

"Subgoals to the Nth Power "

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Dear Folks:

In thinking about tangible results from New Directions, I first have to get myself oriented, so I can focus on the important tangible results. My thinking goes like this.

My assumption is that our largest goal is something that can only be achieved by many groups of people achieving subgoals, each of those only possible if many other groups of people achieve 2nd order subgoals, each of those only possible if many more groups achieve 3rd order subgoals, and so on until we get down to the scale on which our group will achieve its goal this year. My hope comes from the fact that I know of many other groups and individuals all working on subgoals that could all compound eventually to the same largest goal.

To be specific, I would express the largest goal as something like: Humanity lives as a cooperative element within the interdependent earth community.

Narrowing down to a segment of humanity that I feel empowered to influence, I express a 1st order subgoal for my nation-people, knowing that all the other nation-peoples will have to achieve similar 1st order subgoals for the largest goal to be realized: Americans feel their spiritual connection with the natural world and other peoples, and a moral obligation to live responsibly on the earth.

This requires a change of heart and a change in our spiritual awareness of who we are, and it also requires understanding, a 2nd order subgoal like this: Americans understand the complexity of their interactions with the natural world and with other nations.

Thinking practically, a nation-people needs leadership to achieve this understanding, so one of the necessary 3rd order subgoals is: Leaders in America think and act in the context of the complex interactions between human activities and earth systems, and communicate these to the people.

There are political 4th order subgoals, but for the context of New Directions the essential 4th order subgoal is: The academic and scientific communities are

aware of the complexity of interactions between human activities and earth systems and join their efforts to create a context of understanding.

New Directions contributes to this by doing a substantial amount of the work of achieving a 5th order subgoal: Educators and scientists value and cultivate the insights that other disciplines bring to important societal problems.

Those of us who are creating New Directions are one of the groups achieving a 6th order subgoal: There is an institution that brings intellectuals together to discover that other disciplines bring important insights to solving problems that matter.

Each interdisciplinary team that is recruited this year achieves an important step in the formation and success of New Directions, one of the 7th order subgoals: Members of interdisciplinary teams learn to respect each other and achieve success in projects that matter.

I've probably expressed some of those wrong, and no doubt I've left out some levels, but the important thing for this week's work is to get the lowest 3 levels right. So please think with me on these points:

1. Is it true that the reason for making New Directions is to help achieve the goal, "Educators and scientists value and cultivate the insights that other disciplines bring to important societal problems."?
2. Will New Directions be successful if it is "an institution that brings intellectuals together to discover that other disciplines bring important insights to solving problems that matter."?
3. What other subgoals are necessary for the success of New Directions, besides "Members of interdisciplinary teams learn to respect each other and achieve success in projects that matter."?