

The Ceiling of Complexity

Success is complicated. But that's okay; it's only natural. Everything that grows does so in stages, and just before each new breakthrough comes something we call "The Ceiling of Complexity." This is the point at which the processes that once fueled growth become confining, and actually hinder progress. When you reach one of these, it feels like you're a prisoner of your own success. But it doesn't have to be a life sentence. The Ceiling of Complexity offers you the opportunity to reach a new state of simplicity.

The results you've achieved are the result of the successful relationships, structures, and habits you've developed. It makes sense to want to keep doing what works. We've learned, though, from working with entrepreneurs that there's a point at which "what works" stops working. No amount of working harder or longer is going to change that.

We often meet entrepreneurs at the point where they've realized this. They're worn out by the high demands of success but can't see any other way to do things except the way they've always done them. Their lives feel overshadowed by messes and "stuff", and their abilities are eclipsed by details, conflicts, and complications. But there is a way out, and it's contained in one fundamental decision.

Choosing a Direction

A Ceiling of Complexity signals a point at which you have a choice to make. Will you choose the future, or the past? The past is familiar, predictable. You had inspiring goals, and you met them. That felt good. But now those goals are too small for you. If you look at a seashell, you can see the layers that form its substance. The growth was gradual, and the result quite beautiful, but expansion was essential, or that protective shell would have crushed the growing mollusk. Likewise, individuals and organizations reach a point where they need to choose a new way of doing things if they are going to continue to succeed. Even nations face this challenge- as can be witnessed by the intense complexity playing out on the world stage today.

At any level, what's required is the fundamental decision to choose the future over the past. Choosing challenging, big new goals will force you to create new relationships, structures, and habits. These will blast you through your personal Ceiling, and you'll find the level above to be filled with simplicity and clarity. Until, of course, you outgrow that level and face your next Ceiling. Things then will feel no less overwhelming or complex, but you'll recognize that Ceiling for what it is: an opportunity.

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