



element four: **STAGING**

PRACTICING THE 13 ELEMENTS OF ALCHEMY

1 CREATING THE MATRIX. Spaces allow some things to happen and disallow others. What can't happen in your organization may be able to happen somewhere else. You can wait until the right space comes along to support what you wish to create, or you can use alchemy to shift the existing space. Staging is the antecedent to precipitation. It creates the matrix that enables precipitation to occur.

2 DEFINING MOMENTS. Some life stages are changed in an instant by a single unexpected event that has more influence than all the other planned events to date. If we don't recognize its importance, we may continue working for a destination that is no longer possible, or miss the opportunity for a new and preferred destination that has been made possible.

3 DESIGNING FOR EMERGENCE. Many of the gifts we admire most in others are unrealized in us not because we don't have them, but because the stage we have occupied so far didn't evoke them. By intentionally designing a new stage, we make the seemingly impossible, natural.

4 CHANGING COURSE. Often we are carried away by the momentum of a sequence of events—we march on when we should interrupt the flow and stop. By unconsciously continuing, we reach a destination we did not expect or want. Alchemists recognize no-win situations early and redesign or exit the stage.

5 THE PERFECT DAY. An array of experiences can be staged using what's readily available in almost every existing circumstance. We don't need to delay our bliss until something changes or something new comes along—we simply need to stage what's already here differently. Staged well enough, almost every day will have most of the essential qualities of our perfect day.

6 WARNING SIGNS. Often we ignore warning signs until a situation breaks down entirely. To the extent we recognize these signs early, we can redesign our space and avoid non-ideal outcomes. Warning signs may include excessive energy expenditure, recurring problems, group dissonance, lack of resources or cooperation, or emotional turbulence.

7 ACCENTUATION. Stages occupied over time are so formative they may create a personal imbalance by accentuating positive and negative characteristics. Taken to the extreme, even qualities that have been valuable may become so emphasized that complementary qualities are essential for balance.

8 CORE RELATIONSHIPS. Our presence enables futures for those closest to us—and precludes them too. By understanding desirable futures that are less likely because of us, we can redesign the existing shared stage to incorporate what's essential to nurture expanded possibilities for those we love.

9 A TOXIC STAGE. Some spaces are toxic to those who occupy them—they work against the well-being of the people there. They may be crowded, noisy, dark, anxiety-producing, or devoid of nature. Rather than redesign the space, we often condemn people's behavior. Alchemists design spaces to support what they are trying to accomplish. The space may be as simple as a meeting room or as complex as a campus.

10 LINES AND DOMAINS. Some staging uses a sequence to reach a destination—much like going from beginning to end on a line. The effect is the endpoint. Other staging defines the boundary of a new domain—like completing a circle. The effect is the new territory defined by the journey. Both types of staging employ distinct steps in a defined order.

11 PREVIOUS CHAPTERS. By understanding more about the stage that's made you who you are, you can better design the stage for who you wish to become. Often we only partially understand what's contributed most to the qualities and characteristics we are presently expressing.

12 THE NEXT CHAPTER. Often we don't think about a future stage until we arrive—we view it as something separate from what we are doing today. But there are ways to begin staging the next chapter now. Ideally, present and future states both inform and create each other.