



Step 7: Secure the Change

Celebrate Your Golden Stake

On May 10, 1869 the presidents of the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroads met in Promontory Summit, Utah to drive the last two stakes in the last wooden tie to celebrate the completion of the first Transcontinental Railroad. You probably remember from your American History classes, that one of those stakes was solid gold. The other was a mix of gold, silver and iron. Those stakes commemorated 6 years of work by thousands of laborers to complete 1,776 miles of track across the plains, over rivers, through mountains.

While your change hasn't taken 6 years and thousands of people to complete, you've certainly invested a great deal of energy (both your own and your allies) to keep yourself focused and on track throughout the previous six steps. As you get close to completing your own version of the Transcontinental Railroad, you'll naturally invest less energy and one of two things will happen.

The first possibility is the one everyone hopes for – that reality will meet your goals (or at least come within shouting distance; even the Union Pacific and Central Pacific had to compromise over the location of the last eighty miles to actually meet in Promontory Summit). In this case, you'll probably maintain the direction and focus of the change. Eventually, what was once a change effort will become just another part of who you are and what you do.

The other possibility is that entropy will set in and you'll gradually slide back into old patterns as if the change never happened, the way nature reclaims an abandoned homestead, weeds and trees eventually wiping out any trace of the people who lived there.

You probably know the feeling of drifting away

from an intended change. It's the sinking feeling that comes with throwing a diet out the window to belly up to a table of your old "binge" foods. It's the sigh that comes with the recognition that once again it's vacation time and your vacation fund has the measly \$100 you deposited in the first month after last year's vacation. It's the inner voice that

says "Don't even bother" when you think that, this time for sure, you'll exercise everyday or work on that creative project you've been putting off or quit that unhealthy habit of yours.

What determines whether a change is permanent or temporary? What keeps you from drifting off course? The firmness of your final stakes.

In Step 6, you generated and celebrated the small steps that made up the big change you envisioned. When you get to the last task, you need to celebrate big. You need to commemorate the final efforts with your own version of driving the golden stakes before the cheering crowd. Maybe it's a big party. Maybe it's a lavish dinner with the people who've mattered most to you in this process. Maybe it's hiring a photographer to document your triumph.



It's the final stakes that keep you on track.

When you think about it, you know that gold is too soft a metal to actually drive into wood. So on May 10, 1869, the ceremonial, engraved gold stakes were not really hammered in; they were dropped into pre-drilled holes. And of course, gold is too precious to leave lying in a railroad tie; both stakes were removed to safe keeping after the crowds and the photographers left. (The solid gold stake is still on display in the Stanford University Museum.)

While the gold stake celebration is vitally important, it isn't really that strong. It's what philosophers call "a necessary, but insufficient condition." The real stakes that will secure the change you've worked so hard to implement are the ones made of iron and steel.

Rely on Iron

You'll find iron in your habits. You begin by relying on your willpower long enough to make the change an entrenched habit.

In other words, you get up every morning and take action on the change: you go to the gym, you take \$2 out of your wallet and deposit it in your vacation fund, you get out your paints or your journal or your garden tools or whatever. And you keep taking that action until it becomes so much a part of your daily routine you can't imagine starting the day without it anymore than you could imagine not brushing your teeth. (You can make a habit out of something you do at another time of day, but the demands of daily living often interfere with the best intentions and make those afternoon or evening habits harder to nail down.)

If you're going to rely on habit, you have to take the action daily (or every Monday, Wednesday, Friday or on some other regular and frequent schedule). You have to do it whether you feel like it or not. Whether it's sunny or stormy. Whether your work life and personal life are normal or out of control. And you have to take that action for no reason other than this is a habit you're building.

The three basic creativity practices I recommend



Habits are the iron stakes that secure your change!

to my students and clients are habits that give a creative life iron stakes. Regardless of the change you're implementing, making time for process, self care and product time will enhance your life. (For more information about these three practices, see "Basic Creativity Training" in Volume 7, Issue 2 of *Imagination InkLinks*, which you can find on the Newsletter page of my website at RosanneBane.com.)

The basic practices and other habits can be strong stakes, but they can be displaced if, as the childhood chant says, "the train should jump the track." You know, when you face one of those major, unforeseen events that life has a way of throwing at us from time to time. Iron is strong, but steel is stronger. Even more reliable than habit are the steel stakes of your values.

Trust Steel

Changes that are clearly in keeping with and part of your personal values are far more likely to become lasting than those that are not aligned to your values.

Nearly two years ago I decided to stop eating chocolate because I'd read that half the world's chocolate supplies come from the Ivory Coast where child slave laborers are forced to work the cocoa fields. Now I love chocolate, probably too much. It's not much of a stretch to say that I was addicted to chocolate. So I've struggled with this decision at times. It's not as if my boycott has had a huge impact on the chocolate industry. But thinking about what it must be like to be a child slave reminds me that I don't want to be the kind of person who takes

pleasure from something created by another person's misery. I'm not out to convert anyone, I don't think anyone else needs to stop eating chocolate.

I just know eating chocolate is a violation of my values and knowing that keeps me coming back to my commitment, despite occasional slips. If I hadn't connected the decision to my values, my chocolate fast would have lasted two days at the most!



Just as steel is stronger than iron, values hold when habits are lost.

Knowing your values and identifying how a change will honor those values will allow you to drive steel stakes to firmly secure that change. Begin by listing the qualities you value. Then consider how the change you're implementing is related to your values. How does the change you're securing honor and support your values? How would delaying or gradually losing the change violate your values?

In my case, some of the qualities I value are freedom, compassion, joy and respect. These values are violated by slavery; they are honored by my small action to refrain from eating the fruits of slavery. And that awareness is what secures that change for me.

Anticipate Deviations

Deviations from the change plan are a normal part of the process. You will backslide and when you do, you can recover. (I've eaten chocolate a few times, but I keep coming back to my original choice.) If you accept that fact and plan to minimize those deviations, you'll achieve long term success. If you think you'll never slip, you'll be devastated when you do.

Just like resistance, a deviation in the plan is not a sign of failure; it is only a sign that you need to return to the basics of reinforcing your habits and reconnecting them to your values. It's a sign that you need to review the previous 6 steps to see where you need to return your focus.



Deviations signal a need to review previous steps.

Have you temporarily lost the sense of urgency or the awareness of how important this change is to you and your community? Are you out of touch with your allies and partners? Has the vision changed or does it need to change? Keep asking about the first 6 steps until you recognize which ones you need to reinforce.

Preparing yourself for the fall helps you get back up again. When I was in college, I worked at an outdoor sports store owned by my dear friend Art. Art was a natural teacher. He was always looking for opportunities to learn something new and then to share what he learned. One of those opportunities was being invited to teach cross country skiing at the

University of Wisconsin. After covering the basics about equipment and clothing, he and the students would get on the skis. The first thing Art always taught his students was how to fall. Learning to move the skis forward started only after mastering how to fall without getting hurt and how to get back up. Because, as Art always said, if you're going to ski, you're going to fall.

Consider too, the fact that pilots get extensive training in what to do in emergency landing situations, that is, the best way to crash the plane. Pilots don't get this training to teach them to crash instead of flying, they get this training so that if they are ever in a crash situation, they are prepared to act quickly and effectively to minimize the damage.

So what are you going to do if you fall or even crash? What's your plan of action if your stakes come loose and you find yourself drifting off track? You need a plan. It should be a fairly simple plan, because when we're falling, we tend to be a bit stressed and our capacity to follow complex plans is greatly reduced. It might be as simple as "I will read my Urgency Statement every day." or "I will check in with my coach and other allies several time this week." It might be a selection of 5 to 10 simple alternatives you can choose from. When I think about eating chocolate again, my plan is to talk with my allies about why I want it and why I choose not to eat it.

The important thing is that you plan ahead. You'll find the Secure the Change Worksheet on the next page a useful planning tool.

When you or your organization needs the motivation and information to implement changes that will make your vision reality, check out Rosanne's coaching and speaking services.



www.RosanneBane.com
Or call Rosanne at 612-722-4139!

Secure the Change Worksheet

Write a statement of what you will commit to start doing or continue doing to firmly secure this change you've worked so hard to implement. Use the following questions as suggestions and triggers for your statement.

1. What am I committed to doing to keep this change in place?
2. What other commitments can I get out of to make time for the habits that will secure this change?
3. What changes will I make in my environment, life style, schedule, finances to secure this change?
4. How can I rely on my values to support this change?
5. How else will I support my commitment to this change?
6. Who will help and how?
7. What tricks, tips and techniques can I borrow from other people who made important changes?
8. What situations or circumstances can I foresee that might cause me to temporarily deviate from my change and new habits?
9. What are 5 to 10 simple tasks I can do to bring me back on course if I deviate?



Is change making you “shadowy,” i.e. stressed, resistant, emotionally volatile? Are you ready to claim the treasure that lies hidden deep in your unclaimed self?

Deeper into the Dragon’s Den: An Advanced Shadow class

After a brief review of the basics, we’ll seek a deeper understanding of the shadow and how to use it to expand your creativity. We’ll explore how to:

- ⊙ Develop a working relationship with the shadow
- ⊙ Identify and resolve the discrepancy between your Ego’s demands and your True Self’s creative and spiritual desires
- ⊙ Accept the Shadow’s Saving Grace – those gifts you need to keep growing and creating that only shadow can give
- ⊙ Use the energy of the Inner Destroyer to keep your creativity flowing!

Tuition is self-determined based on what value you receive from the class. Online registration at www.RosanneBane.com or call 612-722-4139.

Tuesdays, May 20 thru July 8, 6:45 to 9:00 p.m.

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For more information or to register: call the Loft at 612-379-8999 or visit www.loft.org.