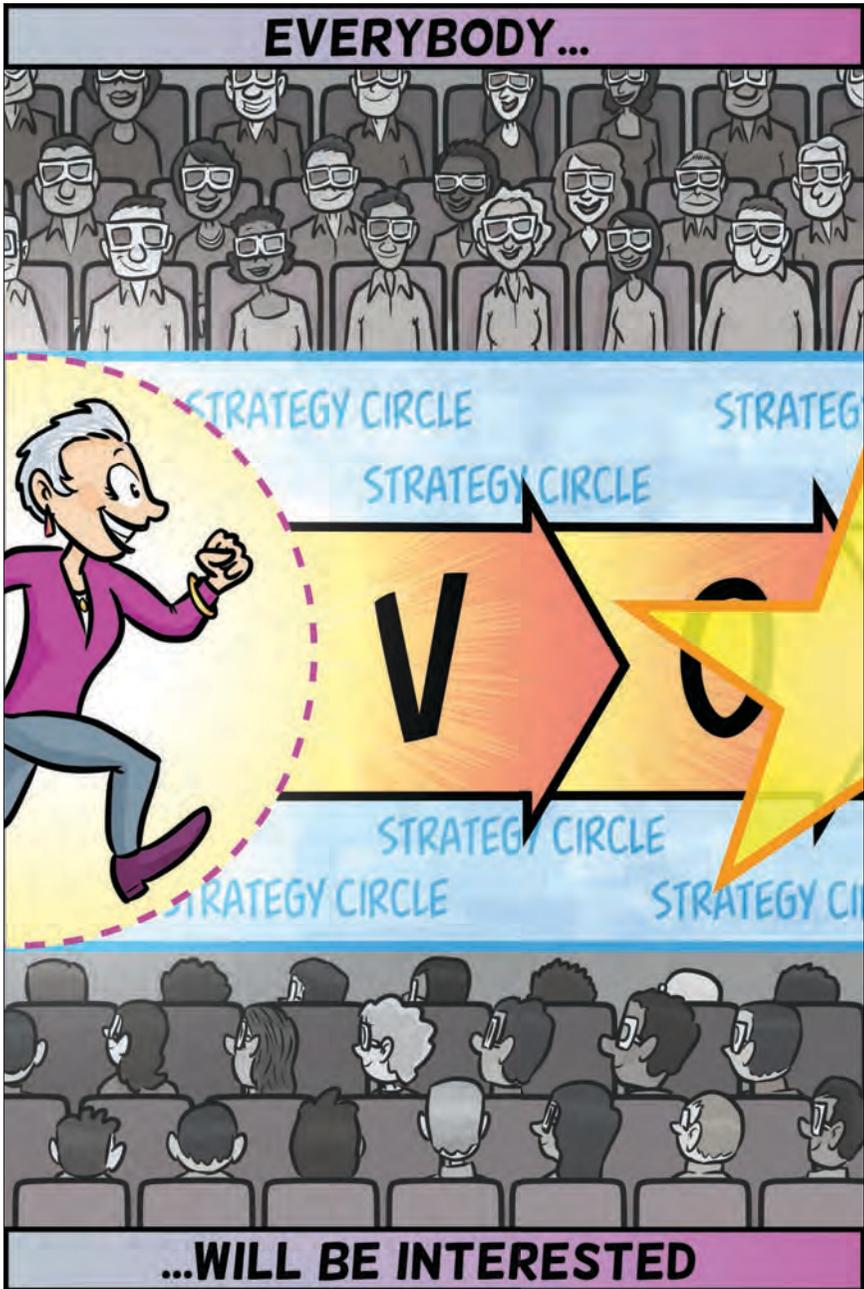
VOTA combines with VOTA.

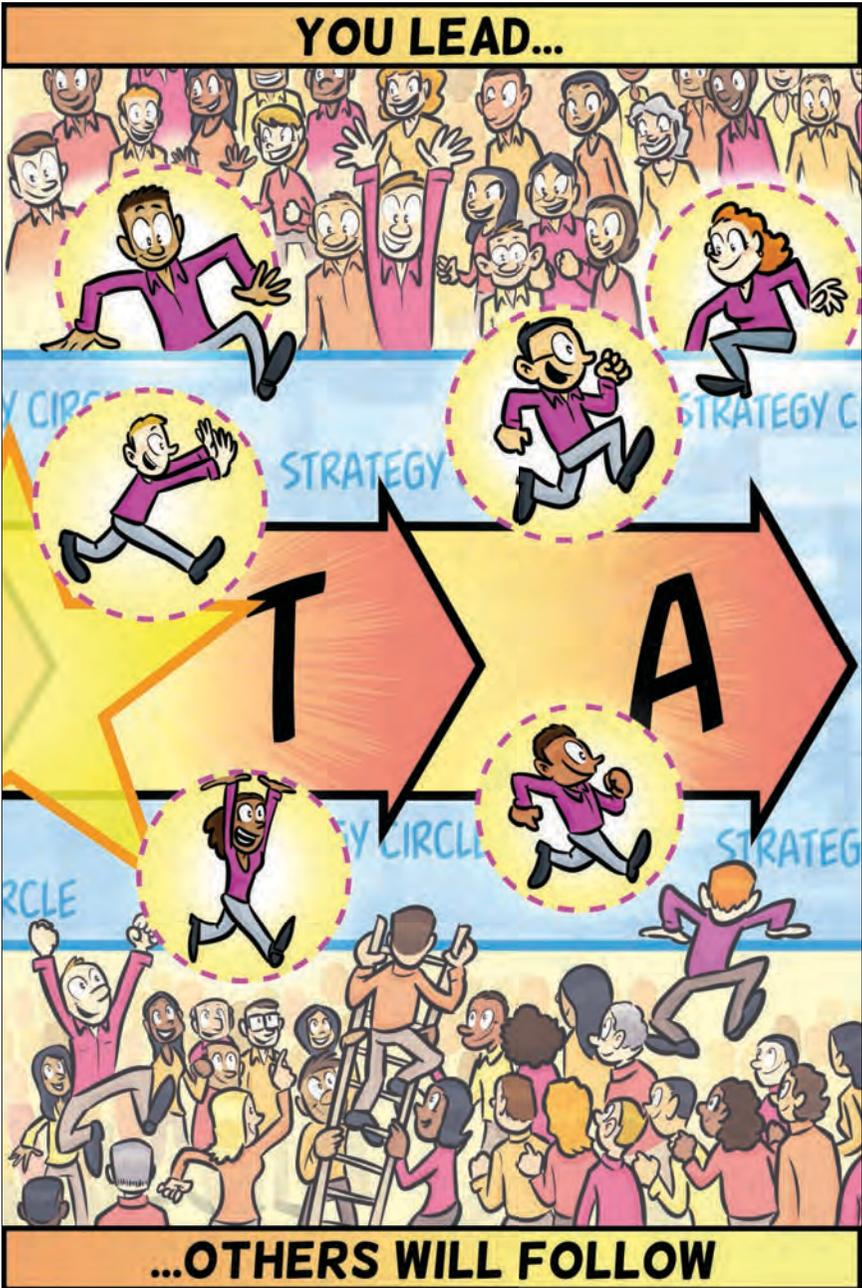
Other individuals who operate on the basis of their own unique VOTA projects will feel a powerful sense of creative and collaborative resonance with all of your unique VOTA progress and achievements.

Everyone's progress organically combines with and strengthens everyone else's without anyone involved having to make any effort for it to happen. All communities are formed on language, and if someone uses the language of VOTA, you'll recognize it and instantly know a lot of things about that person.

You'll know that, like you, they take responsibility for their future, they take responsibility for their obstacles, they maximize their capability and utilize their skills, and they use teamwork to achieve their goals.

Even though you'll have worked on different projects than the other person, you'll have used the same framework as them, and sharing your experiences will be easy, supportive, and reinforcing.





Conclusion

Single Tool, Single Process

You have now learned a single strategy for making sense of your entire life, consisting of The Strategy Circle tool that has a four-step VOTA process.

The Strategy Circle, with its four-step VOTA process, will always let you access your best thinking in a practical way.

It lets you filter your thoughts and ideas in a way that leads to spending your time and resources only on ideas you can take action on for bigger and better results.

Accelerating from 1982.

An entirely new way of thinking about your personal growth as a unique individual—and everyone else's unique experiences—can be understood within a simple diagram that has increasingly grown more useful and powerful since I first created it in 1982 in response to a single, scary experience.

During that experience in 1982, the whole concept and process ended up popping out fully formed, and there are reasons why it's been working this whole time and why it's continuing to work now, decades later—and why it's the concept that all the other concepts in Strategic Coach have been built upon.

VOTA is the formula for success, in both achieving your goals and in growing your capabilities.

And whether people know it or not, they're always using some version of the VOTA process whenever they have truly successful experiences.

Wonderful obstacles.

You now know that anything that seems to oppose your progress in any area of your life is only there because it's your next opportunity to transform yourself into a more capable and confident person.

Obstacles are your brain's best attempt at telling you what has to be transformed to get to your bigger and better goal.

In this way, every obstacle can immediately transform in your mind from something negative to something uniquely valuable.

As long as you're fully engaged, intellectually and emotionally, with your goal, you'll know that the obstacles you're facing are unique to you, showing you specifically the way to grow and achieve your vision.

Even if someone else had the exact same goal as you, the obstacles that would present themselves to that person would be different than the obstacles that have been tailored for your growth.

Anyone can be transformative.

Your entire understanding of everyone else in your life can be completely transformed by knowing that every individual you encounter can use a Strategy Circle to strategize and achieve their biggest goals in life.

I see a lot of people who are angry about the way things are in one respect or another, and I believe that if they were skilled in using The Strategy Circle tool, they'd be further ahead than they are, and they wouldn't be so angry.

Conclusion

Now that you have an understanding of the VOTA framework, you can pass it on to other people so they can make use of their vision, opposition, and transformation, and get into action like you do with every new bigger and better goal you have that you're completely committed to and engaged with.

VOTA is a permanently useful life skill. And as the title of this book suggests, you can apply this formula for your entire life, in every aspect of your life. It gives you a complete structure for accessing your best capabilities, and also for accessing other people's best capabilities, because everyone else completely understands what it is you're trying to achieve and will want to contribute.

Endlessly simple advantage.

With each completion of a Strategy Circle project, you gain a greater sense of personal enjoyment because in this 21st-century world that seems increasingly confusing and complicated to those who don't yet understand the VOTA process, you have an endlessly simple advantage in every new situation.

Now that you have The VOTA Formula, which you can put to use in order to achieve your goals and grow your capabilities no matter what the circumstances are outside of yourself, the world's never going to get more complicated for you.

No matter how complex things get out in the world, you can put everything you see into the framework of VOTA—what you're experiencing is either vision, opposition, transformation, or action.

You now have this way to contain everything.

You'll notice that if you have VOTA, you almost need no ego, because ego is trying to push something through via force of personality or energy. But if you always have the "what" and "why," you have a way of accessing your best capabilities and attracting those of others.

Your choice, your decision.

Everything you need to be increasingly self-transformative is triggered simply by your choice to use your own Strategy Circle vision of your future as the single, decisive capability that will continually expand all of your other capabilities.

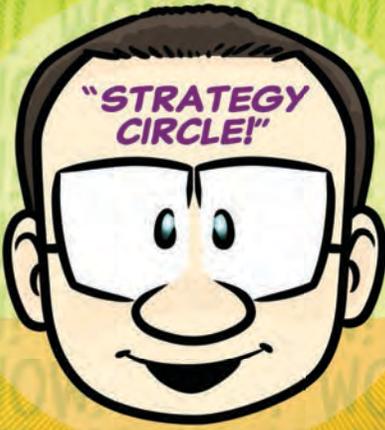
Room isn't simply created for you in the world. But your next Strategy Circle will always create more room for you. You have to engage with a future from inside of your own mind, and recognize that capabilities, achievements, and bigger rewards won't just be given to you.

The world in general doesn't care about your aspirations, but The Strategy Circle is a way of cooperating with the world. If you're willing to commit to a bigger and better goal, to fully engage with the obstacles, and then utilize all of your existing capabilities and intelligence to transform those obstacles into action, then the world takes you seriously.

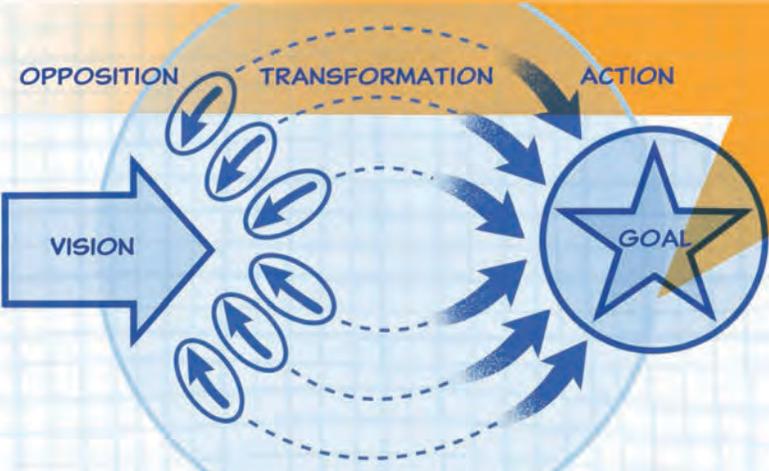
Your future is always as big as your next Strategy Circle.

Anything you want to create is possible when you use the VOTA framework, and you need never get stuck again.

1982



“All those things that seem to oppose our goals are actually the raw material for achieving them.”



The diagram illustrates a process flow from a large arrow labeled 'VISION' on the left to a star labeled 'GOAL' on the right. The path is divided into three stages: 'OPPOSITION' (represented by several small arrows pointing in various directions), 'TRANSFORMATION' (represented by a dashed circular arrow), and 'ACTION' (represented by a solid circular arrow). The entire process is set against a background of a grid pattern.



The Strategic Coach Program

For Game-Changing Entrepreneurs

You commit to growing upward through three game-changing levels, giving yourself 25 years to transform every aspect of your work and life.

A lot of people might think they want to be a Game Changer, but they hope it will just happen for them. The Strategic Coach Program—a quarterly workshop experience for successful entrepreneurs—is for those who are committed and devoted to business and industry transformation for the long-term, for 25 years and beyond.

For many of them, this starts long before they're actually in business. They have an instinct about themselves and how they want to create their future that likely started in childhood. They've fought for their ability to control their time, to control how their money is made, to work with those they want to work with both inside their business and out in the marketplace, and there's a real purpose to their life, with the result that being buried inside of someone else's system could never be satisfactory.

If you've reached a jumping off point in your entrepreneurial career where you're beyond ready to multiply all of your capabilities and opportunities into a 10x more creative and productive formula that keeps getting simpler and more satisfying, we're ready for you.

How it all began—The Strategy Circle.

Since the beginning of Strategic Coach, we've used The Strategy Circle and the VOTA process to create our breakthrough program for entrepreneurs. This one tool and process has created hundreds of other tools and processes, which are all related because they're all based on VOTA.

In our 28th year, VOTA produced a new concept called WhoNotHow. With this mindset, instead of transforming and strategizing the obstacles to your goals all on your own, you find the right “Whos” to do the “Hows” to help you achieve your goals. Because we created The Strategy Circle in 1982, we were able to create WhoNotHow, which we’re now using to integrate all the VOTA-based concepts and tools in the Program.

Three game-changing levels.

Strategic Coach participants continually transform how they think, make decisions, communicate, and take action based on their use of dozens of unique entrepreneurial mindsets we’ve developed. The Program has been refined through decades of entrepreneurial testing and is the most concentrated, massive discovery process in the world created solely for entrepreneurs who want to change their game.

Over the years, we’ve observed that our clients’ development happens in levels of mastery. And so, we’ve organized the Program into three levels of participation, each of which involves two different ways of changing your game:

The Signature Level. The first level is devoted to coming to grips with your *personal game*, which has to do with how you’re spending your time as an entrepreneur as well as how you’re taking advantage of your personal freedom outside of business that your entrepreneurial success affords you. Upping your personal game before you move on to making significant changes in other aspects of your life and business is key because you have to simplify before you can multiply.

The second aspect of this level is how you look at your *teamwork game*. This means seeing that your future consists of teamwork with others whose unique capabilities complement your own, leading to bigger and better goals that constantly get achieved at a measurably higher rate.

The 10x Ambition Level. Once you feel confident about your own personal game and have access to ever-expanding teamwork, you can think much bigger in terms of your *company game*. An idea that at one time would have seemed scary and even impossible—growing your business 10x—is no longer a wild dream but a result of the systematic expansion of the teamwork model you’ve established. And because you’re stable in the center, you won’t get thrown off balance by exponential growth. Your life stays balanced and integrated even as things grow around you.

And that’s when you’re in a position to change your *market game*. This is when your company has a huge impact on the marketplace that competitors can’t even understand. This is because they’re not going through this game-changing structure or thinking in terms of 25 years as you are. Thinking in terms of 25 years gives you an expansive sense of freedom, while focusing on 90 days at a time within that framework gives you a remarkable sense of focus.

The Game Changer Level. Once you’ve mastered the first four types of “games,” you’re at the point where your company is self-managing and self-multiplying, which means that your time can now be totally freed up. At this stage, competitors become collaborators and it becomes an *industry game*. You can consider everything you’ve created as a single capability you can now match up with another company’s to create collaborations that go way beyond 10x.

And, finally, it becomes a *global game*. You immediately see that there are possibilities of going global—it's just a matter of combining your capabilities with those of others to create something exponentially bigger than you could ever have achieved on your own.

36 mind-shifting core concepts.

With these three growth levels, there's a continual upward mastery of 36 mind-shifting concepts. These core concepts continually integrate with one another and evolve. Dozens more innovative concepts exist in the Program that support these core concepts.

Global game-changing community.

Entrepreneurism can be a lonely activity. You have goals that the people you grew up with don't understand. Your family might not comprehend you at all and don't know why you keep wanting to expand, why you want to take new risks, why you want to jump to the next level. And so it becomes proportionately more important as you gain your own individual mastery that you're in a community of thousands of individuals who are on exactly the same journey.

In The Strategic Coach Program, you benefit from not only your own continual individual mastery but from the constant expansion of support from and collaboration with a growing global community of extraordinarily liberated entrepreneurs who will increasingly share with you their deep wisdom and creative breakthroughs as Game Changers in hundreds of different industries and markets.

For more information and to register for The Strategic Coach Program, call 416.531.7399 or 1.800.387.3206, or visit us online at strategiccoach.com.

ENTREPRENEURS

GAME CHANGER

25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36

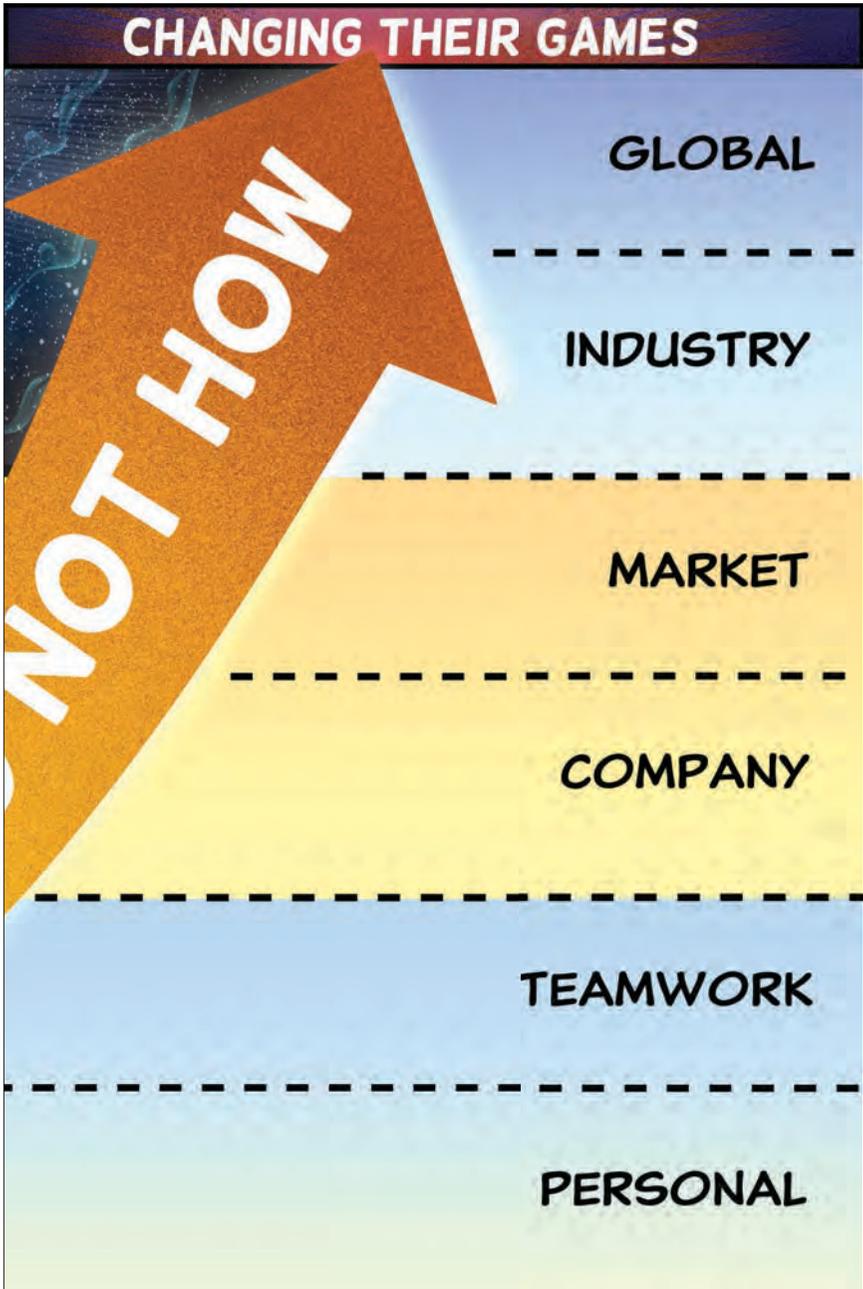
10X AMBITION

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17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24

SIGNATURE

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

WHOM



About The Author

Dan Sullivan



Dan Sullivan is the founder and president of The Strategic Coach Inc. and creator of The Strategic Coach® Program, which helps accomplished entrepreneurs reach new heights of success and happiness. He has over 40 years of experience as a strategic planner and coach to entrepreneurial individuals and groups. He is author of over 30 publications, including *The 80% Approach™*, *The Dan Sullivan Question*, *Ambition Scorecard*, *Wanting What You Want*, *The 4 C's Formula*, *The 25-Year Framework*, *The Game Changer*, *The 10x Mind Expander*, *The Mindset Scorecard*, *The Self-Managing Company*, *Procrastination Priority*, *The Gap And The Gain*, *The ABC Breakthrough*, *Extraordinary Impact Filter*, *Capableism*, *My Plan For Living To 156*, and *WhoNotHow*, and is co-author with Catherine Nomura of *The Laws of Lifetime Growth*.



YOUR LIFE AS A STRATEGY CIRCLE



Many people who encounter obstacles on the path to their goals are stopped in their tracks. But I've discovered that the very obstacles that seem to oppose our goals are actually the raw material for achieving them. They give us specific information about how to transform opposition into action that lets us attain our vision.

The Strategy Circle is the fundamental concept that launched The Strategic Coach Program. This simple four-step process will help you work through any problem or strategize any goal in every aspect of your life, wherever you choose to use it.

For more information about Strategic Coach®:

1.800.387.3206

Toll Free From The UK: 0800 051 6413

www.strategiccoach.com