

“Simply Stated”

“Simplicity gives you time to think about things that really matter.”

-Suzie McWilliams



The year was 1981. Stephanie eagerly took a seat, along with three other competitors she normally called friends, facing the panel of high school teachers, who were today serving as judges, now intensely watching her every move. As she thoughtfully considered the task in front of her, she carefully pondered each square, noting its location to each neighboring square.

As the lead judge, Coach Williams checked the readiness of each competitor. His hand remained above the starting buzzer, ready to press the button that would start the timer. As his hand moved quickly, the starting buzzer sounded! Stephanie instantly grabbed the Rubik's Cube, allowing her fingers to dance across the squares with lightning speed. At 7.9 seconds, she slammed the cube down on the table, hitting the “stop buzzer” with her other hand, noting quickly that her friends continued to move the parts of the cube around in their nimble hands.

As the judges approached Stephanie to congratulate her on her win, one curiously asked what strategy she had used to achieve her success. **“It's not about solving it all at once; it's about breaking it down into very simple, manageable steps.** By focusing on one layer at a time and mastering each simple move, the solution gradually reveals itself. **Simplicity is most often the key to conquering any challenge.”**

As executive coaches, our role frequently involves guiding clients from the realm of complexity to the realm of simplicity. While recognizing the immense significance of drawing out simple, actionable steps from within complex systems our clients navigate or oversee, we must thoughtfully consider the nuances of each client's journey and the varied approaches required to inspire them to pursue simplicity effectively.

In his book, *Developing the Leader Within You*¹, John Maxwell carries this idea of simplicity even further, providing “A Checklist for Change.”

Before embarking on change within an organization, John recommends consideration of the following questions¹:

- *Will this change benefit the followers?*
- *Is this change compatible with the purpose of the organization?*
- *Is this change specific and clear?*
- *Are the top 20 percent (the influencers) in favor of this change?*
- *Is it possible to test this change before making a total commitment to it?*
- *Are physical, financial, and human resources available to make this change?*
- *Is this change reversible?*
- *Is this change the next obvious step?*
- *Does this change have both short- and long-range benefits?*
- *Is the leadership capable of bringing about this change?*
- *Is the timing ideal?*

Acknowledging that the true conversation begins **after** these initial inquiries, we as executive coaches are presented with **distinct opportunities** to steer clients toward **dissecting change** into simple, practical and digestible steps. By doing so, we not only empower them to navigate leadership challenges effectively but also lay the groundwork for organizational success. It is in this process of **simplification and practicality** that true growth and achievement thrive.

In the words of the wise and wonderful, Ms. Suzie McWilliams:

*“Simplicity provides clarity
and clarity often brings inner peace.”*

References:

1. MAXWELL, J. C. (2018). Developing the leader within you. THOMAS NELSON PUB.