

Task Sets for the Emergent Approach

Task Set 1: Set the Stage

Start by determining the “lay of the land” of your endeavor. This includes initial thoughts about imperative, scope, resources, reporting, and rough timelines. It’s a who, what, when, where, and why type of thing. It includes what is commonly called chartering, but it goes beyond that to include initial ponderings about the diagnosis, or even early thoughts about solutions.

Task 1a: Articulate Reasons to Reopen the Strategy Process

Clarify the stressor that is triggering you to invest in changing your framework. If you are embarking on an entirely new endeavor, the reason is obvious. With an existing endeavor, reasons for reopening framework design range from new opportunities or threats, awareness of underperformance or organizational strain, crises, or the boss says so. When you articulate the reason, avoid jargon and be as specific as you can to create tension and dissonance that triggers action, as in Figure 1a.1:

Some triggers will drive you to a major program with significant changes anticipated and some to a minor one as depicted in Figure 11.7. In some cases, you may not know the effort you will need until you get into it.

What if Your Boss Doesn’t Want to Play?


In some cases, only the boss may feel the tension to reopen framework design. This misalignment may be a bottleneck that can be busted only by the boss waking the organization to the issue. Of course, leaders can just say “do it,” even if they cannot coherently articulate their anxiety about the current situation. Draw their thinking out as best you can.

In other cases, the people see the need and waking up the boss is the challenge. It can be tricky to tell leadership that change is needed. Sometimes the leaders are right, sometimes they are wrong. Sometimes leaders can see what the organization

<p><u>New Framework not Successful Enough</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance is lagging projections by 30% and this is unacceptable. • We can price higher; leaving money on the table. • Performance is good, but the organization doesn't understand the strategy; something is wrong. • Performance is good, but the strain on the organization is unsustainable. • The currency assumption in our "strong market" scenario is off by 25%. <p><u>Deterioration and Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence shows the market for our mid-range segment is declining; let's do something before it's too late. • We're losing key employees to the competition. • Our growth strategy is no longer relevant to our older products; need to create a nested system for differential management or divest. • Our supply-chain uses old IT technology; can we live with it? Or do we need to modernize? 	<p><u>New opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We see new applications for our technology in underserved markets. • The opposite of our strategy is now absurd, we've busted the bottleneck—time to get to the next level. • We're not doing enough for the communities where we operate. • We know we can be better and are tired of being an average company; we are not hard enough on ourselves. <p><u>Crises</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A competitor has taken our largest customer; our stock price will collapse if we don't take action now. • The benchmarking study we commissioned shows we are in the bottom quartile of industry EVA; we had no idea. The boss says we need to get to the top quartile, or she will divest us. • We've lost the goodwill of our investors; we fear two may pull out. <p><u>Miscellaneous</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's been 17 months since we revised our framework. • The boss says we need to run a strategy program for the 3rd-quarter board review.
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Figure 1a.1 Examples of reasons to reopen the strategy framework process

cannot; and sometimes they are blinkered. A good diagnosis may sway leaders, especially if they like systematic approaches; yet sometimes it will do nothing more than infuriate them (perhaps because they think people aren't "executing"). You may have to accept their view and hope they come around. You could even create a framework to get leadership to buy in, centered on enlisting allies, for instance.

 **B i k e S h o p**

In Chapter 6, you shifted to the "full-time biking evangelist" strategy after the original "my thing" strategy (Chapter 5) didn't show enough profit. You hired Marie as shop manager, and with your friend and tech manager Wrenchy, you created a three-part nested framework enabling you to evangelize biking full time.

It's now five years later, and lo and behold the shop is a success! Your success enabled you to finance the launch of four additional profitable shops in neighbor-

ing towns. You now employ over 70 people. You turn out to be a great evangelist and source of inspiration to the community and customers; a bit of a local celebrity. Who knew? There's traffic in the shop where you are selling everything you hoped for: good bikes, accessories, service, and even well-attended training classes. There's a great vibe. People are even starting to like Wrenchy's electronic music. The *Yo! Bike It* bumper stickers are everywhere along with T-shirts, buttons, and stickers for little kids.

You have captured the imagination of several demographics: commuters, singles, parents with kids, and even older folks with hip and knee replacements. They all respond to messages about the value of biking for health and fitness and for the environment. No one has had your success convincing people to ride in the cold weather, and to buy heated gloves and hats and other winter riding gear carried in your shop. You convinced people to ride their bike to stores when only buying a few things. You inspire elderly folks to ride with low-slung bikes with super-comfy seats. Your *Yo! Bike It to Work* campaign is a success, where you convince commuters to bike four days a week. On the fifth, they drive, bring in four new sets of work clothes to change into when they arrive on biking days, and take home four sets of dirty riding clothes. Even "the suits" are doing it with their ultra-chic backpacks.

A few people even credited you with pushing them over the top to dump their cars completely. These folks are buying high-quality commuter bikes and electric hybrids with better guards against grease and road mud and innovative safety features for visibility including the *Yo! Bike It*. digital horn. These bikes are expensive with robust mechanicals, mobile phone speakers, phone charging from the wheels, and quality run-flat tires for ultralow breakdown rates, yet people are paying for them. Customers in general are now less inclined to go buy an accessory online after seeing it in your shop, even if it costs 10 to 20 percent less. The mom-and-pop shop reports better business because of all the biking vibe around town. You've also retained your clientele of enthusiasts who were there from the start.

Your ambition is escalating. You have new visions of bringing what you are now calling the *Yo! Bike It* model to a much broader audience. Others are impressed

too. Two of the three global brands and a smaller outfit called Cycling, Inc., are sniffing around. Even your aunt and uncle are impressed.

What to do? Now that your back is no longer against the wall, you have options, and face some exhilarating but daunting decisions: Should you keep going as is, take loans, and grow organically on your own? Or, should you find investors for the capital and assistance? Or, how about selling the shops to an outfit that can scale up more quickly, yet try to negotiate to keep a position of decision-making control? Do you want to keep working so hard? What do you value now after all this success? Money? Living in the bike world? Doing good for people? Fame? You're getting a headache. You need a new framework.

Task 1b: Sketch Your Nested System

Sketch a simple nested structure like Figure 1b.1 (reproduced from Chapter 7, EAS) that positions the part of the organization you are trying to change within the overall organization. Making this diagram helps you (1) understand your context sufficiently to be sure you will consider the constraints and direction imposed by all parent organizations and, (2) be sure, as a parent, you know which organizations will need to be responsive to your framework. In some cases, you may be exploring more than one structure within your control. If you are not part of a formal organization structure, do your best to put your system in context of its parent, children, and peers (peer to you, child to the parent). Even within the scope of your own system, there could also be nested systems; they will become clear as you work.

Recall, every designed component of the framework must pass the duplicate disqualifier (Chapter 8) because there can be no redundancy between parent and child frameworks. If the “child is constrained by the parent” sounds like top-down, old-fashioned, dunderheaded leadership, however, be at ease. In the task sets for designing and implementing frameworks, if the parent allows, it's best to design the parent and child nested systems simultaneously, such that the children inform the parent as much as the parent informs the children in an adaptive progression. Recall also, that nesting does not mean added layers of management. It is a recognition of layers, or multiple peer systems that exist, or that should exist.

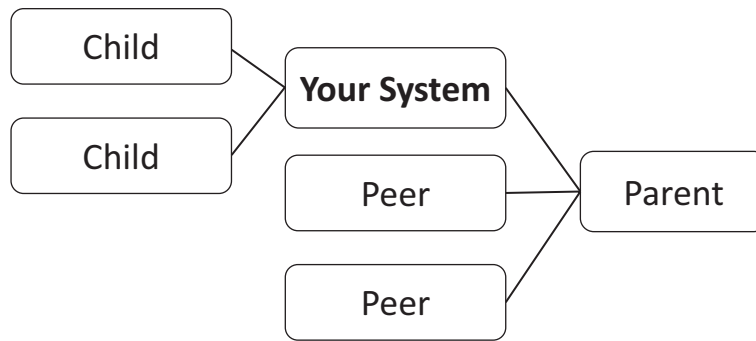

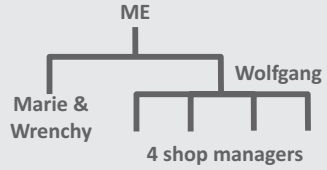


Figure 1b.1 Situate Your Program in the Larger Organization

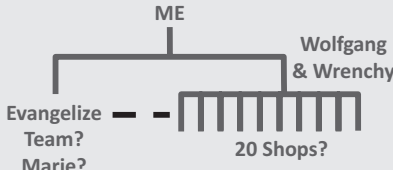
Hint: A great way to get the lay of the land as a program leader or as an organization leader is to ask each nested system to give you their one-page framework, being sure they show relationships with the other organizations.

 Bike Shop

While growing, you added the manager Wolfgang, to whom your four new shop managers report. He has business training and experience and is capable. He can grow, but is it possible for him to run 20 shops? Wouldn't he need a tech leader like Wrenchy? But Wrenchy doesn't have managerial ambition. Can Wrenchy have the influence still working at your original shop? Can Marie become part of a evangelize leadership team? Would they be dotted line to the shops? You sketch out a possibility in Figure 1b.2.



Current set up



Possible set up

Figure 1b.2 Possible organization structures

Task 1c: Design Roles and a Team

Here, you design your initial team. The *Staffing Your Framework Design Program* section of the introduction to the Task Sets gave considerations for several factors when dealing with the personnel aspect of strategy design and implementation including:

- The trade-offs between inclusion versus smallness
- Options for working and steering teams
- Considerations for choosing team members
- Geniuses and jerks
- Facilitator/process leader role
- Using consultants

In general, lean toward small teams and add as needed. You can change the teams so there is no need to perfection at the start.

Hint: Overlay your teams onto your nested structure to give insight into which organizations need to be included.

🚲 Bike Shop

You need help with attacking your expanded vision. You put together a small group. It's a given that Wrenchy will be included. He has been a great partner and friend who always puts the mission of bringing biking to the world in front of making money, which has been tricky at times. Marie must be part of it too. She has contributed to your shop's success, and in fact has become a skillful evangelist herself.

Who else? You now employ many good people who share the *Yo! Bike It.* vision, especially Wolfgang. Despite limited history together, you feel Wolfgang's education and business acumen add a new dimension to your organization, so you pick him for the group too. You are aware that many of the others would have valuable input, but you are afraid of turning the process into a circus, so you stop adding.

Last, because you have zero experience with big finance and partnerships, you engage Josephine (Joey) Deets from ACME, a major consulting firm specializing in finance, mergers, and acquisitions. Joey was recommended by your banker. Unfortunately, you can only afford a little of Joey's time.

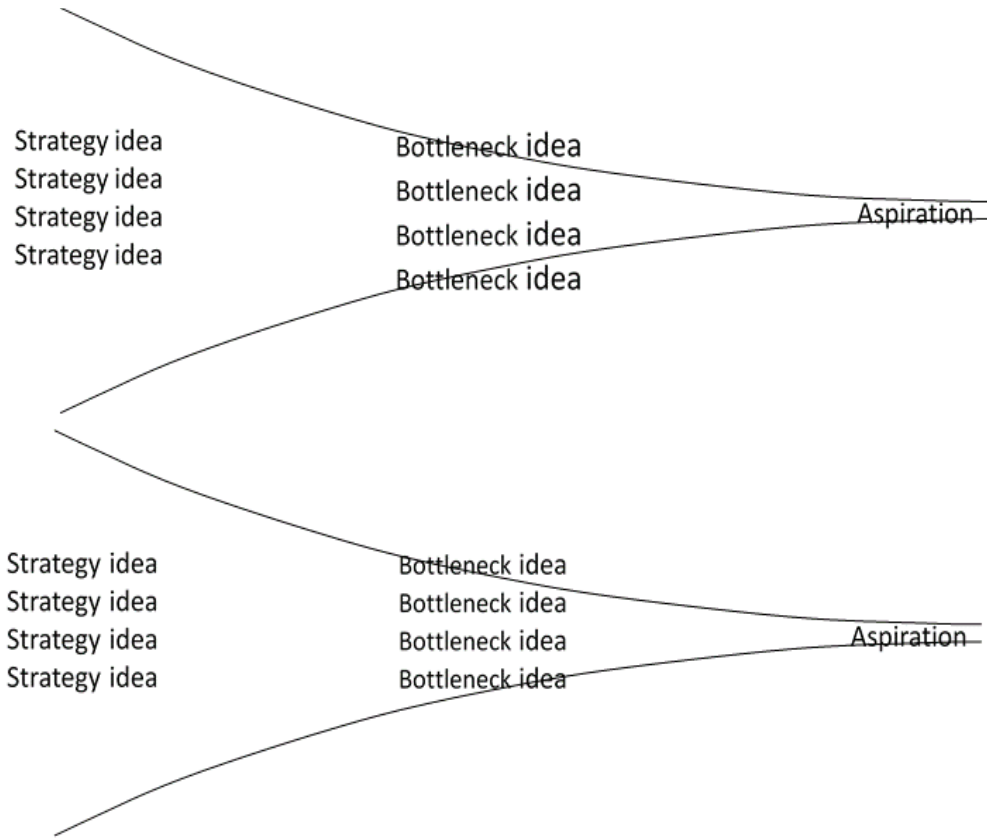
Task 1d: Capture Initial Ideas

In a larger, new, or more complicated endeavor, or if the team members are new to each other, an option for early in the process is to capture initial ideas about the program in a relaxed and open way. Get what's in people's heads already—you can use it as raw material later. You started this in Task 1a asking why you are embarking on the work. Here, you can capture more of the diagnosis and maybe even imagine solutions. If this is a first-time framework, these articulations will be new. If it is a modification, focus on what is changing. Make sure the team knows that everything stated is provisional and everything can change.

The brainstorming tips presented in the introduction to the Task Sets bring a little order to the process. Don't judge; instead, focus on whether people understand what is said. Don't synthesize or analyze; get the juices flowing, stimulate thinking, create energy, and make sure everyone is heard. If you know your nested systems, then brainstorm for each. It's natural for people to start diagnosing and designing when faced with new challenges, so capturing early ideas here is often easy and fun.

You may want to categorize ideas as you go, especially when your team generates a lot of ideas, just don't let the categorizing get in the way of the thinking. As so often in the emergent approach, the Strategy ← Bottleneck ← Aspiration triad helps focus thinking. Don't worry at this stage about finding single bottlenecks or strategies, and don't worry about putting the strategy in terms of a rule; just capture an idea. You may even list multiple aspirations. If you do, you might want to have multiple influence diagrams (Figure 1d.1).

Alternatively, you can always start with the framework components. Either label statements as you go or populate a simple table of the standard components as in Figure 1d.2.



Beliefs for Endeavor _____	
Values	
Aspirations-vision, mission, or goals	
Diagnosis-Proposition	
Diagnosis-External constraints	
Diagnosis-Bottlenecks	
Diagnosis-Scenarios	
Strategy alternatives	
Tactics	
Plans	
Metrics/triggers	
Fitness criteria	

When brainstorming, encourage people to consider:

- The outside world
- Risk and upside potential (Chapter 15, EAS)
- Resources
- Stakeholders
- What they bring to the table
- Stuff they are scared about; what keeps them up at night; bottlenecks, threats
- Stuff they are excited about; opportunities
- What could be

Other categories can be used in addition to, or instead of the framework:

- New ideas; old ideas still relevant
- Beliefs of the future with high certainty
- What outsiders think
- Beliefs of the future with low certainty
- The common view
- Contrarian view

Or, the very simple format of categorize into,

- Everything *in our favor*
- Everything *against our ability* to have a successful endeavor

Be bold when you list these, you can question their validity later as you test and get more specific about framework components. The *everything in our favor* list will be raw material for your proposition and scenarios and the against-you list will be raw material for external constraints and especially bottlenecks.

Last, you might use categories based on the additional tools and techniques shown in Table 17.4 in Chapter 17, EAS. Examples are heat maps and other diagnostic tools, analysis tools like Porter's five forces or other thought processes. Flow mapping, or process mapping, used extensively in *Lean Six-Sigma* techniques, is a good technique for visualizing inputs and outputs, flows of information, and hierarchy.

Hint: Some people freak out when they hear musings about strategies or plans early in endeavors. “We are in problem space now, not solutions space” and similar reproaches may follow. But in an agile approach where you are solving a puzzle (Chapter 11, EAS), advantage is gained from considering problems and solutions

early and simultaneously because articulating one stimulates thinking about the other. The key is to keep these ideas as strictly draft ideas; provisional. Keep it fuzzy.

Set the Tone Early by Giving Offline Work

Giving assignments early in, and throughout, the program creates an expectation of active participation and tests whether people are willing to put in time. This is not just for the key designers; it's for everyone. When people create something or defend a position, it leads to greater participation—emotionally and technically—than just going to meetings and responding to visuals. Offline assignments align perfectly with the ad hoc team concept.

Create a standard of expectation that people will deliver their work on time, by, for instance, postponing a meeting if one or more participants fails to prepare. You do not have to say in advance what the consequences will be for not doing the work. Be exceedingly clear about what is to be done—format, timing, specific objectives, and how they will present their work to the team. (It is amazing how poorly people follow instructions.) Most people think that so long as the right information is captured, format doesn't matter. If, however, you are working in a large complex program, the format, or even the chosen computer application—Word, PowerPoint, Excel—may matter. You can create auto forms in Microsoft office as a *poka yoke*.

Hint: Whenever feasible, use pairs of people for work, especially design work. There's less hiding when only two people are responsible for something, yet there's still diversity and an opportunity for back-and-forth on ideas. Scheduling is easier because difficulty of scheduling is exponentially proportional to the number of people. Working in pairs is less lonely than working alone; there's even intimacy at times.

Bike Shop

You schedule a let-it-all-hang-out brainstorming session with your gang, Wrenchy, Marie, and Wolfgang. You get a hotel suite an hour and a half away from your main shop and tell everyone else that you are busy with lawyers and that it will be difficult to answer the phone. You bring wings, celery and carrots, a big bag of peanut M&M's, coffee, a few Atkins bars, a seltzer machine, a case of Ballantine ale, a big bottle of Guinness, a laptop and a projector, and lock yourselves away. You invite Joey, the consultant, to come at the end of the day, so the team can meet her over dinner.

You tell the team that you want them to think of themselves as partners (dangerous). Marie suggests naming the team the *zTeam*. Everyone agrees. You tell them you want them to speak their minds. You show them data on the costs and profit of the shops, and what it takes to open one. You have a great time. As they talk, you capture and add in parentheses a possible framework category for each idea. You end up with two lists:

How to expand business and reach more people with the vision

Our ability to run a bigger business. (Potential Bottleneck)

Should we change the name of the shops to *Yo! Bike It?* How about *Bike-o-Matic?* (Plan).

Connect with other organizations/businesses that are focused on caring for the environment and health. (Proposition)

The sacrifices we will have to make to reach a larger number of people? (Potential bottlenecks and uncertainties)

Will the model fly in different geographies? Different communities with different politics? (Proposition uncertainty to be assessed)

How long will it take to reach people? To penetrate with the *Yo! Bike It* model? (Uncertainty to be assessed)

I really wish to try to make the *Yo! Bike It* model work in a major city within the next year or two. (Specific goal)

Are we ready for this? Can we get grant money? How can we work with local governments? Sponsored programs for kids? Will the government lift the rule that grants only go to nonprofits? (Potential bottlenecks and uncertainties)

Concerns about partners, buyers, and investors

What is the global brands' ability to reproduce the *Yo! Bike It* model? The service, the evangelism, the care? Will others be willing to make the same personal commitment? Will we just be overrun if acquired? (Uncertainty to be assessed, potential bottleneck)

Is all this success just a fad? Do we know what really caused it? The economy has been good the whole five years—strong stock market. (Uncertainty to be assessed)

Which global brand would be the best partner? What do they want? One brand seems greedy, another seems old fashioned, and Cycling, Inc., seems fun but weird. How will they work with us? (Uncertainty to be assessed, possible constraints from parents)

Will we lose our identity if bought? Will we be overrun by corporate wonks and junior execs who never actually created a business in their careers? Will the accountants take over? (Uncertainty to be assessed)

Wrenchy doesn't care too much about salary, Wolfgang cares a lot, and Marie feels it is secondary. Everyone agrees: if a partner, or a buyer, or an investor is going to make good money, we should too. (Value; fitness criterion)

Whom can we trust? (Uncertainty to be assessed—with experiment?)

At dinner, the group decides to share the list with consultant Joey. Her only response is to ask if people were truly open with each other. Everyone pretty much said yes, but after Wolfgang, Marie, and Joey went home, you admit to Wrenchy that you were holding back personal stuff. You share your private list with him:

Money risk—lose what I have invested? Be liable for loans? Will a pure investor bug me all the time? (Value, constraints from parents, fitness)

Will I be humiliated if this all crashes down? (Uncertainty to be assessed)

Do I really care about helping people? Or, am I just caught up in a mini cult of personality? (Aspirations)

Do I still crave independence? Would I work for someone else? (Value)

What happens to my current staff? Do I give them a piece of the action? Will they follow me? Would they work for a global brand? (Nested framework design)

You open up to Wrenchy even more and ask, “Will I have to work like a dog? Do I want all this trouble? Will I still have time to be around biking and ride? When will I settle down? Will I have to move? I’m still single and getting no younger. I met Pat at the swinging singles bike-a-thon, who seems to really dig me. What if it got serious? I’ve spent no time on relationships; can that go on forever? I’m not that good! If I go for a plan that requires me 24/7 for 5 years, I can kiss Pat (or anyone else) goodbye.” Wrenchy says that you need to at least give the team a feel for these thoughts. You have a quick meeting the next day and verbalize some of them.

Task 1e: Design a Training Approach

Training in two areas is potentially needed. One is for understanding of the emergent approach and second is any new domain knowledge specific to your endeavor.

While learning by doing under a process leader/facilitator will teach the emergent approach to team, it is important for the principles to be understood including the SAM and its elements, the framework components and especially the strategy as the rule to bust the bottleneck, the five disqualifiers, and the agile puzzle paradigm. The degree of training naturally depends on the skills and experience of the people involved.

Caution: Because the emergent approach uses much common terminology with traditional strategy methods, people may believe there is nothing new to learn. Be sure to teach the differences.

Spread training out; mix it into the program. There's no training that works in one pass, just as there is no framework development that works in one pass. It must be performed repeatedly, and it must be coupled with doing. Imagine having to learn a subject of any difficulty by listening to lectures only. It also goes without saying that quick several-day training sessions alone (sometimes called sheep-dipping) will not be the answer.

Big one-time training sessions early are ineffective because people will not have enough time to digest them and there's no learning by doing. You might trigger the immune response, or worse, people might think they understand it better than they really do. Just give the basic principles early on using visualizations and language, and possibly examples of past work, if you have them. Then, integrate training as the program progresses focusing on specific topics when the skill is needed and with repetition. Don't forget leadership training. Take advantage of the extended development model (Chapter 11, EAS).

You may enhance training using social media and the ability to make simple and short videos as the program progresses.

Bike Shop

You have Joey Deets come in every other week and give training to the zTeam on financing, partnerships, legal considerations, and investors. You also start teaching the techniques from the book (*The Emergent Approach*) you found on strategy, preparing them for what's going to come.

Task 1f: Draft Project Timelines and Milestones

Completion dates and timing for intermediate milestones may be thrust upon you. A decision deadline (external constraint) may exist to gain investment from backers, buy equipment, meet a filing deadline, or simply because the aspiration must be met for competitive reasons. Or, again, just because the boss says so. If you don't like what's put on you by the boss, try to negotiate a change or ignore the direction at your peril. If timing is largely yours or the team's choice, you can:

- Set strict timelines and communicate that you plan to hold on to them
- Set strict timelines and, openly or secretly, plan on flexibility as changes are needed
- Set timelines as you go for each task or block of work; not overall timelines

Timelines are a double-edge sword. They can create urgency because some people need deadlines to be motivated. Timelines are also valuable for coordination, helping people plan schedules and giving them comfort in participating. Yet, if timelines change often and significantly, this might be less comforting than no timelines at all. Strict timelines can, especially short ones, destroy people's ability to internalize and learn by "soak" (Chapter 11, EAS). You can't know ahead of time what you will discover in your work and, therefore, you cannot know the amount of work you will need to do.

Caution: If you use the task sets as a milestone or work-plan template, be careful not to move toward sequential thinking.

Weaker organizations put the discipline of schedule ahead of the discipline of discovery. A strong organization can set provisional timelines yet not be a slave to them. There will be natural creative tension around time. A disciplined organization will let the work, the opportunity, or the need dictate timing—a low-level discipline. Strong leaders can accept the anxiety of flexible timing if they know there is a deeper discipline at play.

Hint: If you are willing to risk having people think you are nuts, use what we could call the change-weeks-to-months rule. If experts say your program will take, say, six weeks, then plan for six months. (But, not full time.)

Bike Shop

You're anxious to get going. You're also concerned, despite strong words to the zTeam to keep the work confidential, that given enough time, some word of selling the business or partnerships might leak out and distract the organization. On the flip side, you're facing the heavy spring sales season. You set the milestone of connecting with each of the four competitor brands and several potential investors by August 15—six months away.

Task 1g: Complete, Name, and Socialize the Plan of Attack Where Needed

Despite the dangers of sharing work at early stages (see Introduction to the task sets), there are reasons you may wish to socialize summary elements of your plan of attack to a broader audience than the project teams. Your leadership may require a formal proposal or white paper for large endeavors. The broader organization may benefit from learning about the endeavor, either to engender support or to put fears to rest and stop the rumor mill. You might want to run a few feedback cycles until everyone is sure of what is being said; especially, with people who you are counting on to participate. You need to decide whether brevity or detail plays in your organization and the right form for communicating the plan (such as texts, slides, videos, or another form).

Hint: Try not to get sucked into major debates early. Debating when there's scarcely any understanding or evidence is of low value. Record the comments for later and move on.

Name your Endeavor (see the introduction to the task sets). Use the opposite disqualifier to ferret out names that give no information. Names that are true for everyone and everything will not help you.

Bike Shop

You share your timeline with the zTeam; they all commit to it. Obviously, because of the need for confidentiality, you cannot discuss the program with the rest of your employees. To keep things simple, you call it the zExpansion project.