

HOW TO CREATE

A HOME OFFICE YOU LOVE



GEOFFREY P. McDONALD

A Home-Office You Love

Geoffrey P McDonald

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This book is dedicated to my parents,
Betty and Phil McDonald,
who have unconditionally
loved and supported me
during every step I have taken
along the magical mystery tour of my life.

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1

The champagne cork came off with its customary explosive ‘pop’ as it leapt from the mouth of the bottle and careered into the timber panels on the ceiling.

As the drinks were poured, Jenny stood proudly at one end of the table and began her toast, “To me! For all the hard work that I’ve put in to have the life I want, the business I want and a Home-Office I love.”

As laughter broke out, Jenny’s husband Mike shouted, “What about us?”

“Oh, of course,” continued Jenny, “It wouldn’t have all been possible, or worthwhile, without you. Nor would it have been possible without that new contract or The Design Coach, who opened my eyes to what’s truly possible and obtainable. Look at this place, it’s truly a dream come true to be working here!”

After a brief cheer, the bubbles of the champagne were sipped and swallowed as the conversations began to echo around the room once more.

Richard was surrounded by the discussions, yet not participating. He sipped his champagne and looked around the space he was in. Jenny had invited a few friends over to celebrate the stunning new extension to her house and the signing of a major new contract for her business.

The room was surrounded by a wide variety of indoor plants. It was like living in a greenhouse. Their sweet smell provided a soothing backdrop to the laughter and chatter that filled the air. Through the overhead windows, Richard could see the clear, full moon. He pondered about his life, his business and his Home-Office.

Jenny walked by and tapped his shoulder, “A penny for your thoughts.”

“Oh, I was just thinking,” stumbled Richard.

“Yes, I could tell. You were off with the fairies. Are you okay to drive home?” enquired Jenny as she sat down beside Richard.

“No, it’s not that. I was just thinking about how well you’ve done and comparing it all to where I’m at,” muttered Richard, somewhat enviously, “I can see how happy you are. But, my situation is different. You chose to set-up your business from home; I didn’t.”

Jenny was about to speak before Richard continued. “Remember, they basically sacked me. I’d worked there for over ten years. It’s not so easy trying to recreate an office at home.”

“Richard, think about what you’re saying. The Design Coach says, ‘Exploit the advantages of the situation you are in.’ Working from home is a great opportunity to create a new lifestyle. He also says, ‘Our physical world is a product of our thoughts.’ Once I realised this, I was able to set about focusing on the things I wanted to have happen.”

Jenny moved closer and began to speak more quietly. “You do realize, don’t you, Mike and I almost split up through the way I’d been running my business and my Home-Office?”

Richard whirled around with an astonished look on his face and could only offer a surprised, “Really?”

“Yes, it’s true,” continued Jenny, “About two years ago, business was just starting to take off. I was taking on all sorts of jobs and working all sorts of hours. I had taken over the whole house with products here, client meetings, my work desk was overflowing. I had clients ringing up at all sorts of odd hours, they were even ringing me at restaurants when I was out with Mike.”

“But, you look so happy together now.”

“A friend put me onto The Design Coach. My business was running me and now I run it. In fact, the way I had set up my Home-Office, as The Design Coach would say, ‘I’d been run over by my business.’” Jenny commented enthusiastically, “Once I sorted all that out, other things in my life had more room to move and things began to flow more freely. Now it’s like I’m swimming downstream. It really has made a big difference.”

Richard was pensive. He was certain his business and his Home-Office set-up could be improved, but he was reluctant to spend money on someone else’s assistance.

“You do like my new place, don’t you? I designed this place myself you know...” boasted Jenny, “Well, with some good coaching I might add.”

“Yes, I do like your new place, it’s fantastic. I would hardly have believed it was the same place.” replied Richard. “Well, who is this ‘Design Coach’ then? What does he do?”

Jenny continued talking excitedly, “Well, his background’s in architecture. But he’s not like an Architect at all. I’ve had dealings with Architects in the past, but this guy seems to have a totally different approach. He weaves in a lot of personal development things into the process and he works with you... That’s what I mean, I designed this place!”

Richard was certainly impressed by the transformation of Jenny’s Home-Office. He also noted that it was the first time for a long while that he’d seen Jenny this excited about anything.

Jenny stood up, put her hand on Richard’s shoulder once more and looked him directly in the eyes and suggested, “I really think you should call The Design Coach.”

For maximum value...

The exercises in this book have been specifically designed to be completed in the sequence in which they appear in the story. For readers who wish to gain the maximum value from this book, take the opportunity to complete each of the tasks as they are given to Richard.

The first task to complete corresponds to Chapter 16 and the time inventory sheets at the back of the book (Page 132). The task is to monitor your activities for a complete week. You may wish to complete this now, so when you reach Chapter 16 you will be ready to respond to the questions about your activities.

2

Richard was somewhat startled as the doorbell rang.

He thought to himself, 'The doorbell's ringing and it's only ten to nine. He's early. Ready or not, I guess I'd better answer it.'

A neatly dressed young man was standing on the doorstep when Richard opened the door. He was about Richard's height, with short hair, strong green eyes and a pleasant smile.

He stood there with a briefcase in one hand and a large cooler, that you would take on a picnic, in the other.

Richard thought this was a little strange and whilst still looking at the cooler, he heard the other gentleman speak, in a smooth, steady voice.

"Good morning. I'm looking for Richard Fuller."

"Oh, yes, that's me. You must be The Design Coach," stammered Richard.

"Yes, that's what they call me."

They completed the customary handshakes and Richard invited his guest inside.

Richard lead The Design Coach along the hall, past the kitchen and into his workroom at the rear of the house.

"Please sit down," invited Richard, as he motioned with his hand to a nearby chair.

The Design Coach put his cooler in the corner of the room near the door and placed his briefcase on the small table adjacent to his chair. He sat himself down and looked around the small room that was Richard's workplace.

There was a window facing almost directly onto a fence. The window was a reasonable size but the light coming in was dull, possibly shaded by a nearby tree. To compensate, a fluorescent light in the middle of the ceiling was switched on, even though it was a bright, sunny day outside.

Richard sat behind a regular size desk with a computer, a printer and a desk lamp sitting on top, surrounded by a handful of papers in an in-tray. A series of cables trailed from the electrical appliances to an outlet near the corner of

the room. The desk was in the middle of the room and it was apparent, by the temporary grooves in the flecked carpet, that it had been dragged from the corner, specifically for the meeting.

There was a bookcase on one side of the room, overflowing with books and magazines. A filing cabinet sat patiently beside it. The remnants of wallpaper on the wall, partially obscured by a large wardrobe, suggested the room had been used as a child's bedroom at an earlier time.

There was one picture on the wall, a print of a work by Picasso in a neat black frame.

The most striking thing about the room was not that it was neat and simple, but the lack of personal effects. It was as if there was a strict office policy that such things were a distraction and forbidden from the workplace.

As The Design Coach sat down, he crossed his legs and Richard noticed his shoes. The black leather glistened and reflected the light of the fluorescent tube that illuminated the small room in which they sat. The design of his shoes was simple and elegant, with a stylish buckle that sparkled in the light, on one side. They were unmistakably new.

Richard nervously commented, "I like your new shoes."

"Thank you," replied The Design Coach, "Yes, it's worth the time and the energy to track down the ones you want. I often talk to people about shoes when I'm discussing how to set up Home-Offices."

"Uh?" Richard mumbled, somewhat puzzled by the apparent connection between a pair of shoes and a Home-Office.

Without hesitation and seemingly without noticing Richard's bewilderment, The Design Coach continued.

"I used to buy my shoes out of the bargain bin. You know, the odds and ends that finish up in the 'sale' bin out the front of the store. I had to laugh, when I bought these shoes, I stole a peek in the bargain bin in front of one shop. There was a pair of shoes in there this big!"

As he spoke The Design Coach held up his hands to indicate an extraordinarily large pair of shoes.

"I just couldn't believe they made them that big. They were almost big enough to be a pair of canoes!" laughed The Design Coach. "Anyway, I gave

up buying out of the bargain bin. Sure, they were usually a bit cheaper, but in the long run, they never quite fit or they weren't quite the right colour to match my suits or I simply wasn't keen on them. As soon as they started to wear just a little, I'd toss them out and feel bad about buying them."

"So now," continued The Design Coach, "I tend to think of my shoes as a reward for my efforts. If I'm going to spend my life earning the money to pay for them and then walk around in them all day, then I feel I deserve to buy the pair that I truly want. They have to be the right style, be long-lasting, fit my budget, suit the places that I'm going to wear them and, most of all, they must be comfortable.

Richard nodded in agreement as The Design Coach paused.

3

“I’d like to start by sorting out all the money details. You’d agreed on the phone that you would pay me, as is my usual practice, prior to us starting. Can we do that now, please?”

“Yes, sure. But, can I ask a question first?” enquired Richard.

“Certainly,” replied The Design Coach.

“Why do you ask for payment before starting?” queried Richard, “I’m not very comfortable with that. You know, it’s not the usual way business is done.”

“It’s not? I bought an ice cream yesterday and they made me pay for it before I ate it. Perhaps you mean, this’s not the way that you do business. Is that right?” replied The Design Coach.

“Yes, that’s right,” replied Richard, “for the consulting work I do, I usually have to invoice my clients once the job’s done and then they send it to me later.”

“If you’re happy with that arrangement, then it’s okay.”

Richard sighed. “Well, I guess it’s not perfect, but that’s the way business is usually done.”

“That’s the way you usually do business?” replied a surprised The Design Coach, “As part of setting up my business, I sat down and defined the way I wanted to do things. I tell my clients up front, this is the way that I prefer to work. If they accept the way I work, they may employ me. If they don’t, then they probably won’t employ me. And that’s fine with me, at least this way I get to work the way that I want to. It’s all about enjoying my work. It also solves bad debts and spending unnecessary time chasing slow payments. It serves a far greater purpose too, it...”

The Design Coach paused. He looked down at his briefcase and then he looked intently at Richard. In a soft, yet direct tone of voice, he posed the question, “Richard, would you like to create A Home-Office You Love?”

Richard put his hand to his chin and leant back on his chair. He paused for several moments before answering.

“That’s why I got you here, isn’t it?” responded Richard as he recalled how his friend Jenny, who had recommended The Design Coach, was always talking about this.

“Great, that’s what I thought,” replied The Design Coach, “Can we deal with the money now and get it out of the way once and for all?”

“Sure,” replied Richard.

Several minutes later, the money matters were complete. Then The Design Coach spoke.

“Do you have any other questions you’d like to ask Richard?”

Richard responded quickly, “Yes, yes, I do. What’s a Design Coach? Why do you call yourself that? I’ve never heard of a Design Coach before.”

“Have you played any sports Richard?” enquired The Design Coach.

“I used to play football, a bit of tennis, some cricket, basketball, lots of sports.”

“Good, then you know what a coach does?”

Richard paused, somewhat surprised by this response, he muttered, “Well, of course, but...”

The Design Coach continued, “The players do the playing, the coach merely observes and guides the team toward their objectives. You could say the coach helps the team kick their goals. As a Design Coach, I help you do the designing. I help you kick your Home-Office goals.”

Richard was even more surprised by this comment, “So you’ll be coaching me in design?” Richard put his hand to his chin and paused to reflect upon what had been said. Then, with a mixture of awe and exasperation he asked, “Well, Jenny had always said she designed her own renovation. Is that true?”

“Yes, essentially it is,” replied The Design Coach, “I merely coached her along the way.”

“You mean, then... that... I...” stuttered Richard, “I’ll be designing my own Home-Office? Can I do that? I’m not a designer or an architect. I thought you were going to do all that for me?”

“There are lots of architects out there who will design it for you if you like. I simply find it more powerful and more effective for you, if you are a major player in the process. After all, you have to live here, and only you know what you really want.”

“Well, I guess...” replied Richard in a somewhat unconvincing tone.

“Have you ever been on holiday, Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

This seemed like another unusual question to Richard, but he answered anyway.

“Yes, of course. Just last month, I went hiking in the mountains.”

“Did you organise that trip yourself?”

“Yes, I’m proud to say I did,” began Richard as a smile emerged on his face, “We spent five nights hiking along one of the trails, carrying all our food, tents and everything. We had a great time.”

“I bet you did,” agreed The Design Coach, “Sounds like a great trip. Do you realize planning a trip like that is a form of design?”

Richard was somewhat stumped by this and commented “I’d never considered that as design before. Sure it involved some planning, but it’s not like I was designing a house or a Home-Office or anything like that.”

“We all design all sorts of things in our lives everyday. House design is simply a more complex level of design. And I’m your coach, remember. I’m here to guide you through the process. For now, you may want to consider that design is simply a deliberate way of creating change. If you look at it in those terms, you will appreciate that you do it everyday in some form. Are you comfortable with that Richard?”

Richard hesitated, then uttered an unconvincing, “Yes.”

“Are you sure that you’re comfortable with that Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“Well, no not really. I’m not sure about this whole thing. I’m not very creative you know.”

“I didn’t know that,” replied The Design Coach. “Probably if you hadn’t told me that I may not have realised. I just presumed that anyone who can

organise a five-day hiking trip could answer a few questions about what they want out of their Home-Office. Well, let's make a deal..."

The Design Coach paused.

"Richard, you've paid me your money and I want you to get more for your money than you dreamed was possible. To do that, you have to play your part. I'm going to ask you to pretend that you're really creative today."

"Pretend?" replied Richard curiously.

"That's right, just pretend," continued The Design Coach, "I'm going to ask you a lot of questions and if you'll pretend to be creative by answering all of them, then we'll both get the result we're looking for. A lot of people get hung-up about being creative because they don't value their own creativity. They think they aren't creative because they don't design their own clothes or their own homes. Creativity is simply fitting a good answer to a good question.

"If you want it in really simple terms, there are only two questions to ask anyway. The first question to ask is, 'What do you want?' and the second question is 'How are you going to get it?' All the rest is the details in between. Richard, are you willing to answer some questions?"

"Sure, if that's all I have to do," replied Richard.

"That's all," assured The Design Coach, "Remember, I'm your coach, I'm here to celebrate your success. If you don't play well, I don't look good as a coach. We'll talk some more about it as we go along. Is that okay?"

"That's okay" replied Richard.

"The next thing I'd like you to do Richard is to complete a questionnaire. This is our measuring stick. If we are going to make some changes, which the design process is all about, then it's useful to be able to measure and monitor these changes. I suggest you do this right now."

"You mean right now?" asked Richard.

"If you want to get the most out of what we are going to do today, I think it is best if you do it now," came the reply.

The Design Coach reached into his briefcase, pulled out a single sheet of paper and handed it to Richard. Richard scanned it briefly. It looked like this:

The Home-Office Questionnaire

Circle the response that most closely fits your current Home-Office situation.

1 I enjoy spending time in my Home-Office:

- A Most of the time.
- B Almost all the time.
- C Some of the time.

2 My business card includes:

- A Text in a colour with a picture.
- B Black text with no picture.
- C Text in a colour with no picture.

3 My family knows when I am working because:

- A The door is shut.
- B I tell them I am working.
- C It doesn't matter if they do/don't know if I'm working.

4 Whilst working in my Home-Office I wear:

- A Casual clothes.
- B Formal business attire because it puts my mind into a professional mode of thinking.
- C Formal business attire because I don't know when a client may drop in.

5 My hours of work are:

- A During the set hours, as per my business card.
- B All day and every day.
- C When it suits to mix in with the family.
- D Strictly Nine to Five.
- E When I work best.

6 I chose the space in which I am working because:

- A It was the best option in the circumstances.
- B It was not being used.
- C It was my preferred choice.

7 The biggest influence on my Home-Office is:

- A The demands of my business.
- B The demands of my family.
- C My personal demands.

8 In the main work space of my Home-Office I have:

- A Plenty of space available in my wardrobe.
- B A wardrobe that is full of items not relating to my business.
- C Storage space devoted entirely to my business.

9 I often:

- A Squirm when clients suggest they will meet at my place.
- B Hear compliments from my clients about my Home-Office.
- C Feel that my Home-Office is presentable to my clients

10 Which of the following is most accurate:

- A I always visit my clients.
- B Sometimes I visit my clients, sometimes they visit me.
- C My clients always visit me.

11 My Home-Office consists of:

- A One room only.
- B More than one room.
- C My whole house.

12 My primary Home-Office workplace is used:

- A By all of my family at various times.
- B Mostly for my business use and sometimes for other things.
- C Solely for my business use.

13 When I commenced working from home, I:

- A Evaluated the design of my primary Home-Office workplace.
- B Quickly established my primary Home-Office workplace and began working.
- C Completely evaluated the design of my Home.

14 How does my Home-Office reflect my business?

- A It is a true reflection of my business.
- B It is a true reflection of me, my business and my family.
- C It is simply the place where I complete most of my work.

15 The window in my primary Home-Office workplace:

- A Faces onto a neat yard.
- B Overlooks a view worthy of a postcard.
- C Overlooks a fence or my neighbours backyard.
- D There is no window in my primary Home-Office workplace.

16 My primary Home-Office workplace:

- A Requires lighting on most days throughout the year.
- B Receives winter sunlight and not summer sunlight.
- C Provides unwanted glare and hot summer heat.
- D Provides useful daylight for most of the year.

17 Bonus Question, circle ALL that are applicable.**I have:**

- A Written a Mission Statement for my Home-Office.
- B Written values for my Home-Office.
- C Written goals for my Home-Office.

Richard opened the drawer on his desk, grabbed a pencil and began to answer the questions.

The Design Coach stood up, politely asked for directions to the toilet and excused himself. Richard continued with the questionnaire.

When The Design Coach returned, Richard had finished and was looking out the window. He turned as The Design Coach entered the room and sat in his chair. Richard asked politely, "I've finished the questions. How do I score it?"

The Design Coach reached into his briefcase, pulled out a single sheet of paper and as he handed it to Richard he said, "Use this to tally up your score."

Note... The scoring for the questionnaire is at the back of the book - page 137.

4

After several minutes, Richard had tallied up his score.

He looked up with a downcast expression on his face and mournfully suggested, "I didn't do very well. I barely made it out of the 'Home-Office You HATE!' category."

"That's okay. You called me here today because you recognised that things weren't what they could be, didn't you?" replied The Design Coach.

Richard heaved a sigh of relief, "Yes, I guess so."

"Anyway, like all questionnaires they are merely a guide to a particular way of looking at things. In this case, they compare where you are currently at, with where you could ideally be. The important thing at this point in time is to ask yourself, 'Is this a fair assessment of your Home-Office as it currently is?' "

Richard replied in a somewhat downcast manner, "Well, I suppose it is. I haven't been very happy with working from home. Yeah, I guess you could say sometimes I hate working from home... at least, at the moment, I'm not overly excited by it."

"Do you have any questions about the questionnaire?" enquired The Design Coach.

"Yes, I do. Some of those questions seemed a little odd, like they had nothing to do with my Home-Office. Would you mind explaining some of them."

"Certainly. Fire away." replied The Design Coach.

"The first question is obvious enough," said Richard, "Whether or not I enjoy spending my time can be a good indicator of how I have set up my Home-Office."

"That's right," said The Design Coach, "If you're not enjoying your time in your Home-Office then things aren't as good as they could be. It suggests something isn't working, that something doesn't feel right."

"Tell me about it," said Richard, "I've been to my Doctor more times in the past two years since I started this Home-Office thing, than for the previous ten years working for someone else."

“That’s interesting...” replied The Design Coach, “I had a chat with a doctor friend of mine the other day. He’s always coming up with really good questions... Anyway, he asked me, “What’s the opposite of disease?”

“It’s health, isn’t it?” ventured Richard, somewhat uncertain of whether or not he was meant to respond.

“Yes it is, only he said it more elegantly than that. He said, ‘It’s ease.’ Well, I was rather struck by this. He said, ‘It’s all in the words, ‘dis-ease’ and ‘ease’.’ Then he said, something else, something even more interesting, ‘Look at the word ‘pleasure’.’ Well, I almost fell off my chair. ‘ease’, ‘please’ and ‘pleasure’, and ‘ease versus disease’. Can you see how they’re all connected?”

“That’s easy,” offered Richard with a clever pun.

They both laughed.

“Now that really started me thinking,” continued The Design Coach, “... about Home-Offices. If things are easy and enjoyable in your workplace, then they are probably better for your health as well. So, a good question to ask is ‘How can I set-up my Home-Office so that I enjoy spending my time there?’

“In hindsight, it seems like such an obvious goal to pursue. So that’s when I came up with the idea of “A Home-Office You Love.” Sometimes the pleasure will be in the physical environment and sometimes it’ll be in the things that we do. I often speak to people who instead of running their business are being run by it. Or maybe even worse, they’re being run over by it.”

They both laughed once more.

“I guess that’s where the dis-ease starts to come in, doesn’t it?” suggested Richard.

“Well, I’m no doctor, but it’s an interesting idea,” confirmed The Design Coach.

Both men paused for several moments.

“I guess that’s part of where I’m at,” said Richard. “Doing this job at home isn’t as enjoyable as it was going to the office each day.”

“That’s fairly common Richard, a positive and enjoyable environment can often overshadow some dull work.” commented The Design Coach.

“Yeah, I can vouch for that,” said Richard as he leaned back in his chair and as a smile came to his face he continued, “A few years back, a few friends and I went up to the snowfields to do some work. The work was lousy, but being at the snow sure made up for that.”

They both paused before The Design Coach began, “That’s why it’s useful to re-evaluate what you’re doing when you begin working from home. Some people simply stick their desk in their spare room or clear out their garage, and start work. Several months down the track they either become ill or disenchanted with their lives and then begin to wonder why. It’s important to stop and evaluate what’s going on. Working from Home is very different from working in an office. Each environment has a number of unique advantages and disadvantages. I say, a little exploitation is what’s needed!”

“What?” replied Richard in a surprised tone of voice.

“Exploitation! Exploit the advantages of the situation you are in.” The Design Coach waved his fist as he spoke.

“Horses for courses, huh?” prompted Richard.

“Yes, that’s a good analogy and that’s why it’s so important to focus on the things you really want. Sometimes the highlight of the job is the people in the office and not the work at all. Switching to a Home-Office in these circumstances can be a disaster.”

Richard broke in again, “Well that’s my story exactly. I just thought I’d be able to carry on from home. After all, even though I was no longer officially working for the company, they did give me the contract to continue doing the project that I’d been doing. In many ways, I’m doing the same job, but it’s just not the same.”

Richard paused with a sigh, and then continued.

“I do miss the people in the office. It’s so hard to sit here day in, day out, doing this stuff. I really do look forward to getting out of this office and meeting people face-to-face.”

“Perhaps that’s something you’d like to do more of? Or perhaps you simply need to re-organise what you do?” questioned The Design Coach. “Alternatively, it may be...” The Design Coach stopped mid-sentence.

Richard looked on intently as The Design Coach leaned back in his chair, put his hand to his chin and put forward the question, “What did you put down for question number nine?”

Richard looked down at his questionnaire. He then shifted uncomfortably in his chair before responding.

“Client visits. I ticked ‘A’, I usually squirm when clients ask to come here.” Richard’s voice rose in volume as he continued, “Look at this place, would you bring someone back here if you were trying to look professional?”

“Don’t try. Be professional Richard,” countered The Design Coach.

Richard was taken aback by this comment.

The Design Coach continued, “I know that you are a fan of Star Wars movies, aren’t you?”

“Well... Yes... I am... How did you...” stammered Richard, surprised by the question and how The Design Coach could know such a thing.

“I presume the Imperial Starfleet model hanging in your toilet is yours? Anyway, you’ll recall in the second movie, “The Return of the Jedi”, Luke goes to visit Yoda, the Jedi Master. At one point Yoda, in his own unique, squeaky voice said something extra special. He said, ‘Either do or not do, there is no trying.’”

Richard was silent as he heard these words. He had watched that movie several times and had also heard those words on numerous occasions, yet, it was like hearing them for the first time. Or rather, it was like being hit over the head with them for the first time.

Both men sat in silence for a short while and then Richard finally spoke.

“I’ve been trying to be professional and not being professional. That’s part of my problem, isn’t it? In fact, I’ve been pretending that I’ve still been working in someone else’s office. I’ve even been starting work at nine o’clock sharp and working through to five. A one hour lunch break, set times for morning tea and... oh, yeah, I’ve even been wearing my suits whilst I’m sitting here in my own home!

“No wonder I’m not comfortable. I don’t know whether I’m coming or going. I’ve been trying to turn this house into the office that it’s not. When I work here I feel uncomfortable because I’m in my home and I’m accustomed to

relaxing here. Then when I'm relaxing, I feel like I'm at work, off-balanced and unable to unwind."

Richard had become both exasperated and relieved to have said such things in such an outburst. To put in words what had been bugging him for some months was literally a weight off his shoulders.

He looked at The Design Coach, almost pleading for him to respond with some words of wisdom and advice.

"You're not alone Richard," said The Design Coach. "I've met a number of people in a similar situation. It's a fairly typical reaction when we make a big change in our lives without re-evaluating where we are. We often continue with the same old tried and tested ways of doing things, when they may or may not be suitable anymore.

"My usual comment is a simple, yet powerful one. In fact, of all the things I can say to you, this is probably the most important... In fact, it is the crux of everything I have to say about Home-Offices. If you remember only one thing, remember this..."

The Design Coach then stopped mid-sentence, reached into his briefcase and drew out a single sheet of paper. He handed it to Richard who eagerly grabbed it. There was a simple border around a single sentence, printed in black ink. Richard read it to himself:

A Home-Office is one place where the Home comes first.

Richard read it several times mouthing the words without uttering a sound. After a minute of reading the page, Richard stood up from his chair, chuckled to himself and then announced:

"One Place! The Home comes first!"

He laughed to himself, and then sat down and continued talking in an excited and cheerful tone of voice.

"No prizes for guessing what I put down for Question Eleven. I thought my Home-Office was this room here. It's the whole house, isn't it? I've been

locking myself in here... That's funny, you know, I'd been thinking lately that this room was beginning to feel like a prison."

Richard chuckled once more and then continued.

"What's more, I'd been marching in here everyday to punch the clock without fail at nine AM. sharp every morning. You'd have thought I was in the Army!"

Richard shook his head. "You know, I'm supposed to be my own boss!"

As Richard paused once more, The Design Coach continued sitting patiently and listening keenly to Richard's words.

"Yeah, Question Five. When do I work best? It's not Nine to Five, it's usually early in the morning when no one else is up or around. I'd never considered starting at that time. And as for finishing before dinner..."

"You know... it's any wonder I get annoyed every time my kids come home from school. When I first started working from here, my kids were so excited when they came home from school. 'Dad! Dad! Look at this!' they would say. 'Can you play with us?' they would ask. You know... I kept pushing them away saying it was work time and then when I finished work, we'd have dinner and then they'd go off to bed.

"You know... my family are so important to me. This Home-Office is the perfect place to be with them and I'd built a wall around me saying that I couldn't do all these things that I really wanted to. That's what was so hard. If I knew I could play with my kids every day after school I would finish my work earlier or later. That's something special... I rarely saw my Dad. He'd go off to work each day before I got out of bed. He'd be back late, in Winter it was always dark... and he'd be so tired he'd fall asleep before we did.

"I don't know what you did Mr. Design Coach, but you sure have made me happy right now!"

The Design Coach simply returned a smile.

Richard stood up, "Would you like a drink?"

Before The Design Coach could answer, Richard joked, "I've got wine, port, whisky, whatever takes your fancy? It's my Home-Office, I can have these things, can't I? Or perhaps you'd rather a tea or coffee? I can brew up a fresh

cup of real coffee. Or perhaps, if you'd like a cold drink? We've got apple or orange juice in the fridge as well."

"I'll have an orange juice please," replied The Design Coach.

Richard disappeared into the kitchen. Whilst he was gone the aroma of freshly ground coffee beans began to waft into the room where The Design Coach was sitting. He breathed in deeply and smiled.

5

Several minutes later, Richard returned with an orange juice and a cup of freshly brewed coffee.

As he passed the orange juice to The Design Coach, Richard commented, “Now I guess that truly is one of the great advantages of a Home-Office... all the comforts of home.”

“Bingo!” exclaimed The Design Coach to Richard’s surprise, “I’ve been waiting for you to say that. Someone almost always reaches that conclusion sooner or later. I add a small tag to that line that accentuates the idea even further, just a moment...”

The Design Coach paused and reached over to his briefcase and pulled out a sheet of paper that he handed to Richard.

On the sheet of paper were the words:

*A Home-Office has all the comforts of home,
at work.*

“I like that twist on the end,” commented Richard, “it has a double meaning doesn’t it?”

The Design Coach merely nodded in agreement and then added, “I’ve met people who have naps during the day, invite clients over for a lunchtime swim in their backyard pool and even baby-sit their grandchildren whilst they work. All of which are unlikely working in a formal office situation.”

“And how many offices have you been to where they serve you up a good cup of freshly brewed coffee?” said Richard.

They both chuckled.

“Well, now you’ve discovered my secret,” replied The Design Coach, “That’s what attracted me to the Home-Office market in the first place. The very first time I visited someone working from home, I was served warm scones with cream and jam. My taste buds said ‘Yep, this is the place to be’, and I keep coming back for more.

They both laughed.

After a long pause as they both drank quietly, The Design Coach broke the silence, “Richard, we may have been laughing, but you really did hit on something very important a moment ago. Many people running home-based businesses don’t realize the powerful advantage they have. Do you remember the words we just said?”

Richard stopped drinking his coffee and looked down at the sheet of paper he’d just been given.

The Design Coach continued, “That’s right, ‘all the comforts of home, at work’ ‘All the comforts of home’ and ‘all working for you’. In a nutshell, that is the Home-Office advantage. Read out those words on that piece of paper I handed you before.”

Richard picked up the piece of paper and looked intently at the words printed there.

“Read it out,” urged The Design Coach.

In a slow and steady voice, Richard read the words, “A Home-Office has all the comforts of home, at work.”

“And the earlier sheet that I gave you too,” encouraged The Design Coach.

“A Home-Office is one place where the Home comes first.”

He stopped and repeated the sentence, “A Home-Office is one place where the Home comes first.”

The Design Coach put his now empty glass on the desk in front of him and stood up and spoke in a strong voice.

“They are the first two commandments of the Home-Office. That is the Home-Office advantage. Making the most of these two ideas is the key to improving your quality of life, improving your business appeal and improving your Home-Office. Do you get that Richard?”

Richard was somewhat taken aback by the conviction in The Design Coach’s words. He muttered softly in reply, “Yes, I get that.”

“Can you see the connection between these two?” asked The Design Coach.

“Yes, I can,” replied Richard, “ they do go together don’t they?”

The Design Coach nodded to show that he agreed.

6

The Design Coach sat down, paused for several moments to recollect his thoughts and then calmly asked, “Now where were we?”

Glancing down at the desk in front of him, Richard spotted the questionnaire once more and noticed question two.

“Now tell me, what’s the point about the question on business cards? How does that show anything useful about my Home-Office?” enquired Richard.

“Do you accept that a business card is a representation of who you are and, in particular, who your business is?” responded The Design Coach.

“Yes, I understand that.” replied Richard.

“Well, like a Corporate head office, there’s a link between the way you present yourself through your business cards and how you present yourself through your Home-Office.”

“But what’s the colour of the writing got to do with it? Or for that matter, how can a picture make my Home-Office better?”

As he spoke, Richard reached into his back pocket and withdrew his black leather wallet. He opened it and pulled out one of his own business cards. It was on white card with black writing. As Richard held out the card for The Design Coach to see, he stated, “See, mine is black on white with no pictures.”

“The business card is merely an example of a way of thinking about your business and your Home-Office,” replied The Design Coach. “A business card with black text and no picture is usually the cheapest and easiest way to create a business card. It can be very useful to get started in this way. It is certainly cheap and efficient to do it this way, but if you think about it, this type of card is probably not your ideal card if you had a choice about it, is it?”

“No,” admitted Richard, “I’d rather have a color picture of me on it so people would recognise and remember who I am.”

“Excellent idea... and can you grasp the difference here?”

As The Design Coach paused, Richard did not respond.

The Design Coach then continued, “The card you currently have is okay. It does the job, but it’s generic. It doesn’t highlight your unique qualities or your unique business advantage to your clients. In a Home-Office situation we can fit ourselves into our spare room to get ourselves started, but that’s rarely going to be a perfect fit to your individual needs. It’s more likely we fit ourselves to the circumstances of the spare room, rather than creating the Home-Office that fits us.

“It’s like buying that pair of shoes out of the bargain bin. Sometimes it requires a little more time, effort and money, to get the business card or the pair of shoes that we really want... and usually it’s worth it in the long run. Not only does it give greater satisfaction, I’ve found it’s usually more effective and easier to work that way.”

“I was also intrigued by the question about how your family knows when you’re working,” commented Richard. “I usually just shut the door and that works okay.”

Richard paused, and The Design Coach waited, as if expecting Richard to continue. After several moments, he did.

“What do you mean by ‘it doesn’t matter if my family knows or doesn’t know if I’m working’? How can it not matter?”

“That’s one of my favourite questions on that sheet,” replied The Design Coach. “It highlights for me, one of the most interesting things about the Home-Office and where we are at in our thinking about them. Most houses these days are comprised of a series of rooms with each room allocated to a particular function. For instance, the bedroom, as the name suggests, revolves around the bed. It’s usually stuck right in the middle of the room and we work around that. Which I find really interesting. You know... we typically only use our bedrooms to sleep in and perhaps to store our clothes in. For me, that seems like a waste of space for at least two-thirds of the day.”

Richard was listening intently, but was not sure where all this was leading.

The Design Coach invited Richard into the discussion with a question, “Richard, do you know much about the history of houses?”

“No”, Richard said, “Not much at all.”

“Do you know that the Home-Office is not such a new thing if we look back at history?”

“No, I didn’t” replied Richard in a somewhat surprised manner.

“Well, certainly the idea of office work is a relatively new thing, peculiar to the last hundred years in fact. Yet, if we consider the Home-Office in the broader realm of uniting the home and the workplace, it goes back to the situation that was certainly dominant in the Middle Ages. Around this time, most people either worked in the fields or they were artisans making a wide range of handmade products. Typically these artisans worked at home.

“Often, there were few divisions between where the workplace started and the home began. For instance, the dining room table may’ve been used as a workbench. It may also have been used as a bed and as you’d expect, it was used as a dining table also. Typically, the average house had only one or two rooms. Usually a dwelling consisted of a single large space with a number of alcoves around the perimeter.”

Richard was intrigued and listened with an enthusiastic ear as The Design Coach continued.

“During the Renaissance, the Dutch merchants in particular, began to trade in the rooms at the front of their houses. That’s when the idea developed to devote a specific part of the house to business, leaving the other part specifically for family activities. The idea of specialized rooms used for a single purpose emerged in France a century later. It could be said that the French invented the bedroom.”

“Really?” muttered Richard in a surprised voice.

“The point to this story is that currently we’re at the beginning of something new. The Home-Offices that I am aware of are typically derived from the idea of them being a single enclosed space, with a door that opens and closes and separates or joins it to the events of the rest of the house.

“It is my view that the idea of having a door shut as an indicator of whether or not you’re working is a simple one based upon an old model. I do acknowledge that closing the door is an easy and effective way to screen out unwanted noise and to separate the family from you, whilst you’re working.

“The idea that it doesn’t matter that your door is shut, or even that your family is aware that you’re working, presumes a different set of circumstances.

It presumes that your family can go about their usual business whether you are working or not.

“You could say this questionnaire is based around the ideal. You know, ‘what’s the most desirable situation here?’” suggested The Design Coach. “I’m proposing, that in the ideal situation, the home and the office will overlap and it shouldn’t matter at all whether the family are aware that you’re working. This will become more and more relevant as we move further and further away from the notion of working ‘nine-to-five’.”

“So you see more and more people will be working from home in the future then?” asked Richard.

“Absolutely,” confirmed The Design Coach, “You’re currently leading the charge of ‘the getting a life at home’ brigade.”

“What about this final question, ‘Have I written a Mission Statement for my Home-Office, written values for my Home-Office or written goals for my Home-Office’. I’ve never heard of doing it for my Home-Office before,” stated a bewildered Richard. “That’s taking it all a bit far, isn’t it?”

“It depends what you want. I simply ask the question, ‘Do you want A Home-Office You Love?’ If that’s what you’re interested in achieving I’m suggesting this is the best way to achieve that,” responded The Design Coach. “Richard, have you written a Mission Statement, written values and written goals for your personal life? What about for your business?”

“Well, no... not really,” stumbled Richard, “I do have a business plan that has some objectives in it and I have done some goals before, but I didn’t write them all down.”

The Design Coach did not respond for several moments. Then he leant back in his chair and in a soft, smooth tone of voice posed the question, “Richard, have I told you about the client I had who studies animal behaviour?”

Richard was puzzled by this comment and his reply stumbled out of his mouth, “What? No... I don’t think so.”

“When I was talking to her about Mission Statements and the like, she started talking about her studies of geese. I thought this was a little odd at the time but I let her tell her story. Later, I discovered it was a really good way of explaining things.”

Richard was still puzzled, but he sat back in his chair and listened intently to what The Design Coach had to say.

“She’d been studying animals for many years and a few years back she was part of a team asked to research the migration patterns of geese. In particular, they were really interested in how they fly in formation. You’ve probably seen them, or other birds, flying in a big ‘V’ across the sky. Anyway, her research was based around the idea that geese, like most birds, fly south because it’s part of their instinct to do that. They simply know that’s the right thing to do at that particular time of the year. This is all about their ultimate purpose in life. Like all animals, the instinct of the birds is to breed, to create new life, to perpetuate their own species.

“The really interesting thing she uncovered was about the way they fly. You probably realize that some of these birds fly several thousand kilometres to find the right place for their breeding to occur. Her studies showed that if these birds did not fly together, in the formation, they would not be able to reach their chosen destination.

“In fact, this was so critical, if they did not fly in formation, they wouldn’t be able to achieve their purpose of mating and the future of the entire species would be at risk.

“It also happens this lady was a keen cyclist. And she made the connection that that’s how the Tour de France riders are able to ride so fast. She was aware that a breakaway group worked much harder than the main pack to reach their goal and win the race. It’s simply so much easier to co-ordinate together and ride in formation.

“And like the geese, if there were a few stragglers that were unable, or unwilling, to be part of the formation, then they certainly didn’t get their goal of winning the race and often they didn’t even finish. I just find that so interesting relative to the work that we’re doing today.

“So, it’s okay Richard, that you haven’t written your Mission Statement or your values, or your goals around your Home-Office. We’ll do that a little later.”

7

“Richard, I’d now like to talk about the three types of Home-Offices,” proposed The Design Coach.

Richard was sitting comfortably in his chair and ventured forth, “Is that the three on the bottom of the questionnaire?”

“That’s right, ‘The Home-Office You Hate’, ‘The Home-Office You Like’ and ‘The Home-Office You Love’. On your score, you were very disappointed that you were almost in the ‘Home-Office You Hate’ category.” The Design Coach stopped for a moment and put his hand to his chin before continuing.

“Richard, I have a confession to make.”

Richard’s interest was aroused by this comment and he sat upright in his chair to ensure he heard what was to follow.

“I take my food very seriously.”

The Design Coach paused again as Richard relaxed once more in his chair, almost feeling let down by this anti-climax.

“It’s not that I eat a lot,” continued The Design Coach, “I simply cherish the food that I eat. You could say I follow the Italian and French tradition of celebrating fine foods. I figure that if I’m going to put this stuff in my mouth and in my body, then it’d better be good food. It’s got to be not only healthy and nutritious, it needs to be tasty and delicious.

“You could say that I firmly follow the maxim, that ‘You are what you eat’. Now, I have a question for you Richard, ‘What are your favourite foods?’ I want you to write down the foods that you absolutely adore, you know, your favourite foods.”

Richard was somewhat unsure about this, ‘What does this have to do with my Home-Office?’ he asked himself.

The Design Coach retrieved a sheet of paper from his briefcase and handed it to Richard. It looked like this:

Upon reading the headings on the table, the relevance of the exercise clicked into place for Richard.

“Let’s aim for at least half a dozen under each heading,” suggested The Design Coach.

By the time The Design Coach had passed this comment, Richard already had eight items in the ‘The Food I Love’ category.

“Wow! It sounds like you love your food too!” commented The Design Coach.

“You bet,” said Richard, “Shall I fill out the other categories too?”

“Yes, go for it,” replied The Design Coach.

Richard was eager to fill out the form, but looked at the second column, ‘The Food I Like’, for some time but didn’t write a single word.

“If you are stumped on the ‘Like’ column, go to the ‘Hate’ column. It’s usually easier to go to the other extreme first,” prompted The Design Coach.

Richard found it far easier to do this. He quickly filled out six items of food that he ‘hated’. Then he returned to the middle column and paused once more, looking intently at the sheet.

After several moments, Richard looked up at The Design Coach and then commented, “There are lots of things I like to eat, but, I’m not sure about this?”

“Can I suggest something?” enquired The Design Coach, “The point of this exercise is to note the distinction between the extremes of ‘Love’ and ‘Hate’. You’ve done that easily. The next bit is to distinguish between ‘Love’ and ‘Like’. The gap between these two is much smaller.

“You may want to consider all the meals you’ve eaten in the last week, including breakfast, If they’re not already on your ‘Love’ or ‘Hate’ list, then consider whether they should be on your list of things that you ‘Like’.”

“Okay, now I’ve got it,” replied Richard. He then wrote down several responses, paused and wrote down some more.

Richard put down his pen and announced, “Done!”

“Good,” replied The Design Coach, “What did you learn out of that exercise?”

“Well, you really got me on the ‘Like’ and ‘Love’ bit,” replied Richard.

“I guess I’d never really thought about my food in this way. You know, I usually just sit down and start eating whatever is about, or whatever is going, without spending the time to have the food that I really love to eat.”

“That’s a fairly typical response Richard. Did you notice how easy it is at the extremes?” questioned The Design Coach, “Can you begin to see how this reflects upon how we set-up our Home-Offices?”

“Absolutely!” replied Richard. “If I drooled over my Home-Office the way I drool over the food that I ‘Love’, that would be spectacular.”

The Design Coach smiled and nodded his head, “Absolutely!”

They both laughed.

“Now, the second part of this exercise is to expand our awareness of these three words, ‘Love’, ‘Like’ and ‘Hate’. Now, I want you to write down some other words that describe what ‘Love’, ‘Like’ and ‘Hate’ mean to you. For example, what’s another word that you associate with ‘Love’?”

Richard sat ready, with pen in hand, but no words were being written. After several moments he sighed, “This is much tougher than the last exercise.”

“Yes, it is and here’s a suggestion for you,” The Design Coach paused, then spoke very slowly, “The only right answers are the ones that you put down.” He paused once more and then commented, “These are your words that define ‘Love’, ‘Like’ and ‘Hate’ for you. Simply write down whatever comes to mind.”

This seemed to work for Richard and he began to scribble down a number of new words. After several minutes, Richard said that he had finished.

“Do you have five or six answers for each category Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“Yep, sure do,” replied Richard. “What’s next?”

“I want you to read your list of ‘Love’ words to yourself several times and begin to notice the feelings that you associate with these words. Notice the sensations in your body, the temperature you feel, if there is any pressure that you feel, any movement, etc. Just go with whatever comes up. Sit there for a little while totally immersed in these feelings. You may also want to notice any pictures or images you see, and any sounds that you hear as you think of these words.

“The important point is not the content of the picture. Focus on the way the sounds, the pictures and the feelings are represented. For instance, are the colours bright or dull? Are the sounds loud or soft?”

“Then when you are fully tuned into all of that, write down a couple of words to describe what you felt. Then move onto the words in the ‘Like’ and ‘Hate’ categories. Have you got that?”

“Can I shut my eyes?” asked Richard.

“If it helps, go right ahead,” replied The Design Coach.

Richard repositioned himself in his chair, closed his eyes and sat quietly for several minutes. The Design Coach also sat quietly and watched Richard perform the exercise.

When Richard had finished he leaned back in his chair and smiled broadly.

The Design Coach also smiled and commented, “Can I guess that you found that interesting?”

“Sure did,” replied Richard, “The differences were amazing.”

“Did you write down some words to describe your experience?” enquired The Design Coach.

“Yes, I did”, replied Richard, “And there were some major differences and some similarities between them, which I found interesting. Some were in colour, some had sound, some were warm, that was interesting.”

“Well done, that’s exactly what we’re after here,” commented The Design Coach, “You could say that we’ve just created another measuring stick. The exercise you’ve just completed is one way where you can internally check your responses to the things that we are creating. As we go further through this process we’ll begin to focus more and more on the things that you really want. The things that you ‘Looove’”

Both men laughed.

“Sounds good to me,” replied Richard.

8

“Now, I want to briefly focus on ‘The Home-Office You Hate’. Is that something that you want Richard?” enquired The Design Coach.

“Definitely not,” replied Richard. As he pointed to the column of ‘The food I hate’ from the previous exercise and suggested, “Yuk, that would be horrible! That would be like being sentenced to a life of eating these things. I think I’d rather starve.”

“That’s an interesting comment Richard. Before we go on, I’d like to point out that these categories are somewhat arbitrary. The things that you like today may be the things you hate, or the things that you love tomorrow.”

“There’s a classic story about some farmers in Texas hating all the black oozy stuff that came out of the ground on they land they owned. Then when they found some practical uses for oil, I’ll bet these same farmers loved becoming rich selling it.”

“In the same way, if those things you hate to eat were the only foods left on the planet and they were the difference between eating and starving, living and dying, then you may reconsider what you’ve just said and begin to, at the very least, like them.”

Richard nodded in agreement as he listened to the words of The Design Coach.

“Richard, by now, you should be starting to expand your awareness around the things you ‘Love’, ‘Like’ and ‘Hate’. Now, it’s time for another important distinction around ‘The Home-Office You Hate’. There is some value in describing what you don’t want, but there is a lot more value in describing the things you do want. For instance, there’s a suggestion that the human mind is incapable of processing a negative.”

“What does that mean?” asked Richard as he furrowed his brow.

“Let me give you an example,” replied The Design Coach, “If I asked you not to think about a red kangaroo, what’s the first thing that comes into your head?”

“A red kangaroo,” replied Richard reluctantly, as if tricked by the words.

“You don’t smoke do you Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“No, not any more.” responded Richard.

“Well, this will probably ring a bell to when you were giving up. A lot of smokers when they want to stop smoking, walk around saying to themselves, ‘I don’t want a cigarette’ or ‘Don’t think about smoking’. So what are they doing? They’re actually more likely to smoke, or at the least, suffer stronger withdrawal pains than if they thought of something else. The suggestion is that you need to substitute the smoking with something else. So whenever you previously had the urge to smoke, you eat some sweets or clap your hands or anything else. Overtime, you will then decrease your dependency on smoking, since the addiction to the nicotine is reduced.

“In a similar way, instead of focusing on ‘The Home-Office You Hate’, it is more desirable, and a lot more pleasurable to focus on what you do want. Ultimately, what you focus on, is what you’ll finish up getting. There’s a particular term in psychology called the Reticular Activating System, that basically says, our brains are alerted to particular messages and events. For instance, when you buy a new car or a new piece of clothing, you suddenly become aware of all the other people wearing or driving the same or similar thing.

“The whole basis of goal-setting revolves around this idea, if we focus on something often enough we will develop enough distinctions around it to be able to achieve it. That’s also the basis of practice. Richard, how did you go about setting up your current Home-Office?”

“It was all rather quick,” he replied. “I think I left work on the Friday and set it up over the weekend and was working again on the Monday.”

“That’s an impressive switch. How much planning did you do?” questioned The Design Coach.

“Well, not a great deal. I had about a month’s notice to get organised. I had this room spare, I made the desk and the bookcase as I said earlier, bought the filing cabinet during a lunch break, bought the computer off a friend. I guess I set it all up with a minimum of time, effort and money.”

“And a maximum of efficiency too! I think you’ve done well,” commended The Design Coach. “It’s not easy making the transition to a home-based business. You’ve really highlighted one of the great aspects of the Home-Office, it can really be easy to set yourself up and get started. There are no extra leases to sign. You don’t need a lot of equipment. Almost everyone has a phone, a desk and most people have computers these days. For many

people this is the basic requirement for getting started. So why did you call me? What do you expect to get out of my visit?"

"Well, as much as I'm pleased with the way I've set this place up, I know there's more that can be done. I guess having seen Jenny's new place was the starting point. Then I guess, through doing your questionnaire, and already talking about 'The Home-Office I Love', I can see that I can go another step. Having something I like is not quite enough." commented Richard.

"Those words are so familiar Richard," replied The Design Coach, "Most of my clients have begun to realise they aren't in paradise yet. The Home-Offices they have set up are neat, useful and efficient, but they aren't any of those words you have defined under the love column in that exercise you've just completed.

"I'd suggest you've taken the easy and the obvious path to setting up your Home-Office. Perhaps, now you're looking for something beyond that. That can be part of the disenchantment of working from home once the initial novelty wears off.

"I compare it to climbing a mountain. You start climbing and reach a plateau, where you have a rest and enjoy the view for a while. Then you start climbing again to reach another plateau. You have another rest, enjoy the new view and then it's time to move on again."

"I guess that's why world records are constantly being broken," offered Richard, "There's always another level to move to, another limit to be pushed through."

"Good point Richard," replied The Design Coach, "There's an interesting story about some of the astronauts who have been into outer space. A number of them have spent their whole life working toward those few days in space. When they're up there they have this almost mystical experience. They not only see the planet they've lived on their entire life as a mere dot amongst many other planets in the solar system and they realise they've just completed what they had perceived as their ultimate mission in life. When they come down, they struggle for direction. The key they've said is to set another goal, to aim for a new level of achievement."

"I guess that's a neat parallel to where I'm at," replied Richard, "I've worked hard to have these things. I'm not quite in my dream job. I'm comfortable working from home but there's still something missing. At this point, I figure if I can create a new environment for myself, a place I love to spend

my time, it might make the difference. I guess I've been putting up with a lot of things. This place is fine to get started, but there are also a few compromises here too. It's not my dream palace."

"You may recall," suggested The Design Coach, "in the questionnaire you completed earlier, you were asked about the storage space in your Home-Office. In particular, your wardrobe, 'Is it full or does it have some space available?' That can be a good indicator of whether you're putting up with things. I like to ask the question: 'Do you fit the circumstances or do the circumstances fit you?' "

"I don't understand," replied Richard.

"Okay, let me say it another way," continued The Design Coach, "If we consider the situation whereby your wardrobe is full ...and it doesn't really matter what's in it. We'll presume that at some point in time you put the things in the wardrobe because you wanted to keep them. They must have been useful, or valuable, or both, at some time, otherwise they wouldn't be there. Right?"

"Right," echoed Richard.

"So now the wardrobe is full and we want to put something else in it. What do we do?" The Design Coach paused and looked at Richard.

Richard reflected on this and then suggested with a touch of uncertainty, "We make room for it."

"And how do we do that?" replied The Design Coach.

"Toss something out?" offered Richard.

"Good," responded The Design Coach, "We reassess what's in the wardrobe and compare the value of that, with what it is we want to put in it. Then, as you've suggested, we often toss one or the other out. Now, consider the alternate situation, the wardrobe is half-empty, or half-full, whichever takes your fancy. Now, our decision to put the new item in the wardrobe is not based around how much space we have. It is based solely upon the merits of keeping or not keeping the new item."

“Usually I’d probably throw it in there anyway,” replied Richard somewhat sheepishly.

“Usually, that’s what most people do,” concurred The Design Coach, “Now, let’s consider another situation. If all your wardrobes were full and we gave you another wardrobe to put things in and if we came back in a couple of months time, would that wardrobe still have space available in it?”

“No, I doubt it,” replied Richard.

“I doubt it too,” agreed The Design Coach, “particularly if you keep putting things in there without deciding if you really want to keep them. At some point in time you have to choose. You have to choose what you’re going to keep and what you’re going to toss. The key point is when are you going to choose?”

“When?” repeated Richard.

“This is effectively the difference between reactive and proactive behaviours. I have a little rule I apply in this situation. I call it the ‘Law of Circumstance’.”

The Design Coach reached into his briefcase and withdrew another sheet of paper. He handed it to Richard, who read it to himself.

The Law of Circumstance

You can either choose the circumstances,
or the circumstances can choose you.

If the circumstances choose you,
it will be at the least opportune moment.

If you choose the circumstances,
you will have the most opportune moments.

“Richard,” asked The Design Coach, “Could you imagine in the middle of a client meeting looking for that one thing too many that you stuffed into the wardrobe and when you finally pull it out, everything else comes out too. I think your client’s going to be impressed, but not in the way that you’d hope.

“When I speak to clients about renovating their Home-Offices, and they say they need extra storage space, I usually ask them if their wardrobes are full. Sometimes they still choose to have more space, other times they do a massive clean-out and find out they don’t need the space at all. How about your computer Richard? Is your hard-disk full?”

“It’s getting there,” replied Richard, “I guess I need to spend some time clearing out the dead wood.”

“That’s certainly one way of tackling it,” concurred The Design Coach.

“One way of maintaining control of your storage needs, for your wardrobes and your computers, is to do periodic cleanouts. What I mean by that is to actually set aside time to re-evaluate what you are storing. This goes for clothes, for books, for papers, for anything. Put this set time down in your diary and mark it as a priority. To guarantee that you do it, design a reward for when you’ve completed your task.

“Clearing away the deposits of the past, clears the way to lay down a new future. A good question to ask yourself as you store things is: “If I didn’t have this, what would I lose?””

9

“Richard, this leads us onto our third type of Home-Office. Can you guess what that might be?” enquired The Design Coach.

A big smile grew on Richard’s face as he shyly joked, “Does it have anything to do with love?”

“Absolutely, got it in one,” The Design Coach countered with a bright, clear voice, “The Home-Office you love. Now, I’ve got a really good question for you Richard. Can you recall the first time you fell in love?”

The Design Coach paused for several moments before he recalled, “Isn’t it such a wonderful feeling? All those gooey thoughts and sweet-nothings. How the world seemingly turned into paradise overnight? Floating on air... everything so easy and beautiful... it’s such a comfortable feeling.”

Almost instantly Richard’s face had lit up like a Christmas tree. He nodded his head to confirm what his face had already said.

“Now, notice the feelings you get when you think about that. Compare what you see, hear and feel with the earlier exercise you did when you wrote down those words that defined love for you. Are they similar?” asked The Design Coach.

“Yes, very similar,” replied Richard, whose face had appeared to soften as he grinned like a cheshire cat.

“Okay, that’s what we’re aiming to capture for your Home-Office. Can you imagine a Home-Office that would make you feel that way?”

Richard made no comment. The Design Coach was not even certain that he’d heard the words that he’d spoken. Richard was still ‘in love’ as he peered across the room.

The Design Coach stood up and leaned over to Richard’s answering machine and pressed the button that activated Richard’s outgoing message.

As Richard’s recorded voice began to speak, Richard jumped out of his thoughts of ‘love’ and returned his awareness to the room in which he sat.

As the message came to a close, Richard suggested, “It’s not real flash is it? But, it does the job.”

“Is that like your Home-Office Richard?” queried The Design Coach.

“Um, I guess so,” commented Richard, “The Home-Office that does the job, the one that almost falls into the ‘Hate’ category...” His voice faded away, his sentence incomplete.

“Richard,” began The Design Coach, “It’s obvious you have an answering machine, but do you like ringing people who have them?”

“No, not really,” he replied.

“What would it take for you to like them? Or better yet, what would it take for you to really love them?” asked The Design Coach,

“I don’t know,” replied Richard.

“I know a lot of people who absolutely hate answering machines,” continued The Design Coach. “It’s not so much technophobia, they aren’t scared of machines, they just dislike answering machines.”

“Perhaps it’s because people don’t return their calls,” suggested Richard.

“Could be, but is that the fault of the answering machine?” asked The Design Coach. “I tend to view it that the answering machine is just a box of electronics that’s connected to your phone. It’s like Switzerland in a war; it’s neutral. It just does what it does, because it’s an answering machine.

“You ring up, it says your message and it records the words that it’s given. So, if the answering machine itself is neither good nor bad, just some box on the desk, how do we get people to fall in love with them?”

The Design Coach paused as he waited for a response from Richard. He merely shrugged his shoulders.

“Do you want to know what the trick is Richard?” encouraged The Design Coach.

“Sure, tell me,” he replied with enthusiasm and curiosity.

“The trick is to make your message so good, so fantastic, so incredibly special, people will call you, just to hear the message.”

The Design Coach paused as Richard furrowed his brow as he considered these comments.

“That’s so obvious I’d never have thought of that,” said Richard.

“Recently,” continued The Design Coach, “I visited a guy who works from home with his own recording business. He has a soundproof room and he collects sounds and feeds them into his computer. Anyway, he’s always coming up with these great answering machine messages. I often ring him up, just to hear his latest message. In fact, he now runs a little competition for himself, to see how many people ring up just to hear his message. He puts a new message on his machine each week and apart from his normal business calls, he counts how many people call just to listen.

“Isn’t that a pretty neat way of dealing with people on the phone? ‘I’m sorry you missed me, but here’s an experience for you to savour!’ Do you know, over the past few months since he’s been putting these special messages on his answering machine, his business has gone up almost 20%?”

“That’s interesting how such a small thing can make such a big difference,” commented Richard.

“What could happen if you did something like that with your Home-Office?”

Richard replied with a soft, “mmm”, contemplating this idea.

The Design Coach continued, “One of the ways to define A Home-Office You Love is to create a space where you love spending your time. Right?”

“Right” concurred Richard.

“Well, have you considered, that another way might be to create a space where your clients love spending their time? Now, wouldn’t that be great. Could you imagine clients coming around to see you, just to be in your Home-Office? That would be good for business, wouldn’t it?”

“That would be very good for business,” repeated Richard excitedly.

“Richard, do you remember the medical entrepreneur a few years back who set up a series of clinics with those amazing waiting rooms?” enquired The Design Coach.

“Yes, I do,” answered Richard, “I even went there one day when I had a cold, just to have a look. They had grand pianos, televisions, free drinks, piped music, plants galore, very helpful receptionists and soft comfy chairs to sit in. I was almost disappointed when they said it was time for me to see the doctor. Those places were something special,” observed Richard.

“Lots of people went there,” commented The Design Coach, “but do you think that was because they had the world’s best doctors there or because they provided something extra special in their service?”

“It was definitely the waiting rooms. That’s why I went there, just to have a look.” responded Richard.

“The really amazing thing is, doctors weren’t allowed to advertise back then. Yet, those clinics were so spectacular they were on the news, in the papers, and everybody was talking about them. Word of mouth advertising is very effective, you know. Those waiting rooms could’ve been the competitive advantage that sets their business apart from the rest.”

“And I put it to you Richard, could it be the competitive advantage that sets you apart from the rest? What would it take to set up a Home-Office that people love to visit? How would it be if your clients started talking to each other, about your Home-Office?”

“Wow! That’s a new way of looking at a Home-Office,” exclaimed Richard. “I’d never thought of my Home-Office as an attraction. It was always just somewhere to work. And, I guess that’s what you meant in the questionnaire about having clients visiting me... If all my clients wanted to come to visit me in my Home-Office that would save me heaps of time... and heaps of money not driving the car, and no more traffic. I like that idea!”

Richard leaned back in his chair rubbing his chin with a big smile on his face. Then, suddenly, he frowned. “But how would I do that?” he asked. “That could cost a fortune.”

“Yes, you could pay a fortune to create that,” concurred The Design Coach, “but there are other, more simple, ways of doing it too.”

“Can you give me an example?” asked Richard.

“Sure. Do you like Winter Richard?” queried The Design Coach.

“Sometimes, except it does get a bit cold in here at times,” replied Richard as he waved his arm to refer to the room in which they were sitting in.

“Richard, could you imagine a day in the middle of Winter when the wind is blowing a howling gale, the rain is sleeted down and it’s freezing cold?”

Richard literally shivered in his seat thinking of this scenario.

The Design Coach continued, “Well, could you also feel yourself sitting in your Home-Office by your open fire, listening to it crackle as your client eats the warm scone that you’ve made for her whilst she sips on her cup of freshly brewed coffee? Complement your special Home-Office with special service...Would that be a good place to do business from? Would your clients like that?”

Richard nodded his head in agreement, “I know I’d enjoy that, as long as I don’t have to go out in that sort of weather.”

“You know,” suggested The Design Coach, “You don’t have to go out in that weather if you don’t want to. In fact, you needn’t face that sort of weather ever again if you don’t want to...”

The Design Coach paused, Richard furrowed his brow once more, as if questioning how that was possible.

“In the U.S. at the moment there are a lot of people shifting to the Rocky Mountains for the climate and quality of life. You know... it’s a long way away from the hustle and bustle, and the noise, and the pollution of the big cities. And do you know what they’re doing? They’re setting up small businesses. Home-based businesses. The Home-Office and Information-based work go hand in hand. That’s what’s driving this revolution and people are pursuing locations based on the quality of life and not proximity to jobs or the marketplace. Are you on the Internet yet Richard?” enquired The Design Coach.

“No, I’m not,” replied Richard.

“We’ll talk about this some more later, but give it some thought,” suggested The Design Coach, “If you can structure your work so that it can be done on a computer and a phone, you can virtually work anywhere in the world that you’d like to.”

Richard replied with a long, slow “Mmmmm... Now that could be the way to have a Home-Office I love.”

10

Richard appeared to be getting restless as he looked at his watch for the second time in a matter of minutes. He commented, "I'm becoming hungry, what would you like for lunch?"

The Design Coach did not reply, instead he stood up and walked over to the cooler that he had brought with him.

As he picked it up, he commented, "Lunch is on me, all ready to go. Where shall we eat?" enquired The Design Coach.

"Well, we could eat here on my desk. Or, we could use the dining table," suggested Richard.

"I'd prefer to sit in the sun. It looks like a glorious day out there," replied The Design Coach.

"Of course, let's sit out the back," offered Richard, "I'll just go and get some plates and things."

"No, I have it all covered. It's all part of the service," smiled The Design Coach, "Just lead the way."

Richard lead The Design Coach to the back garden and they unpacked the lunch that he had brought.

There were several dips, some freshly baked breads, several salads, a serving of pasta, some fresh fruit and yoghurt.

"Wow this is quite a lunch. You've brought everything. I see what you mean about taking your food seriously," remarked Richard who was both surprised and impressed.

"Well, as one of the great motor racing drivers once said, 'Everyday I do this job my life is on the line, preparation is the best insurance policy I can buy'," commented The Design Coach.

As the last parcel of food was removed from the esky, Richard arranged the plates and The Design Coach pulled out several glasses.

"What would you like to drink Richard? Mineral Water? Fruit Juice? Or a glass of wine?" enquired The Design Coach.

“Ah...” stammered Richard, “I’d love a wine, but...”

“Not while working?” interjected The Design Coach, “That’s fine. What would you like instead?”

“A mineral water will do,” replied Richard.

“Okay, coming right up” and almost as soon as The Design Coach had made this comment, the glass was filled and in front of Richard.

“Bon Appetit!” remarked The Design Coach and Richard echoed this sentiment with his reply.

After several minutes of eating and listening to the bird’s chirping in the sunshine, Richard broke the silence with a question, “What are some of your goals, Coach?”

“My goals... Well, one of my goals is to celebrate my meals. I believe in eating quality food that is tasty, nutritious and highly delicious. I like to celebrate my food and take my time over a good lunch. Just like we’re doing right now.”

The Design Coach was true to his word thought Richard, ‘He certainly knows what he wants and enjoys it too!’

In between eating, The Design Coach continued, “To answer your question a little more specifically, I want to employ a chef to prepare all my meals.”

“Wow, that could be good. But isn’t that a long way off?” enquired Richard.

“No, not really. It’s like climbing a ladder. Each step we take we move a little closer to our objective. For instance, one of the steps to employing a chef all the time is to have a chef cook for me some of the time. I can simply build up the number of times that I have a chef prepare my meals. I already do this several times a week when I go out to a restaurant. Alternatively, there are home-delivery services catering specifically for the Home-Office market. If I want some lunch, I simply ring up and they deliver it. I had someone prepare this meal for us today.”

“Isn’t that expensive?” asked Richard.

“Depends what it’s worth to you. If it’s important to you...” The Design Coach stopped mid-sentence and looked directly at Richard, “What’s your chargeout rate per hour, Richard?”

“A hundred dollars per hour.”

“I know that includes many hours of research and preparation that are unpaid for, so... if we halved that figure and said fifty dollars per hour as an average rate. Would that be about right?” asked The Design Coach.

“Yeah, somewhere around that.” confirmed Richard.

“Ok, if the home-delivered meal costs you twenty dollars and saves you an hour of your time in buying, preparing and cleaning up, are you in front or behind?”

“Yeah, I see your point.” replied Richard.

“You know, this can be extended to all sorts of other things...” continued The Design Coach, “My mother laughs at me because I pay someone to do all my washing, ironing, shopping, house cleaning, get my car washed and the garden looked after. My mother thinks I’m lazy; I just smile sweetly back to her knowing that paying for these things allows me more time for doing the things I really want to do.

“Would you believe having these things done for me, saves me around ten hours a week! Can you imagine all the things that you can do with an extra ten hours a week? That would be pretty good, wouldn’t it?”

“Absolutely, but...” before Richard could finish, The Design Coach began talking once more.

“That’s one of the great benefits of running my own business,” continued The Design Coach, “And in particular, running it from home - all those old rules of working in someone else’s office don’t apply anymore. I can do my job anyway I please.

“That’s also the whole point of goal setting. I set the objective to have something and then I work out a way to have it. Instead of preparing this meal, I prefer to do other things. This morning I went running. I enjoy that much more. In fact, I’m in training for a marathon. That’s another one of my goals.”

“Really!” exclaimed Richard.

“Yep! I’ve always wanted to run one,” replied The Design Coach. “I guess it’s one of those sorts of objectives, that appeals to some people and not others.

“Some goals we pursue have a particular end in mind, we work to achieve something in particular and the key is the gaining of that outcome, like saving your money to buy something new. That sort of goal has an ongoing effect. You buy the new thing and you enjoy the use of it.

“The goal of running a marathon is very different to that. The climax of running a marathon will be to cross the finish line. Perhaps I will receive a small medallion or a t-shirt to symbolise my efforts. It’s one of those things that goes way beyond money. As Napoleon suggested, ‘People will lay down their lives for a ribbon.’

“I’ve spoken to people who have completed marathons, they virtually all talk about it as a significant emotional event and the mixed set of emotions that go with it. When you cross the line you feel joy, exhilaration, a sense of achievement, pride in one’s effort and performance, and at the same time you also feel extremely fatigued and often very flat several days later, ‘Okay, I’ve achieved my goal; now what?’

“I guess the marathon then becomes merely a memory, an experience. It’s not the pursuit of a thing, it’s... the challenge of doing it. Perhaps, as part of that challenge, it’s the very idea that I said I would do it and I did. Perhaps that’s the ultimate test.

“You set the mark that you aspire to, even though it is further than you’ve ever gone before, and then, you do what it takes to get there. When you cross the line you celebrate your efforts and take up a new challenge. I guess that sums up life... it’s the test of who you are... the test of being who you said you’d be.”

The Design Coach continued, as both men munched on their lunch, “Doing it is the reward. All the preparation is all part of the reward. I compare it to doing your ideal job. To some extent, you’d do it regardless of whether you’re getting paid or not.”

“It reminds me of a dinner I was at recently where I heard a guy speaking who played on the professional tennis circuit. He was talking away for about half an hour or more, hadn’t missed a beat until he stopped, right in the middle of a sentence. He just stopped short, stopped dead.

“He just stood there and looked at the audience for what seemed like minutes and then he said, ‘You know, I’ve been around the world several times, I’ve met movie stars and other famous people, played at Wimbledon, been on television... And to think all I had to do was hit a little ball across a net.’

He commented later that he'd never had a real job and he always thought of what he did as play, he literally played for a living."

"That really struck me as something magical," suggested The Design Coach, "To spend your life doing what you really want to do. It has so many similarities to pursuing 'A Home-Office You Love,' doesn't it? If you're going to work somewhere, it might as well be a place you love spending your time."

The Design Coach paused for several moments before suggesting, "Had enough lunch? Perhaps we should continue on from where we left off prior to lunch?"

11

“Now I would like you to make a further commitment, Richard. Earlier, you paid me money to be here for the whole day to work with your around your Home-Office. That was a big commitment Richard, and I thank you for choosing me and making that commitment. You may recall, at that time I also asked you a question. Do you remember what that question was?”

Richard scratched his head as he looked up to the ceiling and then around the room.

“Nope,” he said, shaking his head, “no idea.”

“The question I asked you was, ‘Do you want to create A Home-Office You Love?’”

Richard’s hand was still on his chin as he responded, “Ah, now I remember, and I said, ‘That’s why I asked you to come along.’ That’s why I paid you my money also.”

“Okay, that’s great. Previously I asked you to make a commitment to me, and you did do that by paying me money for my time and expertise today. Part of why I ask for money up front is for the reasons we spoke about earlier. Another part of why I ask for the money first, is to gain your commitment to what we’re going to do today.”

Richard listened intently and put his hand to his chin.

“The way I run my business is that I don’t do any advertising. I gain all my clients from word-of-mouth. If you’re happy about how I’m able to help you, you’ll voluntarily tell your friends about it. In the same way Jenny Nelson recommended that you call me. Likewise, if you’re not happy, then you can tell your friends that too. This way, my business depends upon ensuring that my clients are happy with the work that I do, and that comes down to them getting what they want. Actually, if I want my business to thrive, it depends on my clients getting more than they knew they wanted.

“One of the particular things that I do is to create a framework for you to do a considerable part of the designing. To do this effectively, I need a

commitment from you that this is what you really want. Are you still with me?”

Richard nodded in agreement and The Design Coach continued.

“Now, this next commitment that I’m going to ask you to make is not specifically for me. This is a commitment that you are making to yourself and it will certainly help me work with you today. You could say this is the part where the football coach says, ‘I’m here to do whatever it takes to win a premiership. Are you guys with me or not?’ Usually the players get all hyped up and the coach repeats this several times so the players are ready to run through brick walls. That’s great for motivation; it’s also great for aligning their purposes. If the coach is there to win the premiership and the players are there for a good time, then it makes life tough.”

“So at this point in time, we have spoken about having ‘A Home-Office You Like’ and having ‘A Home-Office You Love’. My objective is to help you achieve your objectives around your Home-Office. I want you to choose which one you want. ‘A Home-Office You Like’ or ‘A Home-Office You Love’? Which one’s it going to be Richard?”

Without hesitating Richard replied, “Definitely, ‘A Home-Office I Love’.”

“Are you sure about that?” countered The Design Coach.

“Yes, absolutely.”

Upon hearing this, The Design Coach reached down into his briefcase and withdrew a single piece of paper. He handed it to Richard who peered at it intently.

On the page were a simple border, a series of little hearts and in the middle were the words:

“I hereby declare that I am committed to creating a Home-Office I Love.”

Below this was a place for a signature and a date.

Richard looked up and spoke somewhat hesitantly, “You want me to sign this, don’t you?”

“Only if you want to,” replied The Design Coach.

“And if I don’t sign it?” questioned Richard.

“If you don’t sign it then that’s okay too,” offered The Design Coach.

Richard paused and reflected upon the choice in front of him, ‘Of course I want to love my Home-Office,’ he said to himself, ‘But what does it mean to sign this form?’

The Design Coach responded with another question, “What’s your wife’s name Richard?”

Richard looked up from the certificate, taken aback by the question, “Uh? Joan.”

The Design Coach continued with his questions, “How long have you been married?”

Richard was intrigued by this line of question, “Uh? Nine years.”

“Tell me about your wedding?”

“It was outside... in the gardens at a homestead... in the country... there were lots of people there, the sun was shining, and it was a wonderful day,” replied Richard.

“Do you still maintain the commitment to Joan in the way that you made the commitment to marry her nine years ago on that sunny day at the homestead?”

“Yes, of course,” came the prompt reply.

“Well Richard, you could say I’m asking you to make a similar commitment today, except the commitment’s not to me, it’s not to Joan, it’s a commitment to you and a commitment to your Home-Office. In fact, like your marriage, you could say that you’re committing to having certain things happen in your life. Do you still want A Home-Office You Love?”

Richard was adamant, “Yes, I do.” As Richard stated these words, he grabbed a pen from the desk and signed the form. Having written his autograph, he looked up at The Design Coach, “Today is the first, isn’t it?”

The Design Coach nodded to indicate that it was.

Having completed the date, Richard put down the pen and held out the certificate at arms length and read the words on it aloud, "I hereby declare that I am committed to creating A Home-Office I Love."

"Well, I've done it now," said Richard.

"What have you done Richard?" asked The Design Coach.

"Well, I guess I've made a commitment, a contract with myself, to work toward having a really special place to live and work in." He paused and then almost under his breath, he whispered to himself, "Hmm, A Home-Office I Love..."

Both men sat in silence, Richard leaned back on his chair once more and began to look around the room.

After several moments, which seemed longer than they were, Richard shifted his gaze and looked at The Design Coach. He leaned forward and rubbed his hands together and said, "Well, let's get started. How are we going to do this then?"

"Firstly, I'd like to congratulate you. Stop, reflect and acknowledge yourself. You have just taken the first significant step forward. You now have a mission statement, a purpose, a direction to work toward in terms of your Home-Office."

12

“Now we want to define what this specifically means to you. The way we’re going to do this is to treat the design of your Home-Office in the way that a corporation would design their head office. Now, consider for just a minute a corporate head office. Have you ever driven past one, be it a skyscraper or some other building, and said to yourself, ‘Wow, what a great building! They must be doing well to have a place like that?’” enquired The Design Coach.

“Yes, many times,” replied Richard.

“Consider for a moment what it’d be like if someone said something similar about your Home-Office...” The Design Coach paused as Richard reflected on this comment.

“Perhaps they might say,” continued The Design Coach, “ ‘He must be good at what he does to have a Home-Office like that.’ Now that would be good for business, wouldn’t it?”

“Yeah, that would be good for business,” repeated Richard.

“Well, that could be one way of defining ‘A Home-Office You Love’.”

The Design Coach paused as Richard looked up at the ceiling, apparently daydreaming about the possibilities associated with this comment. Both men sat in silence for some time until The Design Coach spoke once more.

“Do you remember how we spoke about the business card earlier? Your business card is a representation of who you are. People assess you and your business based upon the way you appear to them. That includes, how you look, how you dress, what your business card looks like and how your Home-Office appears to them.”

“You’ve probably gathered that we’re talking about your identity. This is a question of how others see you. It’s also, and perhaps more importantly, a question of who you think you are. I think I asked you earlier if you had a personal mission statement Richard, didn’t I?” asked The Design Coach.

“Yes, you did ask, and no, I don’t,” replied Richard.

“And you don’t have a mission statement for your business either?”

“No, I don’t,” replied Richard.

“Okay, let’s say it this way...I’ve just given you a mission statement around your Home-Office in the form of the commitment that you’ve just signed. I now want to link that upto your business mission and your personal mission. Since you haven’t written one before, I’ll take you through the process. Afterwards, and as you develop more and more distinctions around your Home-Office, you may even want to re-write, expand or personalise your mission for your Home-Office. Are you ready Richard? I have some questions for you.”

Richard shook his head, to say ‘no’ and suggested, “Hang on, I have a question first. How come you gave me a mission statement for my Home-Office? Is that useful? Shouldn’t I have a more personalised one?”

“Good question. Usually I do it this way for a couple of reasons. The first is that it is a convenient way to start. It creates a context or a framework from which we can talk about your Home-Office. Talking about the things we ‘love’ is a friendly way of inspiring you to the highest level, ‘What could it be like to have A Home-Office You Love?’ Doesn’t that get your imagination firing?”

“It sure does,” replied Richard.

“Secondly, most people don’t have a lot of distinctions around their Home-Offices. In other words, they are not fully aware of all the options that are available to them. If we aim too low, we can miss the target. We wouldn’t want that would we?”

“No, I guess not,” replied Richard.

“Thirdly, ‘The Home-Office You Love’ is a personalised statement,” continued The Design Coach, “Think about that for a moment; we all love different foods; we all fall in love with different people; we all love and hate different things about our Home-Offices.”

“I guess that’s why we all take up different careers and develop different businesses also,” commented Richard.

“Absolutely,” continued The Design Coach, “Going through the process of creating personal and business mission statements gives you the process to recreate your own around the Home-Office at a later date. And, I would

encourage you to do this. Furthermore, by the time we finish today, you'll be well equipped to do that. That was a good question, Richard. Any more that you'd like to ask?"

"No," replied Richard.

The Design Coach then reached down into his briefcase and pulled out another sheet of paper. He handed it to Richard, who grabbed it gently and studied it intently. Richard eagerly began to fill in his responses as The Design Coach sat quietly and patiently.

The page had a number of questions on it and looked like this:

Who Am I?

Write down at least 5 key words to each question.

1 What roles do I play?

Eg: Family, Business, Friends, Organisations

2 What do activities do I do?

Eg: Family, Work, Leisure, Hobbies

3 What titles or names do I use?

Eg: Family, Business, Professional

4 What have I accomplished in my life?

Eg: Awards, Education, Sport

5 Describe myself physically.

Eg: Physical Features, Health, Fitness Level

6 What strong beliefs do I have?

Eg: Religion, Food, Success, Power, Political

7 Describe my Personality.

Eg: Emotions, Interaction with others

8 What am I not?

Eg: Things that you definitely don't want to be

After several minutes, Richard stopped, put his pen in his mouth and looked up at the ceiling. He took the pen out of his mouth and commented, "Some of these questions are tough."

"Yes, some of them are," concurred The Design Coach, "You're doing well though."

Several more minutes later, Richard had completed the task. With the pen in his mouth once more, he surveyed the form and smiled.

Richard took the pen out of his mouth and asked, "Do I pass?", as he handed the sheet to The Design Coach who looked at it briefly and handed it straight back to Richard.

The Design Coach smiled, “A lot of people don’t want to define who they are, simply responding to the questions is worthy of more than a pass. You are a credit to yourself in creating these distinctions. Now, you should have around forty words on that sheet. Which you have. The next part is for you to pick out about ten words on that list. Just go ahead and circle them as you’ve written them down. The trick to this is to do it quickly, whichever words grab your attention or stand out off the page, even if you don’t know why.”

Richard quickly circled a number of words and muttered under his breath, “seven... eight... umm... nine... ten.” He looked up at The Design Coach and proclaimed, “I’m done!”

“Great, that was quick,” replied The Design Coach. “Now, comes the really powerful part; I want you to write a sentence that incorporates these ten words in it. Can you do that Richard?”

“You mean all ten?” replied Richard, less than enthusiastically.

“Yes, all ten,” replied The Design Coach.

Personal Mission Statement

Now that you have circled at least ten key words, write a single sentence that incorporates all of these words.

After several minutes and a number of revisions, Richard had completed his sentence. He put down his pen, stood up from his chair, with page in hand and read out his sentence in a loud, proud tone of voice.

“Very good Richard,” commented The Design Coach, “You’ve just written a personal mission statement that defines who you are. This is something that you can continue to refine and redefine whenever you are looking to reassure yourself of the direction you are pursuing in your life. Are you happy with that Richard?”

“Yes, another interesting exercise. I’m certainly learning a lot about myself today. I didn’t think designing my Home-Office would be anything like this,” he commented.

“Well, you could say that I do things just a little differently than most,” responded The Design Coach, “And that comes back to my own mission statement. I’m here to empower you to ‘design your own’ environment. Would you like to write a mission statement for your business?”

“Yes, definitely,” replied Richard eagerly, “I can already see the purpose of this.”

The Design Coach reached over to his briefcase and pulled out a sheet of paper that he handed to Richard. “Fill this one in, same idea as previously, just a slightly different angle.”

The page read like this:

Who I Am That My Business Is?

Write down several key words to each question.

1 What do I sell?

Consider: Type of Product or Service

2 What do my clients buy?

For example: Someone buying a drill bit, doesn’t really want a drill bit, they want a hole!

Consider: Convenience, Time or Money savings

3 Who do I sell to?

Consider: Industry, Market Sector, Range of Market

4 Where do I sell?

Consider: Shops, Markets, Regions, Countries

5 How do I sell?

Consider: Retail, Mail-order, Commissions, Personally

6 When do I sell?

Consider: 24 hours per day, Annually, Monthly

7 How much do I sell?

Consider: Price, Volume, Clients per week

8 What do I not sell?

Consider: How do you distinguish your business from your competitors?

9 Why am I in business?

Consider: What are you achieving by being in business?

10 What is unique about my business?

Consider: What do you sell that no one else does?

11 What are my future plans?

Consider: Long-term, short-term

After several minutes of writing, Richard paused and looked up at The Design Coach and commented, “You do ask some tough questions, don’t you?”

“They’re only tough because you’re not used to answering them,” replied The Design Coach.

A short while later, Richard had finished answering the questions, then as he had done with the previous exercise, he circled the ten most important words on his list and incorporated them into a single sentence.

Business Mission Statement

Now that you have circled at least ten key words, write a single sentence that incorporates all of these words.

When he had finished Richard stood up once more and proudly stated his business mission.

“Wow!” exclaimed Richard, “I really feel the sense of power in defining things like that. My mission statements need a little work, but I’m impressed. Just one question though- that heading, ‘Who I am that my business is?’ That’s a strange way of saying things.”

“Words are like photographs,” suggested The Design Coach, “They capture a particular point of view. That heading merely suggests that your business is a representation of who you are, so if we reverse that, you are what your business is. If your business is going well, then that’s a result of who you are, the things you believe in, the things you value, the things you do, the goals you have set and so forth. This ultimately is your identity, who you are.”

“Oh, yeah, I get it,” replied Richard. “But it still doesn’t flow well!”

“One other thing Richard,” offered The Design Coach, “These exercises are part of a powerful process. If you simply align yourself to your mission statements that can make a huge difference to the way you run things.

“I’ve noticed something about people who wore full business attire in their Home-Offices as part of being ‘professional’. Once they’re on purpose with their mission statements they often report they work more effectively and no longer find the desire to dress like that anymore.”

13

“Next,” continued The Design Coach, “I’d like to talk about some of the presumptions or beliefs we have about what we do. I have some more questions for you Richard.”

The Design Coach moved toward his briefcase and found another sheet of paper that he handed to Richard.

The page read like this:

My Beliefs

Write down at least 3 sentences that describe each of the following for you.

1 Home-Office

Consider: What is a Home-Office? Why do I have one?

2 Home

Consider: What is a Home? Why do I live where I do?

3 Work

Consider: What is work? Why do I do the work that I do?

4 Success

Consider: What is success? Is success important?

5 Time

Consider: What is time? Is time important?

6 Money

Consider: What is money? Is money important?

7 Life

Consider: What is life? What is the purpose of life?

Richard read the sheet and looked up at The Design Coach and grumbled, “Questions, questions and more questions.”

“It’s all part of expanding your awareness about what you do and what requirements you have for your Home-Office,” replied The Design Coach. “The more we find out about who you are and what you want, the more able we are to fit your Home-Office to your needs and desires. You wouldn’t walk straight up to a car salesman and say, ‘I’ll have that one!’, without asking lots of questions, would you?”

“No,” replied Richard as he reluctantly picked up his pen and began to address the questions.

After a number of minutes, Richard announced that he had finished and The Design Coach asked if he may look at his responses.

After perusing the sheet, The Design Coach said, “Now, it’s agreed that our objective is to create a Home-Office that you love, isn’t it?”

“Agreed,” confirmed Richard.

“My role, as your coach is to assist you in this process. You could say, my role is to optimise your resources to make that possible. That includes, not only, your physical resources, like money, space, etc., it also includes your mental resources. That is, your thoughts, your knowledge, your beliefs, etc. The exercise you’ve just done is to uncover some of the things that you believe about Home-Offices, homes, work, time, money, success and life, to see if they align with your mission statements.”

“Now, there’s a saying that goes like this: ‘Our physical world is a product of our thoughts.’ Have you heard that one before Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“Um, yes, I’ve heard it somewhere before,” replied Richard, “But, I’m not really sure what it means.”

“Do you want to know what it refers to?” asked The Design Coach.

“Sure. I’m curious,” replied Richard.

“Well, let me tell you a story,” began The Design Coach, “Once upon a time, there was a little boy sitting on his grandfather’s knee on the verandah of their little house. They were looking at the stars in the clear night sky above. Grandfather started to point to different constellations saying, ‘This one is called ‘The Big Dipper’, and that one is called ‘The Southern Cross’ and so forth. Anyway, the little boy was rather impressed by this and asked, ‘Grandpa, you’re very clever aren’t you? How do you know their names?’ and his grandfather replied, ‘I read it in a book.’ The curious little boy then asked, ‘And how did the book know their names?’”

Richard was intrigued by this. He sat with a blank expression on his face, uncertain whether he’d received the answer he was looking for.

“So, the point I’d like to make is around your Home-Office,” continued The Design Coach. “You mentioned that you’re forced into working from home when your old employer made you redundant. Now, that may be so, and it also may be limiting you in terms of creating A Home-Office You Love. The idea that our physical world is made up by our thoughts suggests that rather than having beliefs that might be true, we might as well have beliefs that align with and empower us to achieve our missions in life. That’s the whole purpose of these exercises.”

“So, Richard,” continued The Design Coach, “if you really want to create A Home-Office You Love, I’d suggest that you acknowledge that you now choose to be here. Richard, you may simply want to write it down, ‘I choose to have a Home-Office’. And, if you’re going to choose to have a Home-Office, you might as well choose to have one that you love, right?”

“Right,” replied Richard.

Richard picked up his pen and wrote another sentence. He then paused, put his pen in his mouth and looked up at The Design Coach.

“Now let’s go back to your answers to those questions shall we?” asked The Design Coach.

Richard picked up the sheet from the table to peruse once more.

“Guess what Richard?” asked The Design Coach, “I’ve got another question for you. This is a good question, you’ll like this one.”

Richard flicked his eyebrows up and down quickly, possibly suggesting that he’d heard that comment before.

The Design Coach continued, “Now, the question is: Are the sentences you wrote down useful? In other words, if you had a choice about what you wrote down, and you certainly can choose what you want to believe in. Afterall, this is a free and democratic country, isn’t it? We get to choose what state we’re going to live in, don’t we? And since our physical world is a product of our thoughts... Or if you’d like me to say it another way, ‘we get what we think’, then it makes sense to choose what we want to believe doesn’t it?”

“Sure,” replied Richard.

“And also, that’s what A Home-Office You Love is all about: choice. Right?” asked The Design Coach, “So we don’t want to be carrying around any old baggage that’s going to slow us down. Could you imagine that, having to literally carry your whole wardrobe of clothes around, even the ones that don’t fit you anymore? So we want to update our wardrobe occasionally and make sure they’re all going to be suitable for what we need now and in the future, don’t we?”

Richard nodded to suggest he agreed.

“Okay,” continued The Design Coach, “read through your responses and just check that all the things you wrote down are going to assist you to create A Home-Office You Love. If you come across any that may not help you in this quest, pick up your pen and rewrite the sentence in such a way that it will. Have you got that?”

“Yes,” replied Richard as he read through his responses once more.

After some time Richard had finished this task and remarked “I’m done!”

“Good work Richard,” replied The Design Coach, “Do you have any questions?”

“No, not at the moment,” he replied.

“Good. We’ll move on shall we?” asked The Design Coach.

14

“The next thing we need to consider is: ‘What’s important to you?’ In particular, the question is, what’s important to you about your Home-Office, Richard?” enquired The Design Coach.

“I don’t know,” replied Richard. “Perhaps I don’t understand what you mean.”

“That’s okay, let me ask you another way... If you had to define what qualities you value around your Home-Office, what would they be?”

“Uhm... qualities? Could you give me an example?” pleaded Richard.

“No, I’d prefer not to,” replied The Design Coach in a stern voice, “Then I would be influencing your values. You want to generate your own. Come on Richard, What’s the most important thing about your Home-Office?”

Richard looked up at the ceiling, but no answers came forth.

“Okay, Richard. Let me tell you this. There are no right answers and there are no wrong answers. Simply respond with whatever comes up. What’s the one thing that you value most about your Home-Office? What’s that one thing that has to be there for your Home-Office to be the way that you want it to be?”

Richard was ready this time and he answered quickly, “Comfort! If it’s not comfortable, then it’s not enjoyable to be here. Okay, there’s another one, Enjoyable.”

“Very good. I’m writing them down, so go quickly. The faster we do this, the less you think consciously about your answers and the better the result. Quick Richard, what else is important about...”

Richard was taking up the challenge and before The Design Coach could finish his sentence, Richard replied with, “Function! Privacy! Peacefulness!”

As The Design Coach was writing down Peacefulness, Richard, with a sense of urgency said, “No, not Peacefulness.”

“It’s okay Richard, there are only good responses. We’ll work through the list in a moment. Just keep going, it would be useful if you can list five more values.”

“Okay,” said Richard with some degree of resignation in his voice.

Richard paused for a moment and then in another stream of energy, like a machine gun he fired off in rapid succession, “Sunshine! Warmth! Daylight! Clients! Personality! Flexibility!”

Richard then heaved a sigh of relief.

“Well done,” said The Design Coach, “Basically, we’ve just written down your values around your Home-Office and as the term suggests, these are things that are important to you about your Home-Office, the things that you value. The answers were always inside you, you simply hadn’t done this before, so they didn’t come out as easily at first, but boy, did you let loose at the finish. In fact, we now have eleven, which is one better than ten. Good job!”

Richard looked at the list of words he had said, that The Design Coach had written down.

Comfort
Enjoyment
Function
Privacy
Peacefulness
Sunshine
Environment
Daylight
Clients
Personality
Flexibility

“Okay, now what do we do?” enquired Richard.

“Okay, now we acknowledge that all your values are important and that some are more highly valued than others. Now, we are going to put them in order of importance.”

“But isn’t the order that I said them in the order of importance?” questioned Richard.

“It could be, but not necessarily so,” responded The Design Coach. “Now, relax. This is an easy process to work through. I simply ask you, ‘Which value is more important, this one or that one?’ Okay, let’s go... Which is more important, Comfort or Enjoyment?”

Richard put his hand to his chin and looked up to the ceiling, reflecting on the choice. After several moments, he responded, “Comfort.”

The Design Coach continued, “Which is more important, Comfort or Function?”

“Comfort.”

“Which is more important, Comfort or Privacy?”

“Comfort.”

As they continued down the list, Richard continued to choose Comfort as being his most important value.

Then, The Design Coach began the same process with the next value, “Which is more important, Enjoyment or Function?”

Richard replied, “Function.”

“Okay, is Function more important than Privacy?”

After several minutes, the entire list had been dealt with in this way. Richard’s values for his Home-Office were re-written in order of importance and they looked like this:

Comfort
Clients
Function
Environment
Flexibility
Enjoyment

Privacy
Personality
Peacefulness
Daylight
Sunshine

“Now, it is important for you to define what each of these mean to you,” commented The Design Coach.

“So you want me to write a definition for each of them?”

“That’s right, except it won’t be just any definition, you’re going to write down your definition of each item. Effectively, we’re writing a design brief. That simply means, if we find out what you want, what you value, what’s important to you before we design an outcome for you, then we can tailor the response to you. Not to me, not to the guy who lives next door, we can design it to purposely fit you! It’s a bit like getting a tailor-made suit...

“And, something to remember,” continued The Design Coach, “Some of those words that we wrote down for your values are similar to mine, and a number of other clients that I’ve done this with. However, what these words mean to you will, probably, be very different. So, off you go, write down what each of these words mean to you, or, another way of saying that is, what would I have to have to achieve this? Are you ready?”

“No, can you say that again?” puzzled Richard.

“Sure. In fact, I’ll give you an example, comfort is a common value. One lady I worked with defined comfort as a combination of good lighting and suitable temperature, whereas another client, all he wanted was a good chair to sit on! Likewise, privacy. For some it is total and uninterrupted privacy from anyone and everything, and for others, it may simply be visual privacy, not letting others see what you’re doing. Can you begin to see how your definitions will influence how we might put things together a little later?”

“Yes, I get it now,” replied Richard.

After several minutes, Richard's finished list looked like this:

Comfort - able to be relaxed, have space to do the tasks with minimal effort.

Clients - a place my clients will enjoy coming to.

Function - fit my activity needs of space, equipment, comfort, light, sound.

Environment - minimal impact on the environment, limiting pollution, waste and being energy efficient.

Flexibility - able to do a wide range of tasks and activities.

Enjoyment - a place I like spending my time in.

Privacy - to be able to shut-out the rest of the world and work alone in peace and quiet, when I want to.

Personality - to be able to personalise my space and make it represent me.

Peacefulness - a place where I can relax and be able to work in peace and quiet.

Daylight - a bright and light space throughout the day.

Sunshine - the sun shining into my space for some part of the day.

"Well done Richard. Are there any comments you'd like to make?" queried The Design Coach.

"Yes, does that mean I'm stuck with these values now?" responded Richard.

"No, not at all. Your values will change over time. As we progress through life, what's important to us is forever changing. For instance, when you were a youngster at school, was security and making money important to you?"

"No, not at all," replied Richard with a chuckle.

"Yet, it has probably moved up the scale of importance a little now," continued The Design Coach, "The answers you wrote down are only a guide to what is important to you at this moment in time."

“To gain a more complete understanding of your values, you may want to repeat this exercise every couple of months and note the variations in your responses. Those values that consistently remain at the top of your lists will probably be your core values, so keep an eye out for those ones. Any other comments Richard?”

“Yes, I did find that very interesting,” reflected Richard, “Particularly, since I hadn’t done it before. I was also surprised by a couple of my answers. For instance, I’d never defined ‘comfort’ before. I guess I just knew that I was either comfortable or I wasn’t, without really knowing how or why.”

“It’s good to note these things about ourselves. Well done, Richard!” complimented The Design Coach. “If you’d like to, at a later time, you may want to ask yourself the same questions for other areas of your life.

“You know, ‘What’s important to me about my business?’ Or your career, or your relationships or your life. Now, that’s a good question to ask occasionally, ‘What’s important to me about life?’

Now, before we go any further,” continued The Design Coach, “it’ll be good to just stop and check what you’ve written. Just go back over your list of definitions and check that all of them are possible.

“I had one lady who wanted her Home-Office to have the sun shining in all day every day. Now, unless you create an artificial sun for the cloudy days and at night, she’s not going to be very happy, if her Home-Office doesn’t have those things. So just check that. You may want to ask yourself, ‘Are my definitions possible?’ “

Richard checked his list and nodded to suggest that they were all okay.

“Richard, another good question is to ask is, ‘Are they within my control to create and maintain?’ The sunshine one is an interesting one to answer. Clearly wanting the sun to shine in is not in your control. But it’s a reasonable expectation, provided you don’t live too close to the North Pole where it’s almost dark for six months of the year. So it’s not unreasonable to ask that you be realistic in your expectations. Afterall, you’ll only be unhappy a lot of the time if you’re not. Have you got that Richard?”

Richard read through his responses one more time to make certain and then nodded and smiled.

After a momentary break, The Design Coach asked Richard another question, “Richard, have I told you about some of the places I’ve lived?”

“Uh, no,” replied Richard.

“Well, I’ve rented a few places, done some house-minding, travelled overseas and like most people, if we counted them all, I’ve lived in quite a few different places and quite a few different buildings. It’s interesting to look back at the places I’ve liked, the places I’ve loved and the places where I haven’t stayed for too long at all and just consider what the similarities and the differences were.

“I remember one place,” continued The Design Coach, “where it was simply too small to fit everything into; another that had a great view but didn’t get any sun; another where my flat was really cold and the heating wasn’t very effective. You know, there are a lot of different factors that we can put up with for a short period of time and some factors that we just won’t put up with at all. And, you probably realize if you’ve lived with anyone for any length of time how differently we...”

“I’m married remember,” interrupted Richard, “I like the heat, my wife likes the cold.”

“Interesting,” replied The Design Coach, “That’s why I’d prefer if she was here today to go through this process also. Anyway, now I’d like you to consider your last list and to make a mark beside each one of them in response to the question, ‘If this item wasn’t here, how long would I stay in my Home-Office? Would it be immediate? Like, would you either change it straight away or alternatively not buy it or rent it? Would it be in the longer term? Or would it never make a difference at all?’”

“So you want me to go over the list where I defined my values and write down short-term, longer term or never beside each one?” confirmed Richard.

“Yep, that’s right,” agreed The Design Coach, “You can do that now, can’t you?”

“Just one question though,” replied Richard, “What’s longer term mean?”

“It’s your Home-Office Richard, if you had to define how long it would be, what would you answer?” responded The Design Coach.

“Okay, I can do that,” replied Richard, who immediately began to mark each item in his list.

After some time, as Richard put his pen down, he felt content with this latest level of information that he had just added and now understood around his Home-Office.

“This is really interesting,” began Richard, “You know, these are really good questions. I’m getting so much out of this. All these ideas and things I never really knew that...” Richard paused for several moments, before more words stumbled out, “...I never really knew that I... I guess I did know, didn’t I?”

“Yes, you did know Richard,” replied The Design Coach, “Now do you understand why I call myself the coach? I simply ask you some questions and you’re able to define the Home-Office you love quite easily.”

Richard simply sat and smiled and nodded his head gently.

The Design Coach then continued, “Okay, the next level of distinctions around your Home-Office is like stacking dominos.”

Richard was somewhat bemused by this comment, but was beginning to accept this as simply part of the way The Design Coach talked about things.

“Yes, that’s right, Richard, dominos. You’ve probably seen them on the news occasionally as someone else makes another world record attempt. Quite amazing really, a team spends a considerable amount of time setting things up in just the right order so that one little tickle of the first domino will lead one onto the next, onto the next and so forth until the job is well and truly done.

“And that’s what we’re going to do now. We’re going to put the things that you’ve defined to be important around your Home-Office in such an order that one flows onto the next with the least resistance. You could say it’s like oiling and greasing the wheels on your bike. If you make it smoother and easier, then you can go much further with less effort. That sounds like a good way to be doesn’t it Richard?”

“Yes, I’d like that,” agreed Richard.

“Okay, the question we want to ask here is: ‘Which value would you have on your list first that would lead onto the next?’” asked The Design Coach.

“Hang on, can you say that again, I don’t think I understand that very clearly,” requested Richard.

“Which value is the first domino so that all the others will fall down in a line behind it? What would have to happen first?”

Richard shook his head and then asked, “How is that different to what we did earlier?”

“Good question,” responded The Design Coach, “Earlier we put things in order of importance and now we want to put them in the order that you want them to happen. Consider what happens when you change the spare tyre on your car. First you loosen the bolts a little, then you jack up the car, take the bolts off completely, take off the tyre, put the new one on, put the bolts back on, tighten them just a little, let the jack down and then fully tighten the bolts. Each of these steps may be more or less important than the others, but unless we get them in the right sequence, we’re not going to be very effective, are we?”

Richard nodded to agree with this comment.

“So now,” continued The Design Coach, “if you did know the answer, which one would go first? Which one would go next and so on...”

Richard began writing and after some time, he had finished that task.

“Good work Richard,” encouraged The Design Coach, “What you’ve just created is the syntax of your values. Syntax is merely the order of things. Like this sentence, one word comes before the next and that makes all the difference in what the sentence means. Consider the example, ‘Can Richard play well’ or ‘Richard can play well’. Even though the words are the same, there’s a big difference in their meaning, isn’t there?”

“Absolutely,” confirmed Richard.

“Now we move onto another level,” continued The Design Coach, “create a sentence that includes your top four or five values and put them, in order, in a single sentence.”

After several minutes Richard had completed his sentence and read it out aloud in a proud tone of voice.

“Well done Richard,” complemented The Design Coach once more, “Now, you’ve a neat summary of what’s important to you about your Home-Office in a single sentence. How does that feel?”

Richard’s smile said it all.

“One good way of using this affirmation is to write it down and put it somewhere where you’ll see it often. For instance, you may want to write it on the back a business card that you carry in your wallet. Whenever you have a spare minute, waiting in line for anything in particular, you can pull out the card and confirm that you’re on track with where you want to be.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” agreed Richard.

15

“Now, I’d like to move onto how you do the things you do,” suggested The Design Coach.

“How I do things?” repeated Richard. “What does that have to do with the design of my Home-Office?” he asked.

“How you do things reflects how we set up your Home-Office,” responded The Design Coach.

“I presume it does,” answered Richard, “but is it important? Can’t we just skip this bit and move onto designing my Home-Office?”

“Yes Richard, we could do that,” agreed The Design Coach, “but you do want A Home-Office You Love, don’t you?”

After several moments of silence, Richard, with a hint of resignation, nodded his head to suggest that he did.

“To achieve that end,” continued The Design Coach, “there are certain vital steps we have to take. If we don’t consider the whole package of who you are and what you do, we can miss reaching our objective. It all comes back to fitting the environment to you and how you work and what you do. The closer the fit, the happier you’ll be with the result.

“Let me say it this way, a client recently came to see me because she was running out of space. It seemed like a straightforward concern, as your business expands people often need more space. Yet this lady’s situation was a little different. About twelve months prior to seeing me, she’d been awarded a two year contract with a large firm to undertake a specific role in a major project. At this point in time she went to an Architect who created a great design for her with plenty of storage space, sunlight streaming in and beautiful finishes, just as she’d wanted. The builders also did a great job constructing the renovation to her Home-Office and she thought everything would be okay.

“After working in her new renovation for only a couple of months, she began to run out of space again. And she was beginning to get frustrated because she thought with her new renovation that she’d have plenty of room to work in. She was a little annoyed at the architect she’d seen so someone recommended that she speak to me.

“So we went through the process that we’re going through here. And Bingo! She was suffering from a serious dose of ‘Empty Wardrobe Fever’. I could’ve built her ten new wardrobes and they’d all be full in a couple of months. This lady didn’t need a renovation, she needed some organisation!

“It turned out, where she’d been working previously, she’d had several assistants filing and sorting out her paperwork for her. Working at home, without this support staff, she was storing everything and not tossing anything out. I suggested that she either learn to organise herself or pay for someone to come in and do it for her and then we modified her furniture arrangement to assist her to do this.

“That’s one of the real advantages of what we’re doing here today and the type of service that I offer. Since I receive a flat fee for my time here today, and don’t gain a percentage of building costs like a traditional architect, I have a lot more choices to offer you because my fee is not dependent on what we design.

“And, that’s also why I ask a lot of questions that may not appear to be connected to your Home-Office. But as, you probably realize by now, everything you do in your home and in your business is relevant. It’s not very useful if we, at great expense, go modifying the environment in which you live, when a mere change in the way you do things can be quicker, easier and more effective in the long-term, is it?”

“Uh, no, I guess so,” replied Richard.

The Design Coach reached into his briefcase once more to retrieve another sheet of paper with a border around it and a simple sentence printed neatly in the middle.

“Before I give you this,” suggested The Design Coach, “I want you to consider that for just a moment.” He then paused for some time before continuing. “Again, if we look at the big picture, you are more important than your Home-Office. That’s right, your Home-Office is there to serve you . It’s merely a place, a thing, a piece of technology, if you like, that we use to achieve our ends. You may want to consider that your Home-Office is like a book. Once you’ve read it and you don’t need it anymore, you put it down and go on with something else that suits your purpose.

“You know, I’ve had one client who, after going through this entire process, I was only able to suggest one single change that she make. I said, ‘I think the most positive, single thing that you can do is move to a new location.’

This lady was somewhat taken aback by that at first, but then, when I linked that back to her values, and her mission, and her beliefs, and how she did what she did, she agreed with me. We then created a plan for her to make that happen. So if I could make a suggestion to you Richard, I would suggest that you stay open to all the possibilities here.”

The Design Coach then handed the page to Richard who read it several times to himself, before reading it out aloud. The page had these words on it:

A Home-Office is not just where you live; it's HOW you live.

“That’s probably the key difference between what I do and what an architect does traditionally,” continued The Design Coach, “I don’t simply design your environment, I take into account a much wider range of factors and I offer a much wider range of solutions. If I can suggest a change in behaviour that can save you renovating your Home-Office, I’ll suggest it. We do have the choice of not having to modify this building to achieve the result we’re after here, if we don’t want to. Do you have any questions Richard?”

“Uh, no, not really,” he offered.

The Design Coach reached over to his briefcase and pulled out two sheets of paper. He looked at them both and as he handed one of them to Richard he said, “Let’s start with this one, it focuses on how you do things.”

Richard grasped the sheet and read through it.

How do you do what you do?

Write down several key words or phrases that describe what key skills and strategies you use in the following situations.

1 How do you meet new clients?

Eg: Personally, By phone

2 How do you maintain contact with current clients?

Eg: Regular lunches, newsletters, networking

3 How do you interact with your clients when undertaking a job?

Eg: Personally, In writing, By phone

4 How do you complete your orders?

Eg: Personally, Sub-contract

5 How do you earn your money?

Eg: What specific actions do you do that earn you money? Is it what you say? what you write? what you produce?

6 How would you like to run your business in the future?

Eg: Employ others to do the work, retire within 5 years

7 How do you organise your meals?

Eg: Someone else cooks, the family goes out often, I eat alone

8 How do you maintain your health?

Eg: exercise, diet, relaxation

9 How do you enjoy your life?

Eg: What activities do you enjoy doing?

10 How would you like to improve your quality of life?

Eg: work less hours, earn more money, move to the country

Now add one extra key word or phrase to each question that offers you another way of doing something.

Consider: In the ideal world, how would you like to do this activity?

Now, circle your preferred item for each question.

Comment on what you have learnt from this exercise.

After Richard had read the sheet, The Design Coach asked him if he had any questions.

Richard began, "So, what you want me to do is write down the strategies and the actions that I do in my business and in my life, is that right?"

“Yes that’s right.” replied The Design Coach. “We’re looking for the general things you do to achieve these results. For instance, if I asked you to gain one new client this week, how would you go about doing that?”

“Okay, I think I understand,” said Richard.

Richard then spent the next few minutes responding to the questions, stopping every so often to gather his thoughts.

When he had finished, Richard put down his pen and let out a heavy sigh and commented, “Phew, that was some interesting set of questions.”

“Did you learn anything Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“Sure,” he replied, “I guess I hadn’t really questioned myself in this way before. Particularly, that obvious one about what I enjoy in my life and what I’d like to do more of in the future. I can get the feeling now that these things are important to my Home-Office. I guess I was just getting a little impatient before. I just wanted to get on with designing things.”

“You are designing things Richard,” countered The Design Coach, “You’re designing your future right now by defining who you are and what you want. All of these answers to all of these questions is all part of creating your ideal environment in terms of the Home-Office you love.”

16

“Now, closely related to the strategies that you use to get things done, are the things that you actually do. Richard, the next set of questions for you revolves around the task you were asked to do prior to my visit today. Have you done that?” asked The Design Coach.

“D’you mean the one about what I do, the time inventory? Where I filled in all the things I did for the past week,” asked Richard.

“That’s the one,” replied The Design Coach. “Did you have any questions with that task?”

(The Time Inventory forms and an example are on page 132.)

“Well, I did think that marking out what I did for every fifteen minutes of the day for one whole week was a bit excessive,” began Richard, “but now that I’ve finished it, I realize it was a really useful thing to do. It really gave me a number of insights as to how easily time gets away from me sometime.”

“That’s fairly common,” replied The Design Coach, “and that exercise is a good reminder to all of us how time often escapes. Someone once compared time and money by suggesting that we all earned enough money and had enough time in our lives to be rich in so many ways. They also said whilst we spend our money and can earn some more, once we’ve spent our time there is no more.”

“That’s a good point,” concurred Richard.

“Now, our next step is to look at what you do...” suggested The Design Coach, who was cut-off mid sentence.

“I’m a consultant!” exclaimed Richard somewhat cheekily.

“Okay, that’s as good a place to start as any,” replied The Design Coach. “Can we expand on that a little? What sort of consultant are you Richard?”

The Design Coach paused to give Richard time to answer, but he didn’t take up the offer. Richard sat in silence hoping The Design Coach would continue, which he did.

“I’ve visited a few different consultants who all did different things. We wouldn’t want to get caught up in a blanket term for what we do, now would we?”

Richard nodded.

“Compare yourself to this example, Richard. I visited a lady who’s a consultant recently, she’s a consultant for breeding sheep. Is that the sort of consulting you do Richard?” teased The Design Coach.

Richard’s face went a little red, “Ah, no,” he replied.

The Design Coach continued.

“This lady, and a lovely energetic lady she is, called me with the idea of putting an extension on her house to cater for her business. When we came to discuss her Home-Office, it turned out that she was hardly ever there. She spent most of her time driving across the state and walking around farms. Her Home-Office requirements were somewhat different to most, she simply wanted a place to put her computer and somewhere to talk on the phone. Instead of spending large sums of money renovating her house, I told her to go buy a good chair or a better car and if she wanted to renovate any further, to do it from some other point of view. She came back to me a month later and we put a spa bath in.

“So perhaps the term ‘consultant’ is a little broad, or at the least it’s a little dull, don’t you think Richard? I have a book in which I store all the business cards from different people I’ve met. I was looking through it a couple of weeks ago and half the people in it called themselves ‘Consultant’. It was not only a little boring reading out ‘Consultant’, ‘Consultant’, ‘Consultant’, I also thought it missed out on an opportunity to distinguish what you do, from what everyone else does.

“You may want to consider creating a more exciting term for what you do Richard. Perhaps something more enticing, intriguing or at least something noteworthy that people will remember. Perhaps you can call yourself a ‘wizard’, or a ‘master’ or a ‘world champion’ or something along those lines that adds some panache to what you do.”

“How about a ‘Coach?’” queried Richard.

The Design Coach smiled and then suggested, “Feed it back into your mission statement. A good way to uncover your ‘title’ is to ask yourself, ‘What is it that I do that no one else does?’”

The Design Coach paused for Richard to resonate with this point of view.

“Okay Richard, are you ready for the next set of questions. This’ll be an easy one since you’ve already got the research in front of you in terms of your inventory of time that you spend doing different activities in a given week. Here it is.”

The Design Coach handed Richard a sheet of paper with the following questions on it:

What do you do?

Based upon your time inventory of the activities you have monitored for one week, answer the following questions.

- 1 Which five activities do you spend most time doing?**
- 2 Which five activities do you spend least time doing?**
- 3 Which two activities earn you the most money?**
- 4 Which two activities earn you the least money?**
- 5 Which two activities do you enjoy the most?**
- 6 Which two activities do you enjoy the least?**
- 7 Which two activities would you like to spend more time doing?**

8 Which two activities would you like to spend less time doing?

What have you learnt from this exercise?

“How did you go Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“It was interesting,” replied Richard. “I hadn’t realised that I spent so much time doing petty little things, you know, things that don’t earn me any money at all.”

“Be careful about your assessment there,” pleaded The Design Coach. “The last person I worked with on this exercise spent several hours each day reading newspapers and books, all aimed at researching and developing her expertise. She was almost ready to quit doing that when she figured out these actions didn’t directly earn her any money. Yet, if you look at a broader time-scale, if she didn’t do those things she wouldn’t earn any money at all!

“It may be set up as black and white, you either do this and earn money or you don’t, but it’s rarely this straightforward. I suggest you look for the shades of gray in this exercise. You do realize this is only a guide, don’t you? The purpose is to highlight the differences between your activities. You get that, don’t you Richard?”

“Yes, I guess so,” he replied.

“Richard,” continued The Design Coach, “can you begin to see the relationship between the things you do and your environment?”

Richard paused for several moments and looked up at the ceiling before responding, “Yes, I can now.”

“Can you get a feel for the way all these questions have been set-up?” enquired The Design Coach. “There’s a basic presumption inherent in the structure of what we’ve been doing that suggests that you and your actions should be supported by your environment, not the other way round.”

“I’m not sure that I follow you,” commented Richard.

“Let me explain it a different way then,” responded The Design Coach. “We are presuming that your Home-Office is here to serve you and not you serving your Home-Office. Now that you’ve defined your mission statement, we can look at the direction that you want to go, then we can presume that you must choose what you want it to do for you. Alternatively, if you don’t choose, it’s like a mouse in a maze, the direction is set-up by the environment. You could say this is the difference between living with a destiny and choosing a destiny. Or perhaps, we could say choosing a destination.

“Let’s take a break,” suggested The Design Coach, “I heard on the grapevine that you serve a great cup of freshly brewed coffee, is that true?”

“Absolutely,” replied Richard and they both laughed.

17

As Richard poured the coffee, The Design Coach asked, “Do you know what you’ll be doing in ten years time Richard?”

“No,” chuckled Richard, “Does anyone?”

“I have a pretty good idea what I’ll be doing,” returned The Design Coach.

“Really?” responded a surprised Richard.

“There’s an old saying that goes something like this: ‘It’s okay if you don’t have a plan for your life, the people around you probably do.’ Have you heard that one before Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“Uh, no... I haven’t, I guess...” Richard’s voice trailed off, as he put his hand to his mouth.

“Then you’ve probably heard the one: ‘If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.’ Have you heard that one Richard?” questioned The Design Coach.

“Uh, Yes,” replied Richard somewhat sheepishly.

“There’s nothing to be ashamed about Richard, you always have the option of choosing what you want and working toward it, if you want to. So the reason, I know what I’m going to be doing in ten years time is because I said ‘this is going to happen’ and now I’m working toward that goal. Whether I get there or not is a different question, setting the goal and enjoying the journey toward it is the really fun part. I guess that’s part of the attraction for the marathon. If you don’t enjoy the training, then completing the actual run is not going to be very enjoyable either.

“I have a little riddle I ask around the Home-Office, do you want to hear it?” offered The Design Coach.

“Sure,” replied Richard.

“What’s the difference between ‘A Home-Office You Like’ and ‘A Home-Office You Love?’” asked The Design Coach.

“I’m not sure,” replied Richard.

“You fit ‘The Home-Office you Like’ and ‘The Home-Office You Love’ fits you.”

Richard sat motionless, uncertain whether to laugh or comment.

The Design Coach continued, “I guess we’ve talked about that previously, that’s why I use the shoe example. And do you know what it comes down to when we do the design work? There’s one simple distinction that makes all the difference between these two. Can you guess what it is?” baited The Design Coach.

Richard put his hand to his chin and pondered the question for several moments.

The Design Coach then continued, “It’s probably more obvious than you think. The fundamental difference is ‘Choice’. As simple as that. You choose to have ‘A Home-Office You Love’. So, in ten years time... I’ve chosen the things I want to have happen. And, I’ve got another saying for you, Richard...”

The Design Coach paused as he reached into his briefcase once more to retrieve a sheet of paper. Richard sat curiously, not knowing what to expect.

As The Design Coach found the page he was looking for, he stood up from his chair, looked directly at Richard and said, “Richard, I regard this as one of the most important pieces of advice I’ve ever been given.” He then handed the page to Richard and sat down.

The sheet had text enclosed in an oval-shaped border.

The words read:

“Choose wisely, your life depends on it.”

Richard sat quietly as he pondered this thought.

After some time, The Design Coach spoke, “It may not be a matter of life and death, it may simply be a matter of having a life you love or ...”

The Design Coach paused as Richard muttered, “Having a Home-Office you hate.”

“You could say it that way,” concurred The Design Coach, “Now thus far today we have taken a number of significant steps along this path of choosing the Home-Office you love. You’ve made the commitment to having one, defined mission statements, outlined some beliefs you have about your Home-Office and what’s important to you also. Now comes the really fun part, you get to choose what you want to have happen for the next ten years. Does that sound like fun?”

“Yes, absolutely,” replied Richard in a more spirited tone.

“Now,” began The Design Coach, “can you think back to what we were saying earlier, ‘Our physical world is ...’”

The Design Coach stopped as Richard completed the sentence, “...a product of our thoughts.”

“Very good, Richard,” congratulated The Design Coach, “You’ve been learning more than you thought possible. This is exactly the idea we’re looking for here. ‘Our physical world is a product of our thoughts.’ Richard, have you written down your goals before?”

“Well sort of...” mumbled Richard.

“‘Sort of’ is like trying,” replied The Design Coach, “there’s no such thing. You either have or you haven’t. Many haven’t and particularly, whilst lots of people have set goals in their personal lives, and in business, I’m yet to come across anyone who has set goals around their Home-Office.”

“I did make some goals a while back,” offered Richard, “but I didn’t write them down. Does that count?”

“We’ll count that as a ‘no,’” responded The Design Coach. “Don’t ask me how or why it works, but numerous studies have shown a marked difference in goal achievement when they’re written down. Basically we want to create some goals around your Home-Office and the next time I ask you what you’ll be doing in ten years, you’ll have a clear picture in your mind.

“In fact, let’s do that now,” continued The Design Coach. “Richard, have you used any visualisation techniques before?”

“No, not really,” he replied.

“Good,” encouraged The Design Coach, “you’re really moving into some new areas today, aren’t you? Are you enjoying yourself?”

“Yes, I am, I...” Richard hesitated, then continued, “I guess it’s a lot like looking at oneself in the mirror. Sometimes I haven’t been too keen on what I’ve been saying about myself, but I guess that’s all part of moving forward, isn’t it?”

“Yes it is,” replied The Design Coach, “sometimes we have to face the music and honestly acknowledge that things can always be better. Once we realize that, we can set in place a plan of action to have the life we truly want.”

“And a Home-Office we love,” offered Richard.

“Absolutely,” concurred The Design Coach, “Now for the visualisation to create in your mind’s eye the Home-Office you love. Basically the suggestion is that you relax, close your eyes and just go with whatever comes up. Are you comfortable with that Richard?”

“Do I have to close my eyes?” asked Richard.

“No, not if you don’t want to, most people tend to prefer it that way, that’s all. So relax Richard, you’re going to enjoy this.”

Richard repositioned himself in his chair and closed his eyes as The Design Coach began to speak in a soft, smooth voice.

“Richard I want you to relax and feel how comfortable you are... as you hear my voice you will probably relax more and more and that’s okay... your breathing may slow down and you may begin to loosen your shoulders too...

“...now, that you’re relaxed I want you to play a fun, little game... a game that you’ll enjoy because you can have anything you want... that’s right, anything you want... and we’re going to play this game in the future... in fact we’re going to play this game ten years in the future...

“...now you may want to ask yourself... where am I...in ten years time... where would you like to be... notice what’s happening... what can you hear... what do you feel...

“...and you may want to ask yourself... who am I... in ten years time... and who would you like to be... notice the feelings and the sounds of who you are...

“...and you may want to ask yourself... what am I doing now... in ten years time... and what you would like to be doing... and notice what’s there... here in the future ...and how that would feel to be doing whatever you want...”

“...and you may want to ask yourself if there is a special one... or a special group... that you would like to share this with...”

“...and now you may want to ask yourself... if there is an overall sensation of your life... in ten years time... what would that be...”

“... and now you may want to return your awareness... back to this room and now... you can open your eyes...”

The Design Coach paused and watched as Richard slowly opened his eyes and began gazing around the room. He produced a big smile as he stretched his arms above his head.

“How was that?” asked The Design Coach.

“That was good, really good,” replied Richard nodding his head. “I really got some strange sensations as we went through it, but it all felt so good, talk about A Home-Office You Love...”

Richard’s voice tailed off as he broke into an even broader smile.

“Well done Richard,” offered The Design Coach, “I’m glad you liked that experience. Now in ten years time what would it be like if all of that was really happening, would that be okay?”

“That would be sensational!” exclaimed Richard.

“Okay, now the next step to getting there,” suggested The Design Coach, “is to write down all of what you’ve just experienced that turned you on in such a special way. Do you think you can do that?”

“Sure,” replied Richard eagerly, as he grabbed his pen.

The Design Coach reached over to his briefcase and pulled out a sheet of paper that looked like this:

The Home-Office I Love

In ten years time the date will be:

1 Where am I?

Consider: Climate, Location, Country, Buildings

2 Who will I be?

Consider: Parent, Partner, Business Role, Reputation

3 What am I doing?

Consider: Tasks, Business, Leisure, Retired

4 Who are you with?

Consider: Partner, Family, Employees

5 How will I feel?

Consider: Health, Fitness, Attitude to Life

The Design Coach handed the sheet to Richard who began working on it immediately.

After some time, Richard had covered the page with his description. He then put his pen to his mouth and looked at The Design Coach.

“I’m done,” suggested Richard.

“Excellent!” stated The Design Coach, “It looks like you’ve been very thorough. That’s good, the more details, and the more specific you can be the better you can hone into your goal. It’s a bit like a treasure hunt, the more details you have on your treasure map, the more likely you’ll find what you’re looking for. Also, and perhaps even more importantly, the more specifically you define your goal, the more likely you’ll know when you’ve got it.”

“What do you mean? Of course I’ll know when I’ve got it,” laughed Richard.

“Not necessarily,” countered The Design Coach in a more serious tone of voice, “One of my friends has been working eighty hours a week in several businesses. His goal is to be rich so he can retire before he turns forty. Recently I asked him, ‘How much money do you have to have before you’ll be rich and retired?’ He just stopped and looked at me and mumbled back, ‘I don’t know.’

“For all he knows, he may already have enough. Last time I spoke with his wife, she told me that he’d cut his hours in half and was training someone to take over his job.

“Now, where are we at?” asked The Design Coach rhetorically. “Oh, that’s right. You’ve just outlined your scenario for the Home-Office you love. I’ve found that to be the most effective way to write goals for designing a Home-Office, simply create an ideal scenario of what it’ll be like when it’s finished. The sheet you’ve just filled in can be written up as a story if you like...”

“You mean like a movie script?” interjected Richard.

“Yes, spot-on, like a movie script, I like that comparison,” commented The Design Coach. “You can write a number of different ones if you’re really keen. For instance, I had a client recently who was a writer. She said she had a great time writing up a number of different scenarios around her Home-Office. She wrote them along different themes, such as her ideal Winter’s

day, her ideal Summer's day, an ideal client visit, her ideal work day, her ideal employee, her ideal location and her ideal climate.

"At the time she was looking for a partner, so she even wrote one for that! Funnily enough, what was really special, she put a deadline on her scenario of one week to find her ideal partner and guess what? They're now sharing a house."

"So are you trying to tell me that it will definitely work, that I simply have to write it down and it will happen?" asked Richard, somewhat cynically.

"No, not at all," replied The Design Coach, "It's a bit like tuning a radio into your favourite station. If you don't have a favourite, then that's easy, any one will do. If you do have a favourite then you must have some criteria as to why it is your favourite, so when you find it, you'll know that you've tuned in to the right one."

"I believe the lady I was just talking about, had known her partner for many years and just hadn't realised they were such a good match. That's one of the key benefits of goal-setting, it focuses the mind and raises your awareness to what you've got and what you haven't.

"Actually, that reminds me of a client I visited some months back who lives and works down along the coast. After I'd worked with him, he handed my workbook onto a friend who also worked from home. She completed all the exercises with the intention of calling me to coach her on enhancing her Home-Office.

"Anyway, after she completed the exercises, particularly the scenarios and the goal-setting, she came to the conclusion she didn't need me. She was living on the coast and had turned her hobby into a successful business. Her ideal day was already in place!"

Both men paused for several moments, before Richard's head dropped and he spoke in a more sombre tone, "But, how am I going to make it all happen, it seems such a long way off?"

"Yes, ten years is a long time," agreed The Design Coach. "Can you remember all the changes, all the experience, all the things that you've done over the past ten years?"

Both men sat in silence for some time. Then Richard spoke.

"Yes, I guess that is a long time to achieve the goal. But how do I get started?"

It seems like I've just set myself the task of climbing a huge mountain.”

“Now, that's an interesting way of describing it,” commented The Design Coach, “Now we'll break that mountain down into a series of smaller hills. Would that make it easier for you?”

“Absolutely,” replied Richard.

The Design Coach reached down into his briefcase once again and withdrew several sheets of paper. He scanned over them and handed one of them to Richard. The page looked like this:

Milestones to Create the Home-Office I Love

Ten Years

The Date in Ten Years will be:

The main goal I want to achieve in ten years time is...

Six Years

The Date in Six Years will be:

Presuming that I'm on track to achieve my ten year goal, after six years I will have achieved...

Three Years

The Date in Three Years will be:

After three years I will have achieved...

One Year

The Date in One Year will be:

After one year I will have achieved...

Six months

The Date in six months will be:

After six months I will have achieved...

Three months

The Date in three months will be:

After three months I will have achieved...

One month

The Date in one months time will be:

After one month I will have achieved...

One week

The Date in one weeks time will be:

After one week I will have achieved...

“Do you think you can fill this one in Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“Sure,” came the reply.

“Do you have any questions?” enquired The Design Coach.

“No,” responded Richard, who was clearly eager to complete the exercise.

“Go for it then!” suggested The Design Coach.

In a flurry of activity, Richard wrote an extensive list of responses that completely filled the page. When he had finished he looked up at The Design Coach and smiled.

“That makes it all seem possible now,” offered Richard. “The mountains are now a series of neat little plateaus that I can climb one by one.”

“Great, that’s what I like to hear,” commented The Design Coach, “Is there anything else you’d like to say about it?”

“I like the bit about doing something this week,” commented Richard, “It really brings it closer to home, it puts it all within reach.”

Both men paused for several moments.

The Design Coach then looked at the remaining piece of paper in his hand and announced, “Great Goal Guidelines! That’s next.”

Richard was somewhat puzzled by this, but said nothing as The Design Coach continued.

“You know setting goals has become such a powerful activity, that researchers have uncovered a series of guidelines that suggest ways to write your goals for maximum effect. I call them the ‘Great Goal Guidelines’. Have a look at this...”

The Design Coach handed the sheet to Richard and he read the following words:

11 Great Goal Guidelines

1 Positive

What do I want and not what I don't want.

2 Present

State the goal in the present tense, ie. 'I have...' or 'I am...', as if I already have it.

3 Specific

The more specific my description in terms of what I'll see, what I'll hear and what I'll feel the better, particularly when I review the goal through regular visualisations.

4 Chunk the Steps into Milestones

Break down my major goal into a series of small chunks that are big enough to motivate me and small enough to be achieved. I may consider rewarding myself as I achieve each milestone.

5 Self-generated

Ask myself, 'Is my goal self-initiated and within in my control?' or 'Does it overly rely on someone else?'

6 Realistic

Ask myself, 'Is this goal possible?' and 'Is it reasonable to expect that I can achieve it?'

7 Deadline

Dreams don't have deadlines, goals do. When will I achieve my goal?

8 Evidence

What evidence will I have that I have completed my goal?

9 Resources

Ask myself, 'What resources will I need to achieve this goal?'

10 Ecology

Is it desirable to achieve this goal? What are the side effects of achieving this goal?

11 Take Action!

Achievement = Goal-setting + Goal-getting.

Once Richard had finished reading the list, he looked at The Design Coach and asked, "Can you explain the 'self-generated' one, please?"

"Sure," replied The Design Coach, "Let me give you an example. Let's think back to the time before you'd married Joan. If you want to set the goal that you would marry her, that's not something that you can totally control. To marry Joan requires her permission, if she doesn't give you permission, you can't achieve your goal."

"So you mean that some things are not good goals?" enquired Richard, "Like, I shouldn't set a goal like that?"

"Let's just compare the difference between the goal 'I'm marrying Joan', to the goal 'I'm asking Joan to marry me'," continued The Design Coach, "Now,

one of these options is something that you can do entirely by yourself, the other is something that is not totally within your control. I'd suggest that the limit of what you can do in this situation is to ask Joan if she'd marry you, the rest is up to her. It simply saves a lot of frustration beating yourself up over something that you have no control over."

"Yeah, I get it now," replied Richard.

Richard looked back at the eleven goal guidelines and then asked, "You said before that I could have anything that I wanted and now you want me to be realistic, aren't you contradicting yourself here?"

"There's an important difference between what's possible and what's realistic," countered The Design Coach. "I had a client who wanted the sun to shine in her Home-Office all day, every day. Now that is theoretically possible, but highly unlikely. I simply suggested to her that she clarify how much sun shine she actually wanted. In the end, her goal was to move interstate where it was sunny most of the time.

"The other angle on this, particularly when we first create the goals, is to start with your wildest dreams and then we can link it back to what you're willing to do to get your goal. I have a friend who says he's going to buy an island and retire on it. That's a great goal and it's certainly possible. For most people, it's highly unrealistic because they're not going to generate the millions of dollars that it'll take to achieve that goal.

"My friend is a little more determined than most, he wants that island very much. He recently quit the job he'd had for twenty years and is training to be a stockbroker because he figures that's what it's going to take for him to reach his goal. Does that answer your question?"

"Yes, it does," replied Richard. "I guess that example of the guy buying the island is about what resources you'll need also?"

"That's right," agreed The Design Coach, "What's it going to take to get your goal? Is it lots of money? Is it lots of knowledge? Is it knowing the right people? Then you can ask yourself, 'What do I have to do to get that?'"

"One more question," asked Richard, "How can it not be desirable to get your goal?"

"The most famous example of that is King Midas. Have you heard that story before?" asked The Design Coach.

“Isn’t he the guy who turned everything he touched into gold?” offered Richard, “I’d have thought that would be pretty good?”

“In some circumstances it would be,” laughed The Design Coach, “you’d certainly become very rich, but Midas had a problem, he couldn’t eat. All the food he touched turned to gold too.”

Richard shook his head and laughed quietly as The Design Coach continued, “The ecology check is to ask you to consider what getting your goal is going to cost you. You’re probably aware of the fame and adulation, and sometimes money, that can result from winning an Olympic Gold Medal. You’re probably also aware of the sacrifices and the single-mindedness it takes simply to compete at that level of competition. At some point in time you’re going to ask yourself, ‘Is this worth it?’

“You may remember, I was telling you about my friend who was working eighty hours a week to get rich and retire. His motivation is to be able to provide for his family. What he needs to take into account is if he keeps working those hours, he may not have a family to go home to.”

“Okay, are you comfortable with those guidelines now?” asked The Design Coach.

“Sure,” replied Richard.

“Good, now you may want to check that you’ve written your goals in accordance with those guidelines,” encouraged The Design Coach.

As Richard began to compare the eleven guidelines with the goals he had written, The Design Coach tapped Richard’s desk with his hand and suggested, “One more thing, you may want to rewrite your goal in a very specific format. You may want to write something to the effect, ‘It is now such and such a date, I am in my Home-Office and ...’ and then you can add in where you are, what you see and hear and feel and all the other details that’ll make you know that you’ve reached your goal.”

After several minutes of reviewing and amending his goals, Richard put his pen down and leaned back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling. Slowly the smile on his face began to grow.

He then looked at The Design Coach and said, “I’m beginning to get a little excited by all this. It would be so good to have a Home-Office like that and it all seems so possible now.”

“I’m pleased to hear that Richard,” replied The Design Coach, “being excited about something is a very positive form of motivation. That’s good. Now, we’ve one more exercise to firmly plant the seed of that idea in your mind. Are you ready for another visualisation exercise?”

“Yes, I am,” agreed Richard, “I wasn’t so sure about doing that before, but now that I have I can see the benefit of it all, and it was an enjoyable thing to do as well.”

“Good, thank you for that feedback, it’s good to hear that we’re getting results here,” replied The Design Coach, who also offered a broad smile. “I would like you to make yourself comfortable in your chair and relax. If you want to close your eyes you can, if that’ll help you relax.”

Richard repositioned himself in his chair and closed his eyes. The smile on his face remained.

The Design Coach then continued in a soft, smooth voice, “Richard, as you hear my voice and relax...

“...I want you to put yourself in the Home-Office you love...

“...as you now find yourself there...

“...I want you to notice all the things that are there...

“...as you now hear different things...

“...as you feel what it’s like to be there, in the Home-Office you love...

“...as you now spend a few moments there, enjoy what it is like...

“...as you make any changes that you may want to make...

“...you may want to see yourself in your Home-Office you love...

“...and as you think about that special place...

“...notice what it will be like...

“...attune yourself to what it will be like...

“...and as you get an impression of how wonderful that will be...

“...you can now, pick the right moment...

“...to return to this room and open your eyes.”

After a brief time, Richard opened his eyes and gave out a little laugh as he looked around the room and stretched his arms, high over his head.

“How was that?” asked The Design Coach.

“That was even better than before,” suggested Richard, “it all seemed so real.”

“Excellent,” replied The Design Coach, “You know, that you can practising seeing yourself in your Home-Office you love anytime you want now. This is just like those world-class athletes who practise seeing themselves performing at their very best. And, congratulations Richard...”

The Design Coach paused and Richard waited for him to finish his sentence. Before he did, The Design Coach stood up from his chair and extended his hand toward Richard.

“Congratulations,” repeated The Design Coach as they shook hands, “you’ve just designed your Home-Office, the Home-Office you love.”

18

Richard was rather pleased with his efforts so far. He'd not only worked out his mission around his Home-Office, he'd uncovered his values, established several new beliefs, uncovered his strategies and actions for getting things done and written his goals down for what he wanted. He sat contentedly with a big smile on his face as The Design Coach spoke.

“Great work Richard, now that we've all the pieces, we simply have to put the puzzle together.”

The Design Coach then reached into his briefcase and pulled out three small balls.

Richard had been surprised by many of the things that The Design Coach had done during the day, and this was surely the most surprising of all.

The Design Coach held the balls up for Richard to see. They had a rubber surface, like a balloon; one was red, another blue and the other was green. They were all about the size of a tennis ball.

The Design Coach looked at Richard and smiled, “Now, as we work toward your mission of ‘Creating A Home-Office You Love’ , you could say that we've done the preseason training and now it's time to begin playing the game as we work toward your premiership. To explain how we're going to do this, I'm going to teach you how to juggle.”

“What!” exclaimed Richard, having now recognised the balls that were in The Design Coach's hand, “I can't do that!”

“Relax Richard,” replied The Design Coach, in a soothing tone of voice, “I'm your coach remember. I'm going to work with you on this. If it makes it any easier, that's how I reacted when I was invited to learn.

“I have a friend who's a corporate trainer for a large organisation. One day I was over at his place for dinner with his wife and family and he started talking about how he'd just learnt to juggle. We were sitting at the dining table having our meal and he was trying to explain how to do it. This was becoming a little awkward, you know, there are some things you just have to do to fully understand. It's a bit like telling someone what a particular food tastes like. It's easier to do it, than to put it into words.

“So Alan, my friend, says ‘C’mon, you have to have a go at this.’ I wasn’t so sure about it though, I’d tried several times before practising on my own, and I hadn’t been able to.

“Alan then said, ‘The first step to learning to juggle is to believe that you can’. In fact, I think his specific words were, ‘Whether you believe you can or not, you’re right.’ Well, that made sense to me, if I believed there was no chance that I could do it, then I guess there was no chance that I could. At that point I chose to accept the challenge of learning to juggle.

“So Alan put the juggling balls in my hands and said, ‘The second step is... To be able to catch the balls, you first have to throw them.’ So, I threw the balls as he’d shown me how and then picked all three of them off the floor. I then threw them again, this time, I caught one of them and dropped the other two. He then said, ‘Great, you’ve now completed the second step to juggling.’

“I said, ‘What do you mean, I dropped two of them?’ Alan replied, ‘Celebrate your small victories for they take you down the path of great victories. You caught one more ball than last time, that’s a big step forward. Let’s aim for catching two balls next time.’

“So I practised some more and a couple of minutes later, I was able to catch two of them. Then I went for one more, to catch all three balls. After some time this was becoming somewhat elusive, then Alan said, ‘The fourth rule of juggling is... Dropping balls simply means you need more distinctions around catching them.’ And I guess, I’d never juggled before so I couldn’t really expect to be the world champion in five minutes. So I followed his suggestion and started focusing on catching the balls.

“As I continued striving for that third ball, Alan said, ‘The fifth rule is... There are only two parts to juggling. Throwing the ball and catching it. Everything else is a refinement of these two skills.’ He then suggested I play around with making really subtle variations in the way I was throwing the ball and the way I was holding my hand to catch it.

“So it probably took half an hour, but boy, by the end of that time was I good at catching all three balls. And then Alan said, “Now is always a good time to pause and reflect upon what you’ve accomplished so far. We need to regularly pause to check our progress and to acknowledge that we’re doing a good job.’ This really made me feel good, because at the start I didn’t even think that I could get this far and here I was making it all happen.

“Then Alan told me, ‘Now that you’ve got all the skills, the throwing and catching, to move onto the next phase you simply do more of what you’re doing. Juggling is a process, it’s a movement back and forth between all the parts. You throw up one part, catch the other, throw up the next and so forth. It requires total co-ordination of all the pieces in the puzzle. It’s when all these pieces are working together as one whole that we get the full effect of juggling.’

“Well, it didn’t happen right away, but I did practise for a little while after and I got there. And, when I got there, I was so excited, it made all the efforts of picking up the balls as they fell to the ground worthwhile.

“About a month later, I met up with Alan again and I showed him how well I was doing. All the pieces had well and truly fallen into place and I was juggling like a champion. So Alan showed me some more manoeuvres to practise and now I can juggle in a number of different ways.

“So that’s what we need to do now, shall we have a go at putting it all together?” enquired The Design Coach.

“Absolutely,” replied Richard with total enthusiasm, “Let’s go for it.”

19

“Now, to put all this together Richard, it would be really useful to look at all the things that we’ve worked through so far. Why don’t you have a quick flick through the exercises that we’ve done, just to remind yourself of all your good work.”

Richard, picked up the bundle of pages that lay upon his desk in front of him. He looked at his mission statements; the beliefs he had written down; the things that were important to him about his Home-Office; the strategies he used to operate his business, the results of his time-inventory and the goals he had set for his Home-Office in ten years time.

“We’ve really covered a lot of territory, haven’t we?” commented Richard.

“Yes, we certainly have come a long way. Isn’t that a satisfying feeling?” responded The Design Coach.

Richard simply smiled.

“Do you know what we’ve been working toward all this time Richard?”

“A Home-Office I Love!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, that’s the overall framework of what we’ve been aiming for. More specifically, we’ve been working toward creating a Home-Office Map.”

“A Home-Office Map? I’m not sure Jenny mentioned that,” offered Richard, “Hold on, now I remember, that’s the picture she created that’s hanging on the wall of her new Home-Office. She put it in a gold frame and it sits opposite her desk so she can see it whenever she’s working.”

“Perfect! That’s exactly what I’d suggest you do,” concurred The Design Coach, “...and that’s exactly what we’re going to do right now. Does that sound like a good idea Richard?”

“Absolutely! I knew all this was leading to something solid. So how do we get started then?”

“What do you mean get started? You do realize you’ve already completed 90% of what there is to do?”

“No. No, I didn’t,” replied Richard somewhat surprised.

“All the exercises we’ve done uptil now provide the ingredients for your Home-Office Map. We’ve been teasing out all the little bits and pieces that are you and your Home-Office. Effectively, you’ve already created your Map in your mind. Remember our little saying, ‘Our physical world is...’”

The Design Coach paused and Richard completed the sentence.

“...a product of our thoughts.”

“You got it. That’s also why I just asked you to flip through all the good work that you’ve done thus far. It all helps to refresh your memory and it serves to acknowledge yourself, ‘Yes, I have found out a lot of new things about myself, my business, the way I work and about my Home-Office.’”

“Most importantly of all, what you’ve done is created a context for your business plan. You do have a business plan, don’t you Richard?” asked The Design Coach.

“I sure do. But, what do you mean by a context for my business plan? I thought that was all the planning that I needed to run my business effectively.”

“From my experience,” continued The Design Coach, “I’ve found that for people who run their business at a location other than their home, a business plan is often enough. But, for those people, like yourself, who operate their business from their homes, there’s another context to consider.

“That context is how your business fits in with your personal life and your family life. Let me give you an example. Do you have a marketing plan Richard?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Good, then you’ll be comfortable with the idea that your business plan provides the context for your marketing plan. For instance, your business plan identifies what sort of business you’re in, your financial projections, opportunities for growth, et cetera, et cetera. So, it follows that your marketing plan provides a specific strategy for selling those things you’ve already focussed upon in your business plan.

“Now, you’ll probably agree that it really isn’t very useful to have a business plan for a restaurant and a marketing plan for a consulting business. Likewise, it’s not very useful to define how you’re going to do your marketing before

you define what it is you're going to market. In other words, you wouldn't write your marketing plan before your business plan."

Richard put his hand up to his chin as he began to speak slowly.

"So... what you're saying is...my marketing plan... fits the context of my business plan and... my business plan fits the context of my Home-Office Map. Is that it?"

"In a nutshell, that's it," commented The Design Coach, "I'm proposing that your Home-Office Map provides a bigger picture of where your business plan fits into your life.

"Now, I have a further suggestion for you. You may want to go back to your questionnaire responses because there are a couple of key questions there that deal specifically with this issue. I think it's question number 7 and number 14. Have a look at what you wrote down for those two."

Richard picked up the pages on his desk and filed through them until he found his questionnaire responses.

"Yes, it's number 7," answered Richard who began to read the question aloud, "What's the biggest influence on my Home-Office?' (a) The demands of my business; (b) The demands of my family; or (c) My personal demands."

"What did you put down?" asked The Design Coach.

"I put down 'business'," came the reply.

"What about question 14?"

"Ah, question 14, 'How does my Home-Office reflect my business?' (a) It is a true reflection of my business; (b) It is a true reflection of me, my business and my family; or (c) It is simply the place where I complete most of my work."

"What did you put down?" asked The Design Coach.

"I put down 'c', I thought it was simply the place where I did all my work."

After several moments of silence, Richard began talking with an urgent tone of voice, "But I thought business was the right answer, I guess I didn't realise the full implications of what a Home-Office is."

“Relax Richard. There is no right or wrong answer, simply the one that you are most comfortable with at the time you did the questionnaire. You could also use this as a measuring stick to compare what you were happy with previously and what you are now happy with.

“Richard, when you were a little kid did you believe in Santa Claus?”

“Uh, yeah...” responded Richard in a hesitant tone of voice.

“Do you believe in Santa Claus now?”

Richard laughed, “No, now I play Santa Claus for my family.”

“So what happened?” enquired The Design Coach.

He paused and waited for Richard to comment and then continued.

“If I can suggest that maybe you found out some new information about the world and then you simply changed your mind. And you’re welcome to change your mind about your Home-Office and how you organise it. Likewise, you can change your mind about your business and how you run it and you can also do that with your family and how you relate to them too.

“Can I also remind you that the whole aim of everything that we’re doing here is to allow you to consider the widest possible range of implications of running your business from home. My role, as your coach, is to present a different context for you to consider your Home-Office.

“Effectively, that’s what a coach does. I stand in a different place to you and therefore I’m able to see different things about where you’re at.”

“Well you’ve certainly done that,” replied Richard, “You’ve really spun me around. The shift from what I was looking for when I did this questionnaire earlier to what I’m thinking about now is... well, it’s just fantastic.”

“Great! You deserve the congratulations for answering all the questions that I’ve asked. Let’s now move onto the physical creation of your Home-Office Map. Before we do that, have you any questions that you’d like to ask?”

Richard put his hand to his chin and leaned back on his chair.

After several moments of silence, Richard asked, “Well, the obvious one for me at the moment is: ‘Why is it called a Home-Office Map?’ You’ve been

comparing it to business plans so far, so why didn't you call it a Home-Office Plan?"

"That's a good question," responded The Design Coach.

"Firstly, you may like to think of a Home-Office Map as being like a treasure map. When I was younger I was fascinated by all the stories about pirates and their treasure maps. They always revolved around a journey full of great excitement and extraordinary adventures. The stories almost always started out with the dream about the existence of the treasure. Then, once the map was found, it became possible to find the treasure and that's when the adventure really began. Then the story would show their travels and all the battles along the way until finally they would reach that point to come across the wealth and riches of their buried treasure.

"That's really appealing to me, and that's effectively what we're doing here, except with one little twist. The pirates have a map with a path on it to some unknown treasure. In other words, when they dig up their buried treasure, they don't really know what they're going to find.

"I prefer to do it another way. I suggest that we define what the treasure will be before we get there. This way there's guaranteed excitement about your reward. And, this way it also frees up the path to how you get there. So you can take any route you like and you'll know when you've made it because you'll be able to compare what's there to your map.

"The second point is that ultimately creating the map is the first step. Clearly we haven't made any physical changes to your Home-Office yet. Now that we have the map of what we're after, we could sit down and create some specific plans to change your environment. In other words we could create some architectural drawings. And that's where it could be a bit confusing to distinguish between the 'Home-Office Plan' and the 'Home-Office plans'.

"Also, for many people that I work with, it's simply not appropriate to draw up architectural plans. Sometimes a simple change in behaviour, a shift to an entirely new location; or maybe it's as easy as a shift in the furniture is all that's required to take the step toward the Home-Office they love.

"Any other questions Richard?" asked The Design Coach.

"Can we start making the actual map now?"

“Absolutely!” came the reply and The Design Coach reached down into his briefcase and drew out a large sheet of paper that he unfolded and handed to Richard.

“Here you go Richard. Here’s a sheet of paper to get you started. You’re welcome to get a smaller or larger sheet if you wish. Just remember you may want to frame it and put it on your wall. And the lonely Picasso print could certainly do with some company.”

They both laughed.

20

“So what are the rules about creating a Home-Office Map?” enquired Richard.

“There’s only one rule and that is: There are no rules,” replied The Design Coach.

Richard shook his head and commented, “I had to ask, but somehow I knew you were going to say that. Okay, there’s no rules, but do you have any suggestions?”

“Thanks for asking,” began The Design Coach. “Yes, I do have some suggestions. Let me firstly suggest what we’re aiming for. The goal is to incorporate on a single sheet of paper, that can be framed and readily visible, all the work that we’ve done so far.”

“So I could paste all these pages on a bit of card and stick them on my wall.”

“Yes, you’re quite welcome to do that if you wish,” replied The Design Coach. “However, let us also consider the context we’re working within here. What’s that context again?”

Richard sat quietly for several moments and then in a flash of inspiration, he shouted, “A Home-Office I Love!”

“That’s it. So what you may want to consider is this question, ‘How does my Home-Office Map promote my pursuit of A Home-Office You Love?’ Does that provide a useful context for you Richard?”

Richard leaned back in his chair and said, “I guess that’s like the treasure map we were talking about before. It would be really good if it was really enticing, wouldn’t it?”

“Sure, you could make it as enticing as you possibly could.”

“There’s just one thing though, I’m not really very good at drawing,” offered Richard.

“What’s that got to do with anything?” asked The Design Coach.

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It will be beautiful to you because of what it represents, not what it looks like. Also, the only prize we’re after

here is for you to have A Home-Office You Love. That's our purpose here. I'd suggest, you simply do it in a way that relates to the Home-Office that you truly want to create.

"That also leaves it wide open as to how you do that. I didn't say you had to draw anything. You can use photographs, cuttings from magazines, scanned images, clip art, whatever takes your fancy.

"I had one client who wanted to work from a Home-Office deep within a forest of trees. In his Home-Office Map he incorporated all sorts of leaves and bark and pictures of native birds. He even burns Eucalyptus oil in a aromatherapy burner on his desk to remind him of what he's working toward. Does that give you some room to move?"

"Can I get someone else to draw it for me?" asked Richard.

"Sure, if that's what you want. But, do you know what's going to happen when a client visits you in your Home-Office? They're going to ask you about your Home-Office Map and you're going to tell them that it represents the Home-Office You Love. And then, you're going to say, 'but I didn't do it, somebody else did'. Is that going to be very powerful for you?"

"I would simply encourage you to create one for yourself just to see the power that really is inside of you. It also could be really good to create it for yourself because then you know, you really know, that this is your creation and it's upto you to bring it into existence.

"Please remember, there's a point at which you're the only one that can make it happen. After all, it is the Home-Office You Love, not mine, not your next door neighbours, it's yours!"

"It may be, that when a client comes into your Home-Office and they ask about your Home-Office Map, and I know they'll ask, then you'll be able to stand up and be inspired about what you're working toward. I'll also bet if you're inspired, then they'll be inspired by you too! And that, may be a good basis for you to be effective in your business because they'll know they're dealing with someone who knows exactly what they want.

"You may also want to consider that you can create a Home-Office Map totally out of words. One client I worked with did exactly that. First of all, she simply framed up the contract she signed."

"What contract?" asked Richard.

“The commitment that you signed. You know, the one that says, “I hereby declare that I am committed to creating a Home-Office I Love”. What was really special was, that not only had she signed the contract, her husband and her three children had signed it also.

“At first that was her complete Home-Office Map. Then, a month or so later, she sat down with her family and they created another Home-Office Map and they all put down in words what they wanted. Then a short time after that, they sat down and put down images that represented the words. You may want to take this step-by-step approach if you wish.

“There’s also something special about creating images for your Home-Office Map. One lady who teaches meditation and massage from her home, said something really interesting to me. She said when she first created her Home-Office Map that having all the words in front of her was not very inspiring. Then, when she created some images, and I think she used some absolutely gorgeous photographs, she found the images were coming up frequently in her meditations. That would seem to me to be a great way of literally taking on board the things that you want to have happen.

“I also had an interesting response from a music therapist. She created her Home-Office Map and was very happy to have it on her wall. Then she started to play around with some music one day and wrote a song about it. Now she sings her ‘Home-Office I Love’ song everyday. She also created a tape that she plays each night before going to bed. That’s another great way of putting your plan into your mind’s awareness on a regular basis.

“So as you can see there are lots of different ways of doing this. I’ve simply found putting images on a sheet of paper and hanging it on your wall is one of the simplest and most effective methods, for the majority of people.

“Now that you have your sheet of paper in front of you, you may want to layout your Home-Office Map. At this point, the only instruction I usually give is to say: ‘Represent what a Home-Office You Love means to you on this sheet of paper.’”

“What do most people do?” asked Richard.

“There are two general approaches,” continued The Design Coach.

“The first approach reflects the basic structure that we’ve been using. In other words, their representation revolves around the idea of who we are, in

other words, our mission statements and some people start with that in the centre of their page.

“Then they add the other levels in a series of concentric circles stemming out from there. For example, next you might add your beliefs, then the things that are important to you, your strategies, the things you do and then around the edge, it could be good to put down lots of things about your goals.

“What about a picture of myself and my family in the middle, would that be good?” asked Richard.

“That could be very good. Yes, that’s a good idea Richard,” continued The Design Coach, “You may even want to put a picture of your heroes there too.”

“My heroes, what do you mean?” asked Richard.

“We’ve all got our heroes in life. Remember, when you were a little kid, we all wanted to be just like our Mums and our Dads. They’re usually our first heroes in life.

“A hero is really anyone who you really admire, it could be your wife or a friend. It also may be someone famous that has done something that inspires you, I really admire Albert Einstein and Pablo Picasso, they’re two of my heroes.

“Alternatively, it could be someone who you want to be like. For instance, I really admire Martin Luther King and the powerful way he presents himself. Do you remember his “I have a dream” speech? I can hear the power in his voice ringing through my mind as he speaks those words and that really inspires me.

“The second approach is to focus on the goals that you’ve set for yourself and creating a representation solely of the goals you’ve set yourself.

“Another client, who was a graphic designer, created a wall size mural in his studio. It really is a stunning inspiration for him. Almost every minute he spends in his studio he is reminded of what he’s working toward and that can be so powerful.

“And what’s really great is that when his clients visit, they always ask him where’s he at in relation to the Map on his wall. This has helped enormously in building the relationships with his clients. Furthermore, his clients are even suggesting all sorts of ways of how he can achieve his goal. This has been so successful he’s reached his six year goal after only six months. Can you believe that?”

“Wow, that is spectacular,” commented Richard.

Both men sat in silence to ponder that thought for several moments.

Then Richard looked up and asked, “What if I want to change something in my Home-Office Map?”

“That might be something you want to allow to happen and you can do that in the way you create your Home-Office Map.

“One lady I worked with, simply put a really large sheet of paper on her wall and spends five minutes a day adding to her Home-Office Map. She refines it, she changes it, she adds more detail to it and most importantly of all, that five minutes she spends on it each day allows her to continually stay focussed on what she wants.

“Richard, can I make one last suggestion?” asked The Design Coach.

“Sure, fire away,” replied Richard.

“This suggestion is a really powerful one and underlines all of what we’ve been talking about and reinforces the whole reason we’ve been doing what we’ve been doing today. To show how important it is that you appreciate this point, I’ve written it down on a sheet of paper for you. Just a moment...”

With that pause, The Design Coach reached down into his briefcase once more and pulled out a single piece of paper and handed it to Richard.

On the page were the following words:

The Home-Office I Love now exists:

In my mind.

On my wall.

In my life.

Richard looked at the sheet of paper intently and re-read the words to himself several times.

After some time, he looked up at The Design Coach and said: “Can I tick the first box?”

“Yes, you can. And, very soon when you complete your Home-Office Map and put it on your wall, you can tick the second box. Then put this page somewhere special and when you’ve created The Home-Office You Love in your life, tick the final box. And when you do tick that final box, you will be feeling more wonderful and more pleased with yourself than you ever thought possible.

21

“Done,” exclaimed Richard, as he put the finishing touches to his Home-Office Map.

Richard and The Design Coach both stood up and shook hands.

“Congratulations,” offered The Design Coach, “You’ve done very well today Richard. You should be proud of your efforts.”

“Thank you,” he replied emphatically, “thank you very much, it really has been a truly amazing day,” continued Richard. “I have uncovered a great deal of things about myself, I have planned a whole new future, I have the Home-Office Map that we did together to transform this place...”

Richard paused and a big smile emerged on his face.

“You know, I really broke through a few barriers today. When you said that I was going to be doing the designing, I really didn’t think I could, but now...”

As Richard pointed to the Home-Office Map on his desk, he continued, “Look what we’ve achieved. And, I’m really pleased about the way that we’ve been able to identify my ideal situation... my ideal Home-Office and most importantly I now have a way to get there.

“You know, the thing that worried me most about asking you along here was that you’d design some thing that I really wanted but didn’t have a hope of being able to afford. You know, like designing a fantasy land and then you’d leave me salivating for more, without a means of getting to it. Now, I have a series of neat steps, I can act on that today and I can keep working on over a period of time until I reach my objective.

“And the highlight, really was the juggling and putting it all together. I really didn’t think I could do that. Lunch was also spectacular. You’ve really opened my eyes to some new possibilities, in particular, some of the little things and how they can make such an important difference to the day. As you’ve said, ‘The Home-Office is a great lifestyle.’ Thanks again.”

“Thank you Richard,” replied The Design Coach, “I’m pleased that it’s been worthwhile for you too. Well, there’s two things left to do. Firstly, I’ll remind you to put your Home-Office Map on your wall so you can tick that box.

And, I like to celebrate a good day's work.”

The Design Coach then turned and moved toward his cooler, opened the lid and pulled out a bottle of champagne and a couple of glasses. He turned to Richard, “Would you like to drink a toast to having ‘A Home-Office You Love’?”

22

Despite several follow-up visits with Richard, The Design Coach had lost contact with his client as they moved in different directions. Then some time later, a letter arrived.

The letter read as follows:

Dear Coach,

I'm writing to you to let you know how things are going.

You could say that I'm just a little excited, proud and thankful today.

I've just completed my six-monthly review of where my life, my business and my Home-Office is at.

As part of this review I went back over the questionnaire that I'd completed when you first came to visit me some time ago. I'm pleased to say that my rating is now well and truly at the top of the "Home-Office You Love" category.

Whilst I recall your words that the questionnaire is simply a guide to how things are going and not an end in itself, I've used the questionnaire merely to confirm what I'd already thought: I do love my Home-Office. In fact, I'm totally in love with my life!

Even though I shuddered somewhat when I signed that contract to "Create A Home-Office I Love" on that day when we first met, it has really opened a new way of looking at, thinking about and doing things in my home and my work. In fact, I still have it in a picture frame on my wall, alongside my Home-Office Map.

Today, is a special step along this path. Today, I have achieved the final goal that we'd set out on that day when we first met.

Today, I have ticked that one final box. Yes! My Home-Office Map now exists in my life and I am more pleased than I ever thought possible.

However, I must admit, that I'm some time AHEAD of schedule and it's not quite as exciting as expected, it's much better than that!

And, as my business grows and my family grows, I realize that my expectations and aspirations also grow and I am continually raising my standards to new heights. I have just completed a new and improved Home-Office Map for the future.

I also have a suggestion for you. I think you're selling yourself short by using the banner of "Creating A Home-Office You Love", you're really in the business of helping people to "Create A Life You Love" !

Thank you once more!

Best wishes,

Richard.

P.S. Surprisingly, I still remember many of your stories. I'm now flying in formation, kicking goals, buying the shoes that I want and juggling my way to success.

How to Complete Your Time Inventory

Start by printing out 7 copies of the AM and 7 copies of the PM Time Inventory sheets. This will give you enough for a full week. Also, print one copy of the Time Inventory Tally Sheet - keep this for the end of the week.

Then, review the sample Time Inventory on the following page to see how to do it. It's very easy - simply list your activities, mark the time spent on each one and add up your daily score.

Do this for one full week.

Then transfer your results to the Time Inventory Tally Sheet.

Now, sit back and reflect on where you spent your life... I mean that literally. Your time is your life.

Look for opportunities to spend more time doing things that are important and less time doing the things that aren't so important.

Time Inventory

Day *Tuesday*

Date *November 28th*

PM

List your typical activities, then as you go through your day shade in the time spent doing these things.

Activities	12	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	Total
<i>Sleep</i>													0.5
<i>Personal Hygiene</i>													0.5
<i>Eat</i>													2.0
<i>Read Newspaper</i>													
<i>Play with kids</i>													1.5
<i>Take the kids to school</i>													
<i>Clear my in-tray</i>													
<i>Plan my day</i>													
<i>Write Report</i>													4.0
<i>Meeting</i>													
<i>Today's Mail</i>													0.25
<i>Phone Calls</i>													0.25
<i>Networking</i>													
<i>Prepare meals</i>													0.5
<i>Television</i>													1.25
<i>Time alone with Joan</i>													1.25

The Home-Office Questionnaire

Scoring

1	A2	B3	C1		
2	A3	B1	C2		
3	A1	B2	C3		
4	A3	B1	C1		
5	A3	B1	C3	D2	E3
6	A2	B1	C3		
7	A2	B3	C1		
8	A3	B1	C2		
9	A1	B3	C2		
10	A1	B2	C3		
11	A1	B2	C3		
12	A3	B2	C1		
13	A2	B1	C3		
14	A2	B3	C1		
15	A2	B3	C1	D0	
16	A0	B3	C1	D2	
17	A3	B3	C3		

Rating

- 0-24 You may have a Home-Office you Hate!
- 25-44 You may have a Home-Office you Like.
- 45+ You may have A Home-Office You Love!

The important thing at this point in time is to ask yourself, "Is this a fair assessment of my Home-Office as it currently is?"

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About the Author

Geoffrey P. McDonald has a Bachelor of Architecture degree, with Honours, from Deakin University and a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Geoff has worked in Architectural practice in Australia and the United Kingdom.

He has presented at leading design conferences in the United States, Canada and Australia; including The American Institute of Architects Convention and the Union of International Architects Congress.

Geoff has been published in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada.

As the originator of the term “Design-Your-Own” (DYO), Geoff has been developing strategies for all people to design their own environments based around personal design research and the fields of Accelerative Learning and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).

Currently, Geoff operates two complementary businesses:

- As “The Design Coach”, he offers presentations, training, consulting and design services for the Home-Office market. In particular, he offers a one-day, set-fee, personalized design visit based upon this workbook.
- As the Editor of “Home-Office Living” and based upon the framework of this book, he provides specific practical actions to implement in your Home-Office.

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