

THE LONG CLOCK · CHAPTER NINE

The Field Manual

Chapter Nine of The Long Clock

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Chapter Nine of The Long Clock. The whole book, with every chapter, is at business.hautelumiere.life/library/the-long-clock (DOI https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23989072).

A NOTE BEFORE YOU READ

This work is offered for education and leadership development. It is not legal, financial, accounting, investment, medical or psychological advice; take the advice of a qualified professional who knows your circumstances. Companies and events are described from the public record as the author understands it; characterisations are the author's analysis. Examples are illustrative, and no particular outcome is promised to any reader.

ABSTRACT

The first eight chapters of this book make an argument and test it against cases. This chapter is for running it. It sets out a twelve-week sequence a leader can follow in a company of almost any size, with no change of ownership and no new money, and it is written so that someone who has read nothing else in the book could begin on Monday with this chapter open on the desk. Twelve weeks is a deliberate length. It is long enough to cover one full quarterly cycle, so that the sequence meets the short clock at least once and has to hold its ground. It is short enough that the people in the room can see its end, which matters because, as chapter 4 argued, a frightened room writes short plans whatever it calls them. A sequence with a visible end lowers the fear a little, and that is the first condition for the rest.

CHAPTER NINE

The Field Manual

Twelve weeks, on purpose

The first eight chapters of this book make an argument and test it against cases. This chapter is for running it. It sets out a twelve-week sequence a leader can follow in a company of almost any size, with no change of ownership and no new money, and it is written so that someone who has read nothing else in the book could begin on Monday with this chapter open on the desk.

Twelve weeks is a deliberate length. It is long enough to cover one full quarterly cycle, so that the sequence meets the short clock at least once and has to hold its ground. It is short enough that the people in the room can see its end, which matters because, as chapter 4 argued, a frightened room writes short plans whatever it calls them. A sequence with a visible end lowers the fear a little, and that is the first condition for the rest.

The sequence uses the Tools from the earlier chapters as its artefacts. Each week produces a page. By the twelfth week the company holds a short dossier: a snapshot of its horizons, a purpose sentence written where it binds, a stress test of that purpose, a register of its two clocks, a review of its owners' horizons, a sketch of where its three rights sit, a letter to its investors about the clock it keeps, and a register of predictions to judge itself against a year from now. None of the pages is long. Their value is that they exist, are dated, and are kept where the monthly numbers are kept.

Ammanuel Santa Anna's *Ecstatic Economics* gives the governing principle for the whole chapter in six words: "Culture doesn't float free of structure."[68] Every week below ends in a structural change, a line in a document, a name against a duty, a date in a calendar, however small. A week that ends only in a good conversation has not finished.

The four roles

Four people carry the sequence. In a small firm two of them may be the same person; in a large one each may be a small group. The roles matter more than the titles.

The sponsor. The person with authority to change the documents that govern the company: the chief executive, the managing partner, the owner-manager. The sponsor does not do most of the work. The sponsor's

job is to protect the calendar, to sign what needs signing, and to say aloud, at the start and at each gate, that the sequence is real. Without a sponsor the work becomes a project, and projects are cut in the first bad quarter.

The long-clock holder. The person or body who will hold the company's long clock after the twelve weeks are over. Chapter 13 describes the role in full: a party with a long clock, the standing to act on it, and enough distance from daily management to judge it fairly. In a family firm it may be a family council or the eldest active shareholder. In a listed company it may be a board committee or the chair. In a partnership it may be the senior partner who is not seeking re-election. If nobody fits, the first finding of the sequence is that the role is empty, and the twelve weeks become, in part, a search for someone to fill it.

The finance lead. The chief financial officer, the finance director, the bookkeeper in a small firm. The finance lead owns the numbers on every page and the honesty of the arithmetic. This role is essential because the two-clock reading is, at bottom, a reading of accounts, and because the finance lead usually knows where the draw-downs are long before anyone else does. A finance lead who is brought in at week ten to check figures will, reasonably, defend them. A finance lead who is in the room from week one helps find them.

The sceptic. One person whose stated job is to disagree. Chapter 3 argued that the strongest objections to purpose are a specification; the sceptic is the person who keeps them in the room. Choose someone respected, numerate and unafraid, and tell the whole group that this person has been asked to argue the other side. A sceptic appointed openly is heard; a sceptic who appears uninvited is resented. Give the sceptic a standing item at every gate and the right to have a dissent recorded on any page.

The four meet weekly for an hour and at each gate for two. Others are drawn in as the weeks require: a line manager who knows the apprenticeship programme, a long customer, the company's lawyer, a representative of the staff.

The calendar rule

Before week one, set one rule and write it at the top of the charter: long-clock decisions are taken in calm weeks.

Chapter 4 set out the reason. Under threat, the body's clock shortens before any policy does, and Santa Anna's book is plain about what that does to a decision: under financial threat, he writes, the time horizon collapses to "this quarter, this month, this paycheck."[68] A company does not control when threats arrive. It does control when it schedules its gates.

So the sponsor looks at the coming quarter and marks the weeks that are likely to be hard: the close of the quarter, the week of the results, the week of a lender's covenant test, the week of a known restructuring.

No gate is placed in those weeks. If an unplanned crisis arrives in a gate week, the gate moves. The working sessions may continue; the decisions wait.

The same chapter of the book adds the reason this matters for the people in the room as well as the decision on the page. Santa Anna summarises a body of research on workplaces in one line: "human beings do their best economic work from a state of vitality, not anxiety."[68] The house does not lean on that research for more than it can carry. The rule costs nothing and removes one known source of short decisions.

Weeks 1 and 2 · The snapshot

Purpose of the weeks. To see the company's horizons as they are, before anyone argues about what they should be.

Week 1. The four roles meet. The sponsor states the sequence, its end date and the calendar rule. Each of the four fills in the Horizon Snapshot from chapter 1 separately, without discussion, then the four compare. The differences are the first finding. A sponsor who believes the company's longest-lived asset is its brand, and a finance lead who believes it is its plant, are describing two different companies, and both need to be heard before anything is written.

Week 2. The four produce one agreed snapshot. Where they cannot agree, both answers are written down. The finance lead adds one table: the shortest clock on which anyone in the company is judged, and who sets it. The sceptic adds one line: the strongest reason to stop the sequence now.

The gate at the end of week 2. The sponsor decides whether to continue. This is a real decision, and it is better taken now than at week eight. If the snapshot shows no long-clock asset of consequence, or shows that the company is in a crisis that will dominate the quarter, the right answer may be to stop and return to the sequence later. The decision and its reason are written on the snapshot and dated.

The artefact. The Horizon Snapshot, agreed and signed by the four.

Weeks 3 and 4 · The purpose sentence

Purpose of the weeks. To write the company's purpose in a form that can rank a decision, and to find the document where it will bind.

Week 3. The group drafts the Purpose Sentence from chapter 2: the problem the company solves profitably, for whom, and the harm it will not profit from. Three drafts are normal. The test is the one chapter 2 gives: name one profitable thing this sentence would make the company refuse. A draft that refuses nothing is too wide. A draft that would refuse the company's core business is too narrow, or is telling the group something important.

Week 4. The sceptic runs the Purpose Stress Test from chapter 3 against the best draft. The four objections are taken in order: can it rank a decision, does it bind, is patience present, and on what clock is the company's money owed. Each weakness the test finds becomes a line in the charter's list of structural changes. The finance lead completes the table of capital sources and their clocks, debt included. Many companies find, at this step, that patient shareholders sit above impatient lenders.

The gate at the end of week 4. The sponsor chooses the one document in which the purpose sentence will first be written. In most companies the realistic choices are a board charter, a shareholders' agreement, the terms of the largest bonus plan, or the articles. The articles carry most weight and take longest; a board charter can usually be amended within the twelve weeks. Choose the document that can actually be changed before week twelve, and record the plan for the stronger one.

The artefacts. The Purpose Sentence, the Purpose Stress Test, and the name of the document.

Weeks 5 and 6 · The register

Purpose of the weeks. To put the slow clock on the same page as the fast one.

Week 5. The finance lead, with the line managers who know each asset, fills in the Two Clocks Register from chapter 4. The hardest column is regeneration time. Ask the person who would have to rebuild the asset how long it would take, and write down what they say. A training manager who says six years to rebuild a cohort of skilled technicians is giving the company information no budget contains.

Week 6. The four read the register's draw-down pairs aloud. This is the most uncomfortable meeting of the twelve weeks, and the most useful. Most pairs will be known to somebody. Some will be a surprise to everybody. The sceptic's job in this meeting is to test each pair: is this a draw-down, or a genuine efficiency? Both are possible. The register is not an accusation. Chapter 3 quoted the line from Santa Anna's book that should govern the tone of the room, about the harms of the extractive firm: "Not because they're evil."[68] The pairs are what a structure produced.

The gate at the end of week 6. The group chooses the one mismatch to close first. One, not five. Chapter 13 explains why: a system absorbs one lengthened clock in a quarter, and changing five at once is a reorganisation, which shortens everyone's clock while it lasts.

The artefact. The Two Clocks Register, with one mismatch circled.

Week 7 · The owners

Purpose of the week. To see who holds the company's money and votes, and on what clock.

The finance lead and the long-clock holder complete the Owner's Horizon Review from chapter 5, including the cut arithmetic: what profit would look like if the long-clock lines were stopped, and what any buy-

er's or lender's multiple would make of it. The point is not to tempt anyone. It is to know the size of the incentive the company is resisting, so that it can be resisted on purpose.

The same pair then fills in the Steward Structure Sketch from chapter 6, which shows where the right to the money, the right to decide and the right to sell control now sit. In most companies all three sit with the same party. That is not a fault. It is the reason the shortest clock in the company is usually the moment that party decides to sell.

There is no gate in week 7. It is a week for reading.

The artefacts. The Owner's Horizon Review and the Steward Structure Sketch.

Week 8 · The midpoint gate

Purpose of the week. To decide what the sequence will change, and to tell the people who need to know.

This is the longest meeting of the twelve weeks and should be scheduled in the calmest week of the quarter. The four review every artefact so far and agree three things.

The one structural change. From the register's circled mismatch and the stress test's weaknesses, the group chooses the single change the sequence will make before week twelve. Chapter 4 listed the usual candidates: a longer bonus period, a longer loan tenor, a rule protecting a named long-clock line unless a reason is recorded, a line in the minutes of every major decision naming the asset it draws on, a seat or standing item for one long-clock party.

The long-clock holder. If the role was empty at week 1, the group names who will hold it from week twelve, and on what terms. If the role was filled, the holder confirms what they will read, how often, and what they will do if the register shows a draw-down.

The conversations. The group lists every party who must hear about the change before it is made: the board, the lender, the family, the investors, the staff. Chapter 11 sets out each conversation, with a script. The sponsor assigns each one to a named person and a week.

The sceptic presents the case against at the start of the meeting, not the end. A dissent, if there is one, is written into the charter.

The artefact. The charter's middle page: the change, the holder, the conversations.

Weeks 9 and 10 · The conversations

Purpose of the weeks. To hold the conversations listed at week 8, and to revise the change in the light of what is heard.

Chapter 11 is the companion to these two weeks. The principle governing all of them is to bring the page, not only the argument. A board shown the register reads its own draw-downs. A lender shown the cut arithmetic sees why the company wants a longer tenor. A family shown the Steward Structure Sketch sees where the right to sell sits, and can talk about whether it should.

For a listed company, or any company with outside investors, week 10 is when the Investor Clock Letter from chapter 8 is drafted. It tells investors what clock the company intends to keep, which measures of the long-clock assets it will report, and on what schedule. The letter is not sent in week 10. It is drafted, reviewed by the company's lawyers and finance lead, and scheduled for the next regular reporting date, so that it arrives in the ordinary course rather than as an event.

A conversation that changes the plan has done its work. Record what was heard and what changed in the charter.

The artefacts. Notes of each conversation, the draft Investor Clock Letter where it applies, and the revised change.

Week 11 · The predictions

Purpose of the week. To write down, before the change is made, what the company expects to see.

Chapter 10 explains why this week matters more than it seems. Without predictions written in advance, any result a year from now can be read as success, and nothing is learned. The four fill in the Prediction Register: what the change should affect, by how much, by when, and what result would show it had failed. The sceptic writes one prediction of their own, the result they expect if the change does nothing.

The predictions are modest. A rule protecting the apprenticeship programme predicts, at most, that the programme's intake is held and its completion rate does not fall. It does not predict higher profit, and a register that predicts higher profit from a single structural change is promising more than any study in chapter 5 could support.

The artefact. The Prediction Register, signed and dated.

Week 12 · The signature

Purpose of the week. To make the change, in the document, and hand the long clock to its holder.

The sponsor signs the amended document: the board charter with the purpose sentence and the protected line, the bonus plan with its longer period, the minute template with its new line. The change is effective from a stated date. The long-clock holder receives the dossier and sets the first date on which they will read the register.

Then the group does one more thing that is easy to forget. It writes a single page for the people who work in the company, saying what was changed and why, in plain words. Santa Anna's book warns against the gap between what is said on a wall and what is felt in a room; a company that announces a value it does not structure, he writes, has made something "worse than useless — it's gaslighting."[68] The page is the opposite of the poster. It names a document, a date and a person.

The artefact. The signed document, the dossier handed to the holder, and the page for the staff.

When it stalls

Every sequence of this kind stalls somewhere. The common stalls, and what to do about each, are these.

The quarter turns bad. Results disappoint, a customer leaves, a lender calls. The calendar rule applies: working sessions may continue, gates move to the next calm week. Do not cancel the sequence in a bad week. Postpone the decision and say so in writing, with a new date.

The sponsor loses interest. This usually shows as missed meetings. The long-clock holder should raise it directly and early. If the sponsor will not protect the calendar, stop the sequence formally, record why, and keep the artefacts. A half-finished register is still a register, and the next sponsor will find it.

The register is too frightening. Sometimes the draw-down pairs reveal more than the group is ready to act on. The answer is not to soften the register but to narrow the change. One protected line is enough for a first quarter.

The sceptic wins. Sometimes the case against is stronger than the case for. That is the sequence working. Record the reasons, and close it. A company that has looked carefully at its clocks and decided to keep them as they are has made a decision, not avoided one.

The purpose sentence will not settle. If week 4 ends without a sentence the sponsor can sign, move on with the best draft and mark it as provisional. The register in weeks 5 and 6 often settles the purpose: once the group sees which long-clock assets it would protect at a cost, it knows more about what the company is for.

Psychological safety is assumed rather than present. If the people in the room will not say what they see, the register will be empty. Santa Anna's book is plain that this cannot be ordered: "But psychological safety is not something you can mandate through policy."[68] The practical remedy is small. The sponsor speaks last at every meeting. The sceptic speaks first. Dissents are written down without comment.

The year after

The twelve weeks change one thing. The year after keeps it.

Each quarter. The long-clock holder reads the Two Clocks Register beside the accounts and asks one question of management: which long-clock asset paid for this quarter's result? The answer is minuted.

At six months. The four meet once to compare the Prediction Register with what has happened. Nothing is concluded yet; chapter 10 explains why six months is too soon to judge most long-clock changes.

At twelve months. The four meet in a calm week, read the Prediction Register in full, and record a verdict: the change held, the change held but did nothing measurable, or the change failed. Then, if the verdict allows, they choose the next clock to lengthen and begin a second, shorter sequence. A company that does this each year for five years has changed five clocks without ever reorganising.

Each year, the purpose sentence. The sentence is read once a year by the board and the long-clock holder against one question from chapter 2: what profitable thing did it make us refuse this year? If the answer is nothing, either the company was fortunate or the sentence is not binding.

Santa Anna's book describes the enterprises that manage this well as being "clear about their values and flexible about their strategies."[68] The register, the predictions and the yearly change are the flexible part. The purpose sentence, written where it binds, is not.

For a smaller firm, or a household

In a firm of a dozen people the four roles may be two people and the twelve weeks may be six. The order holds: snapshot, purpose, register, owners, decision, conversations, predictions, signature. Chapter 12 adapts the same sequence for a household, where the documents are a purpose sentence and a one-page Household Horizon Page, and the patient party may be a relative, a neighbour or a credit union. Nothing in either version is investment advice; the sequence changes how decisions are taken, not what is bought or sold.

The Tool: The Twelve-Week Charter

One page at the front of the dossier. Fill in the top before week 1; the rest as the weeks go.

1 · The people

ROLE	NAME	THEIR OWN LONGEST CLOCK (YEARS)
Sponsor		
Long-clock holder (or: empty)		
Finance lead		
Sceptic		

2 · The calendar rule

- Long-clock decisions are taken in calm weeks. The hard weeks this quarter are: _____
- Gate dates (weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, 12): _____

3 · The weeks

WEEK	ARTEFACT	DONE (DATE)	DISSENT RECORDED?
1–2	Horizon Snapshot (chapter 1)		
3	Purpose Sentence (chapter 2)		
4	Purpose Stress Test (chapter 3) · document chosen: _____		
5–6	Two Clocks Register (chapter 4) · mismatch circled: _____		
7	Owner's Horizon Review (chapter 5) · Steward Structure Sketch (chapter 6) · Hand-Over Ledger if an ownership change is in view (chapter 7)		
8	The change · the holder · the conversations		
9–10	Conversations held (chapter 11) · Investor Clock Letter drafted (chapter 8)		
11	Prediction Register (chapter 10)		
12	Signed document · dossier to holder · page for the staff		

4 · The change

- The one structural change: _____
- The document it is written in: __ · effective from: ____

5 · The year after

- First quarterly reading of the register by the holder: _____
- Six-month comparison: __ · twelve-month verdict: ____
- The next clock to lengthen, if the verdict allows: _____

A page in the drawer

At the end of twelve weeks the company has changed one line in one document and handed a folder to one person. It is a small result for a quarter's work, and it is meant to be. The line is in a place that binds, the folder is in the hands of someone with a long clock, and a date is set on which somebody will read it again. Chapter 10 sets out how they will know whether it worked. *Ecstatic Economics* is kept at , and the house's

book on employee ownership, *Owning the Work*, takes up the case of a company where the long-clock holder is the workforce itself.

References

1. Santa Anna, A. *Ecstatic Economics*. Luminous Prosperity, 2026. Chapters 3, 4 and 5, including the sections on psychological safety and on common pitfalls. The research on workplaces the book summarises is cited there; it is quoted here for the book's argument, not re-examined.

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