



**The Last Word on Power  
Executive Re-invention for Leaders  
Who Must make the Impossible Happen**

**Notes by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA Ph.D.**

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**Author's Bio:** Tracy Goss is one of the foremost experts on transformational leadership. She consults to CEOs and top executives of major communications, technology, banking, food and retailing companies, in the U.S., U.K., and Europe. Ms. Goss is the President of Goss- Reid Associates Inc., and cofounder of the Leadership Center for reinvention, both based in Austin, Texas.

**Author's big thought:** This book is an invitation to accomplish something so extraordinary that it currently seems impossible. A big-stakes game lies at the heart of this book. The author has conducted intensive programs for executive leaders and the key leaders throughout their organizations. So revolutionary is this course that it has changed the lives and organizations of the people who have gone through it. Now, everyone can experience the power of her methodology through this book.

**Chapter Notes:**

**Chapter One: The Power to Make the Impossible Happen**

- The power that brought you to your current position of prominence and responsibility as a leader – the power that is the source of your success in the past – is now preventing you from making the impossible happen in your life and in your work.
- You must acquire a new kind of power: the power to consistently make the impossible happen. The pathway to this new power is to completely “re-invent” yourself: to put at risk the success you’ve become for the power of making the impossible happen.
- The outcome of Executive Re-invention, for those who take it on, is an entirely different relationship with reality, not only with the future but also with the past and the present.
- The author defines this advanced level of power as the ability to take something you believe could never come to pass, declare it possible, and then move that possibility into a tangible reality.
- Once you acquire the capacity to generate the power to make the impossible happen, it cannot be taken away from you. In fact, it increases over time.

- Fortunately, this power can be acquired by anyone- anyone who is committed to something in his or her life that is currently not possible and who is willing to “re-invent” himself or herself to accomplish it. Nobody can achieve that sort of power by copying what someone else did.
- Executive Re-Invention is a series of radical transformations in which you put at stake the success you’ve become for the power of making the impossible happen. Through seven distinct transformations, you completely re-invent yourself as a leader by redefining your reality of the past, present, and future and your relationship to taking risks, winning, action, and being extraordinary. Executive Re-Invention provides you, and allows you to provide others, with the capacity for making the impossible happen regardless of past experience or current circumstances.
- Some people are concerned that the imperative to “re-invent themselves before they re-invent the organization” implies that there is something wrong with them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Executive Re-Invention is not remedial work. It does not even improve the leader’s skills. It takes leaders someplace new, to unknown and unfamiliar territory.
- Executive Re-Invention is not a psychological journey. It’s not a theological journey. It’s not even a philosophical journey. It is primarily an ontological journey. Ontology is that branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality and different ways of *being*. Executive Re-Invention is concerned with the different ways that you as a leader are *being* and how that determines your reality of what’s possible and not possible.
- The purpose of this book is fivefold:
  1. To introduce the path of Executive Re-Invention for leaders and engage them in making the impossible happen
  2. To incite people to see the value of following this path, to re-invent themselves and the leaders of their organizations
  3. To dispel the myths and habits that hold people back from their own destiny
  4. To end the despair about resistance to change in organizations, and, as result of the first four purposes:
  5. To catalyze the emergence of extraordinary leadership in al aspects of everyday life.

### **Leaders Must Reinvent Themselves First**

- If you are going to re-invent your organization, then in order to succeed, you must first re-invent yourself.
- The way key leaders think and act has been a key force in giving the organization its current identity and practices. Therefore, if you are one of these people, and you do not re-invent yourself before you begin, then your re-invention effort will not accomplish what you want.
- The situation of corporate leaders today is that they take on the “top gun” missions of complete corporate re-invention but without any training.
- If you are a breathing human being, you are resistant to change. Like all your fellow human beings, you are designed to be incapable of starting with a clean sheet of paper. This is not a matter of changing what you are *doing*, but of transforming your way of *being*.
- Until you have re-invented yourself to be personally free from the constraints and limitations of your own past (including your own past successes), you will not have the power to deal effectively with what is the source of resistance to change – either your own or that of others.

### **Transforming Your Way of Being versus Changing What You Are Doing**

- *Change* is a function of altering what you are doing – to improve something that is already possible in your reality (better, different, or more). *Transformation* is a function of altering the way you are being – to create something that is currently not possible in your reality.
- The way you are *being* is the source of your reality, which in turn is the source of your *actions*.
- It is difficult to realize in the environment of typical business language that your actions are always the expression of some overall way of being unknown to you, of which your will and decisions are just a part.

### **The Context is Decisive**

- To alter the way you are being, you must engage with the phenomenon of context. *Context* is the human environment that determines the limitations of your actions and the scope of the results your actions can produce.
- This explains why copying someone else’s strategy – while it may improve your reputation – never seems to lead to an effective action.
- Changing processes will not get to the heart of transformation because you cannot get to being from doing. Processes and doing do not provide people with the power to alter their context.
- Creating context is a cornerstone in the foundation of Executive Re-Invention. You shift the way you are being by creating a new context from which to relate to reality.

### **Language is the House of Being**

- Language is the only leverage for changing the context of the world around you. This is because people apprehend and construct reality through the way they speak and listen.
- By learning to discover the concealed aspects of your current conversations and learning to engage in different types of new conversation, you can alter the way you are being, which in turn, alters what’s possible.
- When you create a new context, you create a new realm of possibility, one that did not previously exist.
- The leaders of the American Revolution created a new realm of possibility for humanity. They did this by declaring, “human beings have rights.” This brought about a new political environment.

### **The Stages of Re-Invention**

- This book takes readers through seven separate transformations. Each one involves new skills and new ways of thinking. Each requires some practice, and some willingness to experiment. Each offers an opportunity for broadening your own capabilities, for making the impossible happen in your own life and in the life of those around you.
- The first four stages have to do with freeing yourself from the constraints of the past:

1. Uncovering your winning strategy: learning to recognize the existing sources of power underlying your individual success in the past
2. Experiencing the limits of the Universal Human Paradigm at work in your actions: undoing the context, and the way of being, that lead you to seek continuous improvement instead of re-Invention
3. Learning to put everything at risk: becoming willing to operate with no guarantee that you will succeed, and with your eyes wide open to the high odds of failure and the accompanying consequences
4. Inventing a new master paradigm that provides you with a new source of power: making a series of declarations that constitute a new master paradigm that allows you to engage the forces around you in an unprecedented manner
  - The last three stages build your capacity for making the impossible happen:
5. Inventing an impossible game to play: creating the future that re-invents you as a leader, and making bold promises in the game you have chosen to play, so that you do not spend your life carrying a spear in someone else's opera.
6. Breaking the addiction to interpretation: operating in a reality where there are no "shoulds," and where every problem and dilemma is seen from the standpoint of an invented future rather than through the filters of history
7. Operating beyond the limits of your Winning Strategy: learning to operate beyond compensating for what's not possible. Like building a new set of muscles, this stage develops the capacity to have your everyday acting express the "impossible future" you have invented.

### **Who are the candidates for Re-Inventing Themselves?**

- The "impassioned" CEO or anyone accountable for an organization's future
  - Anyone in the position of being an "executive transformational catalyst"
  - Anyone engaged with a "designated impossibility"
  - Before moving on, ask yourself these three questions. Answer the one which is the most evocative for you.
1. What are you interested in accomplishing that requires you to re-invent yourself to accomplish it?
  2. What would you be committed to accomplishing – if only it were possible?
  3. What's worth accomplishing – so much so that it would be worth re-inventing your whole self?

### **Chapter Two: Uncovering Your Winning Strategy.**

Discovering the Source of Your Success, Which is Also the Source of Your Limitation

- A Winning Strategy is a lifelong, unconscious formula for achieving success. You did not design this Winning Strategy, it designed you. As a human being, and as a leader, it is the source of your success and at the same time the source of your limitations. It defines your reality, your way of being, and your way of thinking. This, in turn, focuses your attention and shapes your actions, thereby determining what's possible and not possible for you as a leader.

### **Success is Never Free**

- Your Winning Strategy is not what you do. It is the source of what you do. It is a manifestation of who you are being. That is why, to a surprising degree, your behavior (what you are doing) is governed by Your Winning Strategy.
- For as long as your Winning Strategy is your ground of being, it will never occur to you to take actions beyond it.
- But as soon as you must take on the impossible, the Winning Strategy will not only cease to be useful, it will impede you from succeeding.
- Your Winning Strategy also determines what, from your point of view, is wrong with other people.
- The purpose of this first stage of transformation is not to find a better Winning Strategy, but (1) to recognize your own individual Winning Strategy and (2) to recognize the Compensating Power principle at work in your own Winning Strategy, and how this affects your current source of power.

### **The Compensating Power Principle**

- The *Compensating Power Principle*: Every time you exercise your Winning Strategy and produce a possible result to compensate for what's "not possible," to an equal degree you expand the scope of what's "not possible," thereby keeping the cycle going.
- Re-inventing yourself does *not* mean replacing one Winning Strategy with another. Any Winning Strategy is as limiting as any other and keeps you trapped in the past. Re-inventing yourself deals with releasing yourself from the grip of all Winning Strategies. It means releasing yourself from the relentless practice of applying any formula that is a compensation for what's not possible.
- Start by asking yourself: In my everyday work life:
- *What do I listen for?* ("listening for") To what is your attention drawn? One way or another, this "listening for" element determines whether or not you will move into action and shapes the action you will take.
- Observe yourself taking notes at meetings or programs. What information do you write down?
- Notice when you feel you're in the right place and things are going well. What gave you the clue that things were okay?
- Ask yourself during conversations, "In what way is what I 'listen for' expressing itself in the conversation that I'm presently having?"
- "Listen for" what it is that prompts others around you to go into action too fast.
- Ask someone who knows you well what they think you "listen for."
- *From what actions do I expect power?* ("so as to act by") What represents an essential solution or action, in any given situation, to produce a successful result? You don't consciously dwell on your actions; they are automatic responses to the context created through your listening.
- Some techniques to uncover this include describing four or five examples of what you look like in action. Are you designing, confronting, persisting, helping, persuading, or taking responsibility? You should begin to see a pattern in your descriptions that expresses how you move forward in order to achieve success. Think about your negative opinion of others.

- People sometime condemn others for not acting “properly” Your opinion of them is a clue to your “so as to act by” element. Examine your own speaking – in both verbal and written form. The act of writing, more deliberate than speech, forces you to choose words that are significant. Your writing holds clues to subtle nuances that reveal your approach to action.
- *What is the desired outcome of my life? (“in order to”)* What’s most important to you in the long run? You act, move, study, talk, and make decisions in order to what? In order to achieve what outcome?
- To articulate this component of your Winning Strategy you can examine your past.
- You can ask yourself what the worst thing is that could happen to you as this element is easiest to spot when it is threatened or thwarted.

### **Expressing Your Winning Strategy as a Whole**

- Think about the three components of your Winning Strategy as a whole. Revealing is truly a discovery process: You must unearth your own Winning Strategy. Your Winning Strategy is as unique to you as your fingerprints.

### **Winning Strategies in Organizations**

- Organizations too, have a Winning Strategy. It is a reflection of the Winning Strategy of the organization’s leaders.
- If the senior leaders are in a position where they can’t be pushed out, and they don’t leave if their own volition, they will push the organization back to the point where they are again needed and feel power. They might say they are willing to do anything to help the organization success, but the Re-Invention process will be undermined.

### **Chapter Three: The Universal Human Paradigm.**

#### The Voice Whispering in Everyone’s Ear

- A paradigm is a constellation of concepts and values shared by a community of people. The larger the community, the more significant and all encompassing the paradigm.
- The context of the *Universal Human Paradigm*, which colors all choices, decisions, and actions, is this:
  - There is a way that things should be.
  - And when they are that way, things are right.
  - When they are not that way, there’s something wrong with me (the interpreter of events), with them (other people) or with it (anything in the world).

#### **The Way Things “Should” or “shouldn’t” Be**

- There is a way that things should be. And when they are that way, things are right. When they’re not that way, something is wrong with you, them, or it.
- This context of the Universal Paradigm is the source of the Winning Strategies described previously.

- Since it's so universal, why be concerned about it? Because the Universal Paradigm, which we have learned from childhood onward, hamstring us in fundamental ways that affect our ability to create the impossible.

### **The Perpetual “Missing Dot”**

- A good way to understand the Universal Human Paradigm is to compare it to a popular game. Think of life as that familiar nine dot puzzle that is often used to show the advantage of “lateral thinking”. The object of the game is to connect a square of nine dots with four straight lines without ever taking your pencil off of the paper. Once we know the trick, of course, the new awareness seems obvious. But it was not obvious before.
- To live your life by the principle that “life should be some way” is to spend your life playing the equivalent of the nine-dot puzzle without connecting the last dot. As soon as you make that last move, at whatever cost it takes, another dot mysteriously opens up elsewhere in your life. You get better and better at playing the connect-the-dots game and you reap success in the process. But every attempt leaves just one dot unconnected, one goal unmet, one significant aspect of life unfulfilled.
- You can only solve the nine-dot puzzle by becoming aware of the artificiality of the limits of the box. Similarly, you can only break out of the Universal Human Paradigm by increasing your awareness. The first step is the same as the first step in solving the nine-dot puzzle: to step out of your imaginary frame and look closely at the parameters of the puzzle.

### **Survival Under the Universal Human Paradigm**

- The more you follow your Winning Strategy, the more you are buying into the game. As long as you think you are playing the game effectively, you don't question the need to play it.
- The survival game established by the Ultimate Human Paradigm is the game that holds you back from making the impossible happen.

### **The Universal Paradigm in Organizations**

- The default context of organizations is the context of the Universal Human Paradigm: that there's a way things “should” be. When they are that way, things are right. When they're not, there's something wrong with me, them, or it.
- One of the ways you can spot a transformed group or organization is to observe how people relate to each other. Their interactions are not based on personalities or on results; they are based on their commitments.

### **Chapter Four: “Dying” Before Going into Battle.**

Freeing Yourself From The Illusion That You Can Control Life So That It Turns Out The Way It “Should”.

- Japanese Samurai warriors, in reminding themselves of the inevitability of loss, used the phrase “Die before going into battle.” This practice allowed a warrior to enter an episode of combat without fear of death. He had brought himself through an experience of the acceptance of death ahead of time. His death was a plausible outcome. In this way the warrior was able to fully give

himself to his mission without concern for survival. Such freedom made all the difference between defeat and victory.

- The equivalent of experiencing “dying before going into battle” for today’s leaders is to accept – as if accepting a gift – these statements:
  - Life does not turn out the way it “should>”
  - Nor does life turn out the way it “shouldn’t.”
  - Life turns out the way it does.

### **The End of Hope**

- Accepting that “life doesn’t turn out the way it should” is the equivalent of an alcoholic “hitting bottom”. You must go through a life-transforming experience before you can transform your relationship to the addiction and before you can move from denial to acceptance.
- There are at least three significant implications of the statement “Life does not turn out the way it should.”
- In the long run, your Winning Strategy will never completely “work.”
- Your life will never be complete. To be a human being is to devote your life to pursuing the ninth dot until you die.
- You cannot control the outcome of your life. In the end, the outcome will be the same. One day you will die. Someone with a shovel will throw dirt over your face. You will be, at that time, as satisfied or unsatisfied as you *will* be. In the meantime, life won’t follow the pattern of the controls you are trying to put in place.
- Your life will not turn out as you hope it will. There is no hope of life “turning out as it should.” Life turns out as it does.

### **Accepting Hopelessness as a Gift**

- Accepting that you can’t control the outcome is not the end of action – it is the opening for the boldest and most daring action. You can accept total responsibility for your choices and actions. You are free to play full-out in creating and implementing an extraordinary future for yourself and your organization.
- For this transformation to affect you, you must see through the illusion that you can control the outcome.
- You can provide a different quality of life for your life. You can take on making the impossible happen, knowing all the while that even if you do that, you will still not alter the outcome. The author calls this process “getting to zero” – reaching a state where you do not interpret events as being “better than they should be” or “worse than they should be”. Events are simply what they are.

## **Chapter Five: Creating the Re-Invention Paradigm.**

Acquiring the Capacity to Make the Impossible Happen

- The next transformation is to invent a new master paradigm – the Re-Invention Master Paradigm – discovering its possibilities as if nobody had ever discovered them before.
- Inventing a new master paradigm is accomplished with language: specifically the speech act of declaration.
- A declaration is the act of speaking that brings forth a future the moment it is spoken.
- For a declaration to be authentic and have the power to create a future, one element is essential. The person who speaks the declaration must have authority in the area in which he or she is declaring.

### **A Declaration of Possibility**

- The new realm of possibility you declare is founded solely on your stand for that possibility – without precedent, argument, or proof. Said another way: A declaration of possibility brings “what is not” into existence as a possibility.
- As with all declarations, to make an authentic declaration of possibility, you must have authority in the arena in which you are declaring. That arena is: What you say is possible, and not possible, in your future.
- You are the authority in the arena of what you say is possible and not possible in your future. You have total authority with regards to what you say is possible and not possible in your future.
- While this may seem self-evident, it is extremely important to understand that in the past you have not taken this authority. As a function of your Winning Strategy and the Universal Human Paradigm, you have given away your power to determine what is possible or not possible in the future. You have given over this power to the past. Anything impossible in the past has been impossible in the future.
- You are about to break through this barrier. You will reclaim the power you have given to the past.

### **Creating the Re-Invention Paradigm**

- Getting beyond the limits of your Winning Strategy and the entire Universal Human Paradigm requires reclaiming the power you have given to the past: the power to determine what you say is possible or not possible in the future.
- This is accomplished by a series of three specific declarations which bring into existence a unique realm of possibility – a new master paradigm designed for making the impossible happen, the Re-Invention Paradigm. This is the new paradigm from which to express your leadership.
- The first two declarations create the new Re-Invention paradigm. The first creates a new future for you as a leader. The second provides a new source of power in the face of present circumstances. The third declaration is the context for the new paradigm. It frees you from the constraints of the past.
- *The first declaration: “I declare the possibility that ‘what is possible’ is ‘what I say is possible.’”* With this declaration you reclaim for yourself the power (to determine what’s possible in the future) that you had formerly granted to the past.

- Before operating from this declaration, you automatically related to the future according to the guidance of the Universal Human Paradigm. Which means:
- Events take place
- You interpret those events
- Those interpretations determine what you are willing to declare possible, which in turn shapes the limits within which actions can occur.
- These limits, in turn, affect the scope of the results that can be produced.
- Once you are operating from this declaration, the future is invented. What you say is possible determines what is possible. Your actions and the results they produce are a reflection of the possibility you declared.
- *The second declaration: "I declare this possibility: 'Who I am' is the stand I take."* With this second declaration, you create the possibility of a new way of being for yourself as a leader. The phrase 'who I am' refers to the way you are *being*. This declaration makes room for a new way of being that is a function of the commitment that you are willing to make.
- Power in the Re-Invention Paradigm is generated from a commitment to an "impossible future". Once you declare a specific impossible future, your way of being now operates in relationship to that declaration. Your Winning Strategy no longer dictates your action.
- After this stand is taken, and the commitment is made, then all the deterrents of the past – interpretation, historical analysis, and fear – are no longer deterrents. They are now something that exists, about which you are informed, while you take actions to move the possibility into a reality.
- *The third declaration: "I take this stand: 'there is no such thing as right or wrong and no fixed way things should or shouldn't be.'" This declaration is the context for the Re-Invention Paradigm. It displaces the Universal Human Paradigm context ("There is a way things should be, and when they are not, there's something wrong with me, them or it").*
- You are declaring the possibility that henceforth you are relating to everything that happens primarily as something that happened – without any meaning added. You are declaring the possibility that henceforth you do not relate to an event as whatever interpretation or explanation or conclusion you drew, based on the past. You do not relate to it as "the event happened the way it should" or "the event happened the way it shouldn't." You relate to it as "the event happened."
- Power is determined by the speed with which you can declare something possible and move that possibility to reality.

### **Taking a Stand**

- Taking a stand is a declaration of possibility that allows something to move forward from "existing as a possibility only because you said so" to "existing as a reality where it is so in the world."
- Taking a stand involves five essential elements:
  1. *The stand generates a unique kind of certainty.* You are certain of your persistence and continued capability in the face of risks and quandaries. You base your certainty on the

willingness to “live in a question,” rather than needing to know all the answers. When you have taken a stand, you do not need to know in advance how you will accomplish this possibility. You trust that you will be open enough, questioning enough, and capable enough to handle whatever needs come along during the course of your commitment.

2. *There are no explanations, evidence, or proof in this arena.* You can't explain or justify a stand. You take your stand because this is the stand you take.
  3. *There are no justifications.* You do not need to justify your purpose: You do not take a stand because it's the right thing to do, or because it must be done, or because the world will be a better place.
  4. *There are no prescriptions.* There are no rules of behavior, textbook solutions, or formulas for what to do or how to do it. Each person who makes a declaration must find his or her unique way of acting toward the commitment and filling in the missing pieces.
  5. *There is a commitment to take action.* You make a commitment to move the declared possibility to a reality, regardless of the circumstances. This requires making a series of bold promises and fulfilling them. Without this commitment to act, the possibility you declared will never be transformed from a possibility to a reality, and it will go out of existence over time. Declarations are deliberately purposeful. They are always made in relation to your commitment to provide what is missing for the declaration to become real. That is what gives them credibility.
- All five of these declarations require courage – a kind of existential courage where you must stand on your own, bringing forth yourself and the future from nothing. Taking a stand doesn't necessarily mean standing alone or without support. Taking a stand determines who you are being and what you are committing yourself to, while life happens the way it does.

### **From Declaration to Design**

- The author closes this chapter with an invitation. She invites us to make a bold declaration of possibility regarding yourself as a leader.
- History changes through declarations. Only through your declarations can you begin to alter the context in which you live. Only declarations will allow cultures to give birth to a new way of being. Only declarations allow you to transform the world.

### **Chapter Six: Inventing an Impossible Future.**

Creating a new Game that redesigns you as a Leader

- This transformation leads you to design a new “game” for your life – an invented future, constructed with rules, principles, and a designed scoring system, in which the stated purpose is to reach your “designated (im) possibility.” Based upon your design, this game will shape your choices and actions, while life “is turning out the way it does.” The game will redesign you as a leader.
- The next step is to create a specific stand – a stand that is large enough in scope to replay the game of “surviving” that you have played in the past, through your Winning Strategy. It will be interesting enough to devote your life to fulfilling.

- This stand becomes your impossible game in life. What's the relationship between the stand and the game? Once you take this stand, you will have embarked on the game; indeed, designing the stand you take is a key part of designing the game.
- As you play the game, it will alter your identity. To make the impossible happen, you give up the old identity that was built on your Winning Strategy. You begin to relate to yourself as "Who I am is the future of my enterprise." You are being a "clearing" in the world; an opening in which an invented future can crystallize. Over time, others will quite naturally relate to you as this invented future, rather than as a personality.

### **Leaders are the "Clearing" in which the Future Happens**

- A *clearing* is an opening in the world of dense, conflicting interpretations – a place of light and simplicity.
- The clearing is created by your listening. You are always "listening from" the stand you have taken to be the future of your organization, the country, education, government, or your industry. This listening functions as a kind of gravitational pull. When you are a clearing for a particular future, you will find that everyone around you shows up as related to some concern or commitment associated with that future.
- You will know that you have become a clearing when the kinds of problems you have to deal with, and the kinds of conversations you have, have altered. They will no longer have to do with your Winning Strategy but with the stand you have taken.
- The kinds of requests that people make of you, the kinds of promises that you make, the reasons people come to you, the invitations you receive, and the areas you spend your time with will all be different when they are shaped by your invented future.
- As a leader operating in the mode of transformation, the fundamental question is: "What kind of clearing are you being?" Your actions, and the actions and the actions of those you lead, will be correlates of that clearing.

### **Generating a Clearing for Yourself as a Leader**

- To generate a clearing, you speak "yourself." This is a very different act than speaking about yourself. It's made with a kind of speech act called an "expressive" – a form of declaration that lets others know who you are in regard to a specific issue or relationship.
- This game calls for being very explicit. This can be accomplished by using the expressive that begins, "Who I am..." You always create a clearing with an expressive that brings forth the arena from which you will generate the stand you take. The expressive might take the form "Who I am is the future of ..."

### **Creating an Invented Future**

- A goal is a place to get to from where you are.
- Unlike a goal, a realm of possibility is not a place to "get to" from the present. It's an invented future to "come from" into the present. An invented future is unrelated to the past. It has no "in order to" component. In fact if you fail, it doesn't matter. It's irrelevant. It still moves the possibility forward.

- You engage in the possibility for its own sake, simply because you said you would. You declare it a game worth playing, regardless of whether you succeed or fail. Indeed, it is unlikely that you will succeed, since the scope of your game is intentionally designed to probably be very large.
- Even if you succeed in fulfilling the realm of your impossible future, life will still turn out the way it does. The game will not get you the “ninth dot.”
- Play the game, and you will be free to live and work in an environment of unlimited possibility, rather than in an environment of inherited options. You will have the capacity to use your professional life as a leader who makes the impossible happen by engaging in actions of the highest risk. Reinventing yourself into an impossible future doesn’t alter how life turns out. It alters who you are *being* and what is available, while life turns out the way it does.

### The Design of Your Game

- You invent an “impossible future” by creating a specific realm of possibility and declaring that fulfilling this specific realm of possibility is the game that you are now playing in life. You further declare that you are no longer playing “life” for survival, but for making the impossible happen.
- Everything, from here on in, depends on what you are committed to creating.
- The game you invent out of the transformation in this chapter is the vehicle from which you will develop the mastery you need as a leader who makes the impossible happen.
- First, make sure you are standing the presence of the three declarations described in Chapter 5, the declarations that together free you from the Universal Human Paradigm:
  - “I declare the possibility that what is possible is what I say is possible.”
  - “I declare the possibility that who I am is the stand I take.”
  - “The stand I take is: ‘There is no such thing as right or wrong, and no fixed way that things should or shouldn’t be.’”
- Now move to your specific stand and put the game in motion.
  - “Who I am is the future of...” (Your expressive)
  - “I declare the possibility that...”
- You will return to these speech acts when necessary, during the course of your game. This is because you must create the Re-Invention Paradigm anew each time you operate from it. It must be continuously brought into existence.
- It may be appropriate to reiterate your expressive and declaration, almost as a ritual to bring yourself back into the transformational mode, from which you are playing the game.
- Finally, make the game real by making an initial bold promise – a promise that stretches you beyond the limits of your present reality. The bold promise is the answer to the question *what is the focus of your attention in the game you are playing?*
- During this game you will always be in action. You won’t take action on fulfilling the declaration of possibility itself. It is handled by making a series of bold promises, and taking action again and again, to fulfill them and make new promises, standing in the future that you have declared.
- Throughout all of these stages of designing the game, bear in mind, five key design principles:
  1. Principle #1: Assume you will fail in this game. You will wholeheartedly play to win. The only way you can play any game authentically is to play it to win. But you know in advance, that it will turn out the way it does. What’s important, because you said so, is that you move the

possibility forward. Regardless of the impediments you encounter or the circumstances that you must include, they are all opportunities for building the muscles of making the impossible happen.

2. Principle #2; something within the game has to be more important than something else. As you create guidelines and measures, keep checking on whether this is a truly *bold* promise.
3. Principle #3: the game you design must be currently impossible, and you must be passionate about engaging in it.
4. Principle #4: the bold promises you make should have challenging time frames.
5. Principle #5: the game must be large enough in scope to hold all of your other accountabilities inside it.

## **Chapter Seven: Building the Bridge between “Possibility” and “Reality”.**

Implementing Your Impossible Future.

### **The Addictive Cycle of Interpretation**

- Before you can proceed further, you must break an addiction. All human beings have this addiction; it is a component of the Universal Human Paradigm. It is the addiction to interpretation.
- Transformation always begins by breaking the addictive cycle of interpretation and distinguishing what happened, from your interpretations about what happened.
- In the Re-Invention paradigm, what happens – whether generated by you or someone else- is always and only a conversation: always and only a request or a promise.

### **The Bridge from Possibility too reality is a Conversation for Action**

- The next two transformations of Executive Re-Invention are designed to break the addictive cycle by transforming the way that “action” occurs to you.
- Your vehicle, once again, is conversation. You moved an “impossibility” to a “possibility” with the speech act of “declaration,” now you move a “possibility” to a “reality” with two new speech acts: *requests* and *promises*. Together, they constitute the elements of a conversation for action.
- Action will now mean a series of committed requests and promises.

### **Requests That Generate Commitment**

- Both requests and promises bring forth the future as a commitment. When you make a request, you generate something in the future as a possible commitment. And you seek a committed response from a person who has the authority to deliver on that commitment.
- Your purpose in making a request is to move a specific possibility forward to a reality. You give a name to that possibility and invite one or more people to commit themselves to it, in some form.
- The power of a request stems in large part from the fact that a request isn’t a representation of an action but is, in fact, an action in itself. At the moment a request is made, it brings forth the possibility of an action in the future. You are taking an action to move a declared possibility to a reality.

- What allows people to authentically accept a request is the assurance that they have the authentic opportunity to decline. With the freedom to decline a request, both people are empowered.
- Once you integrate into your way of being the knowledge that anyone can say no, it will begin to change you. You will begin to ask for more, which can be a huge departure from your previous way of operating.
- If you don't think you need to make requests, if you don't think you need to ask anybody for anything, you are playing a very small game. You are also playing a small game if you only make requests you think will be accepted.
- A request always involves four elements:
  1. *A committed speaker.* If you are making a request, it must come from a committed stand. You must be extremely clear about the commitment. Because it shapes the way the request is worded, which in turn affects the ability of the listener to respond effectively. You shortchange your own power if your request doesn't match your own commitment.
  2. *A committed listener.* The listener must be someone who can do something about the request. If the person you are speaking to does not have the authority to grant your request, then you are not operating from a place that will move you to the future.
  3. *A specific set of conditions.* If they are imprecise or ambiguous then the request will be ineffective.
  4. *A deadline or time limit.* The listener must know exactly how much time there is to fill the request, and the speaker must know the point in time at which he or she can clearly determine whether the request has been fulfilled.
- If the requests do not contain all these requirements, they do not bring forth a committed response, and the action does not move forward.
- Requests with clearly worded, specific conditions ensure that the listener is, in fact, responding to the same request that the speaker intends to make.

### **“What Are You Asking For?”**

- In the Re-Invention Master Paradigm, you design your conversation to ensure that your requests will be heard. You can do this only when you realize that you have no control over the outcome. No matter how well you phrase your request, it may be denied. If it is denied, that will be a denial of your request. You will move from there to making another request. In fact, either way, you will move on from there to make more requests and promises.
- Timing is vital to making a request, if you move into action too soon; there will not be enough support for possibility because the speaker and the listener will not be connected to the same commitment. There must be enough background conversation to ensure that both parties are willing to play in the same game.
- Before making a request, you must create a background of *relatedness* that supports the possibility. A background of relatedness is rooted in the shared commitment that all the principle players have for the work you conduct together.
- To create a background of relatedness, you begin by “listening for” that mutual commitment. You listen for the statements in the actions of the other person, find the aspects that resonate in your own commitment, and then build those into your request.

- Creating a background of relatedness is one example of how each conversation in the Re-Invention Paradigm is an act of creation, with both players starting at zero. The two players can only create a new context by articulating it freshly – being specific about the language they use and making sure that important features of that background are spelled out.
- If your request is accepted, move the action forward with more requests and promises, as they seem to be called for.

### When They Say No

- It doesn't matter whether requests are accepted or declined. It doesn't matter if they are declined with vehemence. A clearly worded request always moves things forward, even when it is declined. Simply by making the request, particularly if it is a well-thought-out request, you have to put yourself in a better context from which to raise other requests, or make their promises, related to your "designated possibility".
- The decline of a request is, in fact, a committed action. Declines move action forward as powerfully as acceptances if they do not become embroiled in interpretations. Declines bring hidden issues to the surface.
- It's important to remember that you have made a commitment to fulfill the possibility, not to fulfill the possibility "in a certain way" or "the way you want to."

### Promises, *Bold Promises*

- A *promise* is the second speech act in a conversation for action. Like a request, a promise is an action that brings forth a future as a commitment and moves the possibility forward to a reality. It's important to remember that only requests and promises move possibilities to a reality.
- When you make a promise, you bring forth a particular future, as a commitment. You always make a promise to a committed listener, even if that committed listener is only yourself.
- A threat is also a form of a promise.
- In making the impossible happen, action is always and only a speech act. And always and only a request or a promise. In moving a possibility to a reality, there is no set order to which comes first – a promise or a request. However, the author recommends beginning with a bold promise, because it creates urgency and makes fulfilling the possibility an immediate priority.
- The boldness of the promise is important. A *bold* promise is a promise that you don't know how to fulfill and that, predictably, you could not fulfill within the specified time frame. Bold promises dramatically shorten the time it takes for a possibility to become a reality. If you are keeping all your promises, then your promises aren't big enough. When you make a bold promise, you are also agreeing to stay in communication about your progress. You have made yourself accountable to the person who is receiving your promise.
- Include as many supports as you can think of when you are designing the conversation in which you can make your promise.
- The promise is the tool you use to put your words in action. If you promise something, you are saying that you will do everything you need to do to live into your promise. All that counts is your word.

- As with requests, the way you phrase a promise is critical. Different forms of phrasing a promise convey different nuances. Each form has its own flavor and ramifications. Consider these: I accept, I pledge, I vow, I contract, or I agree. I guarantee, or I swear. I authorize.

### After a Promise is Made

- There are three possibilities:
  - *You can keep it* – that is, you can fulfill the conditions of the promise on time.
  - *You cannot keep it*. When the due date for the promise is past, the promise has not been fulfilled.
  - *You can revoke it*. Revoking a promise is taking an action at the moment you recognize that the promise will not be fulfilled by the specified date. You declare that your original promise will not be fulfilled, giving the person you made the promise to as much notice as possible, so that person can deal with any consequences or inconvenience your revocation may have caused.
- In all cases, as with accepting or declining a request, no meaning is added to keeping, not keeping, or revoking a promise. It's just what happened. There may, however, be consequences to not keeping or to revoking you're your promise. You must take responsibility for those consequences. The recognition that you aren't "good" or "bad" does not absolve you of the responsibility. In fact, the only reason to revoke a promise is that revocation is the responsible thing to do, and you fully accept the consequences.
- There are actions to take after a promise is revoked or not fulfilled. These actions might include offering an apology for what the person must deal with; making wither a new or different promise, to help ameliorate the results from not fulfilling the first; offering to fulfill any requests the other person might have that would reduce the inconvenience for them.
- That last action, offering to fulfill the other person's requests, creates an opening for that person to ask for something, so that you do not destroy the background of relatedness. In fact, your offer can create an opportunity to build an even stronger background of relatedness.

### Three Questions After Something Happens

- With your knowledge of requests and promises, you can now react differently to events that happen to you. Instead of occurring for you as the "causes" of "what's right" or "what's wrong" in your life, actions can now occur for you as "requests" and "promises" that come you way. Thus gives you a great deal more freedom in the way you respond to them.
- The key is the speed with which you shift out of the Universal Human Paradigm. Can you move immediately to stop the inevitable interpretation from throwing you off balance?
  - *Questions #1: "What happened?"* The answer is always "A conversation took place". In other words, someone made a request or a promise. You merely note any interpretations, explanations, or conclusions that occur to you as something that "you have".
- You then ask the follow up question:
  - *Questions #2: "What's missing?"* 'What does not exist that is essential for your 'designated possibility' to become a reality in the context of the game you are playing?'
- What's missing?" is then followed by a third question:

- *Question #3: “What’s next?”* The answer is always “take action from the future.” Make a request or a promise that moves your “designated possibility” (the game you created) forward into a conversation that is taking place in the request.
- When that request or promise is accepted, declined, or countered, then make another. And another. And another. Until the invented future, the possibility that you are *being*, occurs in worlds as a reality, for you and for other people.

### **Action Under the Re-Invention Paradigm**

- You can “have” your interpretations, instead of acting from them as if they are the “truth” or an event that “really” happened.
- “What happened,” on a moment-to-moment, hour-to-hour, day-to-day basis, is irrelevant to the final outcome. “What happened” is just what happened.

### **Chapter Eight: What Athletes and performers Know About being Extraordinary (That Executives Don’t)**

- Most people are not used to thinking seriously about transforming their action after reading a book. You already know that transforming your action as a result of a book is difficult – maybe even impossible.
- The author then makes the following declaration and promise:
  - “I declare the possibility: The transformations necessary for Executive Re-Invention can be produced by reading this book and using it as a coaching tool.
  - I invite you to make the same declaration, and I promise that the transformation from this chapter will give you the wherewithal to fulfill it.”

### **Creating a Lifelong Practice**

- Everything starts with practice. The seventh transformation of Executive Re-Invention, and the focus of this chapter, involves your relationship with practice and with “being extraordinary.”
- The transformations in this book reinforce each other to the extent that (no matter how valuable you may find them individually) the power they provide to make the impossible happen is only available when you incorporate *all* of the transformations as part of who you are *being*.
- That includes this last transformation in the area of practice – to embrace practice as the pathway to attaining a level of competency at making the impossible happen, and to continue to refine it throughout a lifetime. In short, you develop a way of *being* the practices, not just *doing* them.
- When you engage in this transformation, you shift your relationship with “being ordinary” from occurring as a function of natural talent, opportunity, and circumstances to “being extraordinary” occurring as a function of practice.
- When this transformation is complete, practice will no longer occur to you as a means to an end. Practice will occur to you as the essence of beginning.

- The key to extraordinary performance is the practice. Practice is the threshold of capacity.
- The price for being extraordinary calls for a relationship with practice that is equivalent to the commitment that artists and athletes have to the practices of their professions.

### **The Whole is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts**

- Inherent in each of the first six transformations that make up Executive Re-Invention is a specific form of practice. These practices are components of a single transformation in themselves. They cannot be begun, let alone mastered, until you have completed the other six transformations.
- In working with these practices on a day-to-day basis, you will deepen each of the previous transformations individually, and you will provide yourself with the power of the entire Executive Re-Invention process- the power to make the impossible happen.
- Each of the practices gives you access to a particular type of power, but only when they are put together do they add up to provide access to power to make the impossible happen.
- To transform something is to alter how it *occurs* (how it exists, and how you are *being* in relation to it): from occurring in a way that constrains or limits you to occurring in a way that frees your actions. In each of the seven transformations, you are creating a new “clearing,” in which the key elements of leadership (winning and succeeding, the past, taking risks, what’s possible and not possible, the future, action, and being extraordinary) can exist as a component of your power to make the impossible happen.

#### *Practice #1 Six impossible declarations before breakfast.*

The transformation “Uncovering Your Winning Strategy” involves your relationship with success and winning.

You are shifting from...

... success and winning occurring as the desired outcome..

...to...

...success (in the form of your winning strategy) occurring as a compensation for what’s not possible.

- Recognize your winning strategy in action, moment by moment, and – instead of acting or giving in to that strategy – stop to ask, “What ‘possibility’ am I compensating for here?” To implement this practice, you must stop and catch yourself. It is best managed on a day-to-day basis. In this practice you don’t just “believe” impossible things; you declare them, incessantly and enthusiastically.

#### *Practice #2: Tuning into the world of interpretations.*

The transformation “The Universal Human Paradigm” involves your relationship with the past.

You are shifting from....

...the past occurring as a series of events that “really happened” and are “the” truth....

...to...

...the past occurring as a series of interpretations you’ve made about events that happened, all of which are valid and none of which represent “the” truth.

- To deepen this transformation, you develop this practice; become aware, day by day, of the extent to which you (and other people) automatically and immediately interpret everything that happens. Be able to hear that nearly every conversation is a reflection of the universal

interpretation: “There is a way that things should be and there’s something wrong with “me, them, or it” when they are not that way.”

*Practice #3: Giving up the meaningfulness of your past*

The transformation “Dying’ before Going into Battle,” involves your relationship with taking risks.

You are shifting from...

...“taking risks” occurring as a serious threat, where the consequences might result in losing everything (if things don’t turn out the way they “should”)...

...to...

...“taking risks” occurring as “moving the action forward,” with nothing to lose (since life does not turn out the way it “should”; it turns out the way it does).

- To deepen the transformation you develop this practice: taking the stand: the stories you tell about what happened in your life, your career, and your organization are not “true” – the events as you interpreted them never happened. Indeed, life itself is meaningless, and is all an interpretation that you made up. Finally, it doesn’t mean anything that life is meaningless.
- You can put all of your life at stake, in the service of whatever “designated impossibility” is important to you, because you know all of your life, to date, is meaningless. When you can do that, then you have met the challenge of this practice and completed the transformation of learning to “die before going into battle.”

*Practice #4: having the “world” for your “word”*

The transformation “Creating the Re-Invention Paradigm,” involves your relationship with “what’s possible” and “what’s not possible”

You are shifting from...

...“what’s possible occurring as “what’s predictable,” bound by the limits of past experience...

...to...

...“what’s possible” occurring as what you say is possible and what you commit to make happen, based on nothing.

- To deepen this transformation, you develop the practice: Replace “predicting the future”(by analyzing what’s possible, benchmarking, setting objectives or goals, or making feasible promises) with “declaring the future” and making bold promises to fulfill it.
- Keep up this kind of practice, making and following up declarations of “impossible” possibility. And at some point you will hit a threshold where a significant enough part of the world will concur that “when you declare that something is possible, it happens.” Making the impossible happen will no longer be a possibility you invented, it will be an expertise you *have*, as a function of who you are *being*.

*Practice #5: Recognizing the cost of the tantrums you throw*

The transformation “Inventing an Impossible Future,” involves your relationship with the future.

You are shifting from...

...the future occurring as “someplace to get to” (from the present), where “what’s wrong with you, them, or it” will be fixed or improved, and things will be the way they should”...

...to...

...the future occurring as an invented “impossible” game, where there’s no such thing as “should” or “shouldn’t.” as ‘right’ or “wrong.”

- To deepen this transformation, you develop this practice: Shift your focus of attention from what you are doing to the way you are being. Specifically: Are you being the “invented future and context” that you created, or are you being “right,” dominating and avoiding domination, and justifying the way you are?
- The payoffs for maintaining your unwanted condition can be put onto three categories. While all three apply, one of them will be the senior payoff – the most influential – for the particular unwanted condition that is persisting.
  1. You get to be right. You also get to make somebody else wrong.
  2. You get to dominate or avoid being dominated
  3. You get to explain the way you are and justify staying that way. This payoff, the strongest of the three, is directly connected with to the “in order to” column of your Winning Strategy.
- In this realm of practice, you bring yourself in touch with the enormous cost of your racket. You probably already know what your persistent, unwanted conditions are. (A clue is: They are things that you complain about most). You need to allow yourself to experience that the cost is greater than the payoff. Only then will you stop conning yourself and running a racket.
- The practice of viewing those unwanted conditions as a racket will allow you to recognize them for what they are. In recognizing them you no longer have to act them out.
- Death is not the most profound loss or tragedy in life. That which dies inside of us as we live is a far greater loss. The loss of possibility, a loss that comes from running our personal rackets, has ravaged the lives of too many individuals who could have otherwise transformed the world.

*Practice #6: Learning to see the “hook” coming before you swallow the “bait”*

The transformation “Building the Bridge between ‘Possibility’ and ‘Reality,’” involves your relationship with action.

You are shifting from...

...action occurring as “a series of activities” ...

...to...

...action occurring as a series of conversations.

- Now to deepen this transformation, you develop this practice: Replace reacting from the past with acting from the future.
- This practice involves learning to listen to actions as elements of conversation: speech acts such as requests and promises. Even when you recognize events as requests and promises, it is still easy to be swept away by your interpretations of what these events “mean.” You become hooked by those interpretations.
- One way to recognize a hook is to examine yourself regularly. To try to anticipate moments when you are getting worn out, upset, annoyed, or frustrated. When you do experience those feelings, they are probably not a direct result of the event that actually happened – the request or promise that was actually made. Chances are, your strong feeling stems directly from an interpretation or conclusion you’ve assigned or drawn.

- As you develop your expertise through this practice, you learn to avoid being hooked. Even in the heat of the moment, you learn to distinguish your reaction from the interpretation, and distinguish your interpretation from the event itself.
- Timing is everything. You have to see your interpretations arising, without being swept away into actions based on those interpretations.
- A key ingredient in transforming your relationship with action, and in mastering this practice, is your ability to transform what you “listen for.” Train yourself to “listen for” requests and promises, rather than for assessments and assertions. “Listen for” requests and promises, not for your Winning Strategy’s version (or someone else’s version) of what “should” or “shouldn’t” be, what’s “wrong” or what could go “wrong.”
- When you learn to listen well, you will be able to pick out the opinions from the requests. As you learn to listen, you will discover what people are committed to and you will begin to relate to them from their place of commitment.

### **The Last Word on Power from the Author**

I *declare* this possibility: the time for a revolution in leadership has come. It is time to live in a world where a vast number of people are actively engaged in making the impossible happen.

I *assert* that nothing less than a revolution in leadership will allow the successful re-invention of our organizations, industries, and countries worldwide.

I *thank you* for the opportunity to share this conversation.

I *take the stand* that anyone who has read this book has the opportunity to re-invent himself or herself into an extraordinary leader, who makes the impossible happen.

I *invite you* to join me in taking the stand that you, personally, are such a leader.

I *urge you* to commit yourself and your organization’s leaders to take on Executive Re-Invention.

I *strongly recommend* that you declare (for yourself) who you are as a leader, before you close this book.

I *assure you* that if you seriously engage in the practices of Executive Re-Invention, you will realize each of the transformations.

I *promise that* when you accomplish all seven of the transformations, you will give yourself the gift of ultimate power- the power to get the world to match your words – the power to dance with the past, the present, and the future with complete and total *freedom!*

**Recommendation:** This book was very powerful for me. I have read it again and again. It challenged me to grow to the next level and it opened up a world of possibilities that I am in the process of creating. I am a true believer in Goss’s work.

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**About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD**

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

To schedule a free ***Break From the Pack to Success*** consultation email [ceocondfidante@frumi.com](mailto:ceocondfidante@frumi.com) or call 949-729-1577