
Thoughts for Reflection

We are faced with both infinite possibilities and incredible constraints. The challenge is thus twofold. First, given all the possibilities we might pursue, how do we choose? The answer to that is best derived by addressing the second question. How do we use the constraints that we are under to achieve the most significant thing(s) possible?

While I believe that it contains great wisdom no matter how resource-rich we might be, I find Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less by Roger McKeown an especially strong guide for us as we think through the path we want to set.

The following quotes are taken from that book.

(Essentialism) is about making the wisest possible investment of your time and energy in order to operate at your highest point of contribution by doing only what is essential.

Essentialism is a disciplined, systematic approach for determining where our highest point of contribution lies, then making execution of those things almost effortless.

Essentialists systematically explore a broad set of options before committing to any.

“You can’t overestimate the unimportance of practically everything.” (John Maxwell)

Essentialists ask, “What is the trade-off I want to make? What can I go big on?”...Trade-offs are not something to be ignored or decried. They are something to be embraced and made deliberately, strategically, and thoughtfully.

Listen for what others do not hear... Hear what is not being said.

If the answer is not a definitive *yes*, then it should be *no*.

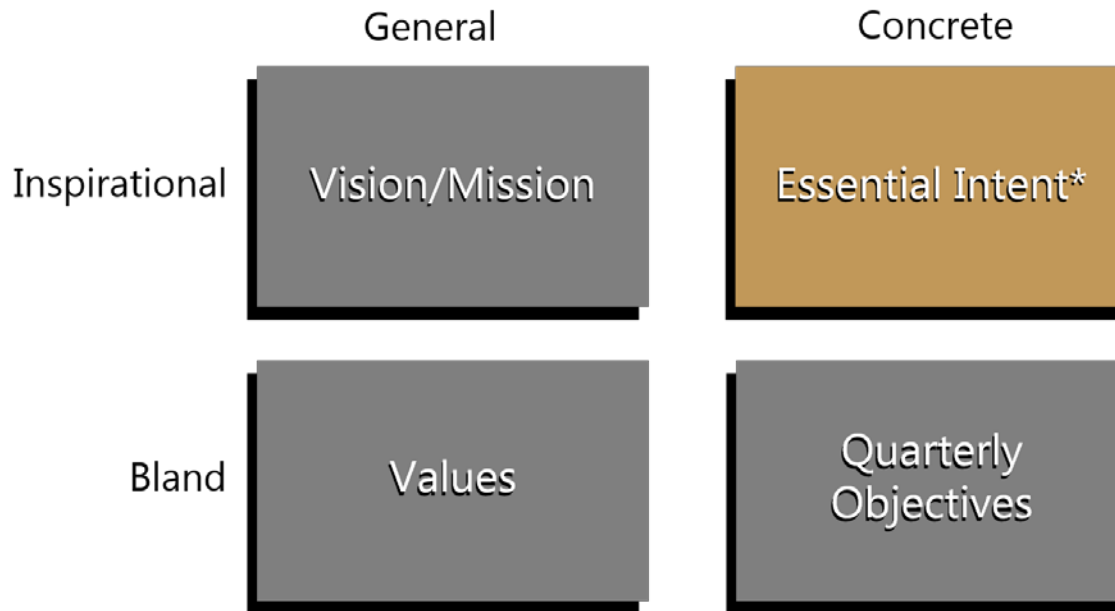
As you evaluate an option, think about the single most important criterion for that decision, and then simply give the option a score between 0 and 100. If you rate it any lower than 90%, change the rating to zero and simply reject it.

Making our criteria both selective and explicit affords us a systematic tool for discerning what is essential and filters out the things that are not.

We aren’t looking for a plethora of good things to do. We are looking for the one where we can make our absolute highest point of contribution.

When they have sufficient levels of clarity, they are capable of greater breakthroughs—greater than people even realize they ought to have—in those areas that are truly vital.

An essential intent is both meaningful and measurable.



**Make one decision that eliminates 1000 later decisions.*

An essential intent is both meaningful and measurable... A powerful essential intent...is concrete enough to answer the question, “How will we know when we have succeeded?”

Define the essential intent by answering the question, “If we could only do one thing, what would it be?”

Debate until you have established a really clear (not pretty clear) essential intent.

Clear intent leads to alignment.

Navigating (saying no) with courage and grace is one of the most important skills to master in becoming an essentialist, and one of the hardest.

An essentialist has the courage and confidence to admit his/her mistakes and un-commit, no matter the sunk costs.

We must summon the discipline to get rid of options or activities that may be good, or even really good, but that get in the way.

An essentialist produces more—brings forth more—by removing more instead of doing more.

The essentialist pursues small and simple wins in areas that are essential.

Essentialists start small and get big results; they celebrate small acts of progress.

Make the essential the default position.

Focus on each team member’s highest role and goal of contribution.