

CRAFTING AND CREATING POWERFUL OUTCOMES: A LESSON IN LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE EMPOWERMENT DYNAMIC

By David Emerald

What will you create today? Identifying and crafting the statement of your outcome is often more challenging than it may seem on the surface. Recently, I had the opportunity to be with a group of “emerging leaders” from a successful Midwestern U.S. engineering company.

On the last day of their leadership program, we worked with harnessing Dynamic Tension as they planned for putting what they had learned into practice back on the job. The process of harnessing dynamic tension is explained by and through the characters in my book *The Power of TED** (**The Empowerment Dynamic*).

“David, there’s another aspect of the creator life stance that I know Ted will want to tell you about,” Sophia remarked. “It’s the key to creating the outcomes you’ll be envisioning. Since I learned about this tool, I use it to approach almost everything in my life.”

*“There’s a very simple way to understand and harness the process of creating,” said Ted. “The tool Sophia’s talking about is Dynamic Tension. The way you create any outcome in your life is to hold the vision of your deepest desires. At the same time, though, you much honestly and accurately assess your current situation and how it relates to your greater vision. By doing this, you engage a tension between what is and what can be. This tension is the primary creative force behind the manifestation of any outcome. It’s as natural and powerful as the force of gravity.” Chapter 7, *The Power of TED** (**The Empowerment Dynamic*)*

*Power of TED** (**The Empowerment Dynamic*).



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The first step in the process for the leadership group was to write a clear and powerful outcome statement. Once again I was reminded that this is easier said than done. Whatever the focus, powerful desired outcome statements meet the following criteria.

Desired Outcomes are Stated in Present Tense – Outcomes are statements of vision. When we envision something, we see it as complete, whole, finished – to the best of our ability. Some visions are clear and concrete, while others may be more vague with only a sense of direction to guide us. Yet, we need to step “into” that vision and state as if it were already here. For instance, the outcome statement for this article is: “This month’s TED* Article is complete, succinct, inspiring and helpful to readers.” I have written it in present tense; even though it is not yet complete (I am only into the first bullet point here!).

Desired Outcomes are Affirmative – Creators focus on moving toward what they *do want*, rather than resolving or getting away from what they *don’t want*. While a problem may serve as the catalyst for creating a solution, it is the solution/outcome itself that becomes the focus. When you face a problem, it is important to identify what it is that the problem is inhibiting you from having, doing or being. Focus on what you desire and go after it. In creating the solution, the problem will be resolved. This is where many of the leaders in the recent program struggled the most. One started with “I will stop doing it all myself” and another wrote “we will reduce the number of safety violations in the plant.” Eventually, the first person stated, “I am effectively delegating tasks and projects to my staff,” while the second envisioned “We have a culture of safety in our organization.”

Desired Outcomes Answer the Question: “How will I know when I created it?” - As you allow yourself to revel for a few minutes in the “present tense reality” of your envisioned outcome, fine-tune it. What qualities and/or characteristics would you use to describe what you see and experience in your vision? What might be the “success criteria” by which you would be able to declare, “The outcome is complete”?

In the leadership group, the person who focused on delegating saw being with their family all weekend long (rather than her pattern of going to the office for a few hours on Saturday)

and feeling excited about new projects (rather than the weight she felt added when something new emerged). Evidence of a “safety culture” included “employees are making suggestions on preventive safety ideas” and “other plants are benchmarking our practices because of our exemplary safety record.”

Problems are often a catalyst for creating outcomes and solutions. Merely working to eliminate or resolve the problem often leads to quick fixes or reactive responses that are difficult to sustain over time. How do you arrive at your true outcome statement? A useful technique to use is the Problem Reframe.

First, identify a problem that currently faces you. It may be personal or professional – or both. Write the problem down. Now ask: “What is it that I really want?” Here’s the catch, the answer cannot be “to solve the problem.” If the answer is not quick in coming, imagine that somehow the problem was magically solved in an instant. What would the disappearance of the problem allow you to have, do, or be? By answering that question, you will have the beginning clues to what the vision is that the problem stands in the way of. Then finally, write a powerful outcome statement using the criteria above.

Perhaps this example will help: A few years ago my wife and I were working with a group of community leaders in a major metropolitan area. One of the participants was a member of the school board for their unified school district. Their problem was the student dropout rate. “We have *got* to reduce the dropout rate,” was her problem statement. As she shared it with the group, you could see the weight of the issue reflected in her slumped shoulders, her downward gaze and hear it in the tone of victimhood of her voice. After reframing the problem, she declared the outcome that, in her vision with the voice of a creator, “We have a school system that engages students who see it as relevant to them in preparing for college and/or their work lives.” As she spoke, she stood erect, her eyes sparkled and she smiled as she further remarked, “In creating *this*, the dropout rate will cease to be a problem!” She then created an action plan and identified the baby steps for moving toward her passionately stated outcome.

Following these guidelines can help you craft powerful desired outcome statements.

Remember to begin by reframing the problem. Focus on outcomes, giving yourself a goal to step toward. In your experience you may find that as you take the baby steps in creating and accomplishing your outcome, your vision will increase in clarity and concreteness. So, what will you begin to create today?