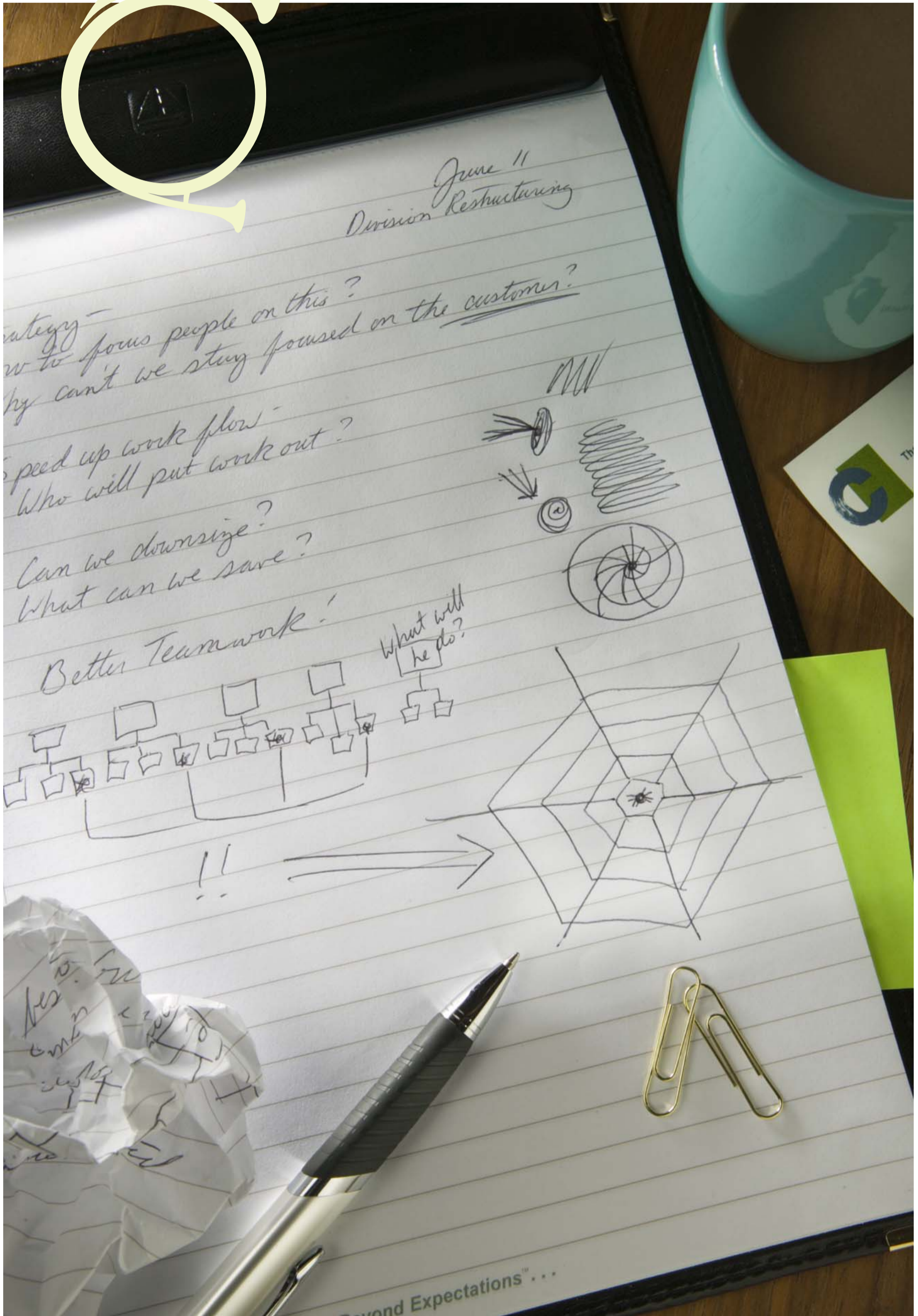


THE CLARION CALL



The clarion is a musical instrument of the Renaissance. Renaissance music brought people together, helped solidify communities, and reflected optimistically upon the future. In ensemble, Renaissance musical instruments were a powerful metaphor for the notion of community, combining diverse sounds to create focused, harmonic melodies of enduring brilliance. The clarion symbolizes our commitment to simplifying organizational management and helping businesses build dynamic, sustainable, organizational communities for the future.



*Darcy Topper, Senior Advisor,
The Clarion Institute*

A shift in perspective can be an amazingly freeing experience. It allows us to break away from rigid frameworks, gain fresh insights, and see new possibilities. For instance, consider the truism, "Change is hard." What if it is hard because we define it as hard? What if instead we define it as easy, or as fun? What could this shift allow to happen?

At The Clarion Group, we're great believers in shifts in perspective. Viewing situations through different eyes, from different perspectives, with different assumptions.

Recently, we played with the power of a shift in perspective while driving back from our Retreat and Design Center in Stonington, Connecticut. While discussing metaphors for organizational structure and what could be learned from comparisons with almost any object, the sight of a spider on the windshield prompted, "What would an organization look like through the eyes of a spider?" Suddenly, the shift in perspective provided a fresh context through which to consider organizational structure.

This issue of The Clarion Call was inspired by the musings of a wandering mind. We present "Spider Think" as an example of how easy and fun it can be to consider new perspectives simply by letting your mind go to un-natural places. The sidebar Passions and Perspectives reminds us of the value of embracing and encouraging the people within our own organizations to share their very individual points of view.

We invite readers to enjoy this issue and encourage you to see for yourselves how breaking mental barriers and allowing creativity can help you understand and solve challenging problems. As always, we welcome your feedback.

A Shift in Perspective

Often in business (and in life), what may seem to be a problem may only be a reflection of your point of view.

By nature, human beings appear to be creatures of habit. Once established, mental patterns guide our thoughts and actions. To realize how true this can be consider this: How often have you found yourself driving down the road to some familiar place when suddenly you look around and notice how far you've gone without being aware of it?

Habitual behaviors, whether they are deemed good or bad, reflect the mind's filtering process at work. Every day, we are surrounded with more and more information to take in. With so much data being thrown at us, we adopt mental habits that allow us to choose what information to pay attention to and what to ignore. It is simply a matter of self-preservation.

Recognizing that our mental habits exist allows us to become aware of them. With awareness comes the opportunity to reframe our perspectives.

The notion of "reframing" is not new to readers of The Clarion Call. Rather, it is a recurring theme that plays a central role in our philosophy and approach. It is woven into our application of the Operating Model, organicity, scenario planning, organizational design, and more. The reason is that awareness of one's perspective and the ability to demonstrate adaptive thinking is so vitally important to overall success for individuals and organizations.

Is It a Problem or a Point of View?

In our work with clients, we apply a constantly evolving series of frameworks to help define how the Operating Model functions in the organizational context. These frameworks help clients to

evaluate and organize their activities. For example, who makes decisions, how information flows, or which dynamics enable high performing teams. Another, often equally important, value is that they provide new frames through which leaders can shift their perspectives.

When we are able to reframe a problem, one of two things can happen:

1. The problem becomes clearer so that it is more solvable.

For example: A decision-maker is viewed as far too tentative. However, in looking at the problem from an information flow perspective, it becomes clear that the decision-maker never had access to the necessary data to make good decisions.

2. The problem just goes away.

For example: A battle for resources is viewed as a conflict between the old and the new. What if, instead, the conflict was framed as prioritizing resources for future requirements? Or, a business unit is viewed as resistant to corporate rules. What if, instead, the problem was viewed as that particular unit being at a different stage of evolution, requiring a different structure and different ways of working?

The value of being able to step back, identify and acknowledge your perspective, explore other options that might also be true, and integrate new learning cannot be overstated. At the same time, a shift in perspective is not nearly as difficult as the traditional wisdom that "change is hard" would have us believe. In fact, it can even be fun.

Identify, Explore, Integrate

How can you tap into and expand your personal or organizational perspectives? What could you be missing by not doing that? Our perspective is that it is fast, simple, and advantageous to look a little further by applying a three-step approach:

1. **Identify** the topic you want to explore or the challenge you're faced with.

2. **Explore** it from a different point of view. First, what is your current point of view? Then, what else is available to you? What great ideas

does this perspective give you? How will this make the situation better or solve the problem? What will it require letting go of?

3. **Integrate and apply** your learning back to the topic at hand.

If I Were A Spider

With the identified challenge to consider organizational structure, let's explore a shift in perspective through the eyes of the spider. What do we, as non-arachnids and non-entomologists, observe about spider webs? What parallels might exist with business structures? Some observations we might have:

- They are sticky and flexible with high tensile strength. They can withstand a great deal of wind and strain and can stretch a long way without breaking.
- They provide both homes and hunting grounds. They provide sustenance for some, but they mean death for others.
- They can be built almost anywhere – where and when they can be the most useful. They are fixable when broken and can be created overnight.
- Their structure follows a pattern but is not absolutely regular, allowing it to change depending upon circumstances.

Almost as soon as we've made our spider list, the parallels become clear. We start thinking, "Hmmm, I wish my business were more like that web." To integrate our new learning back to the challenge at hand, what possibilities might the spider web metaphor suggest for organizational design?

- It could be more flexible, temporary, constructed or abandoned as needed.
- It could change shape or extend to an additional branch, or add new members as needed.
- It might be invisible for those who are not in the organization. Non-members would be excluded from the benefits and the risks of being a part of the organization.
- It could be built to absorb the blows of the wind and be rebuilt as long as it still makes sense to be there.

To take our new learning a step further, when would an organizational structure like this be most appropriate?

- When a non-intact group needs to huddle around an objective.

- When a high degree of interaction and cooperation is required.
- When one person needs to be part of several organizations. Consider that spiders themselves do not get caught in the web; they can move to another at any time.

Is a spider web the perfect metaphor for business structure? Probably not, but that's not the point. Such an unexpected and creative change in perspective can push us beyond the traditional view (e.g., the standard approach of organizing by function, market, or product) and provide alternative perspectives to find the best solutions.

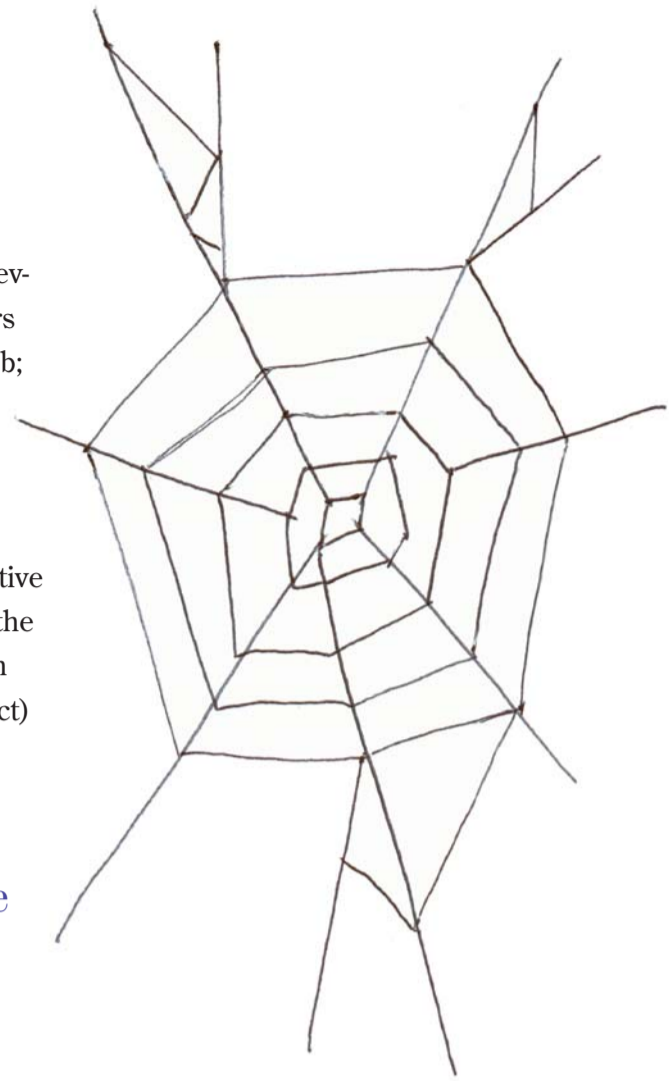
Getting Stuck in One Perspective

So, why do people get so invested in their singular point of view? There could be as many different reasons as there are people, but some common themes emerge:

Organizational inertia. At the level of the organization's culture, talking about things from unfamiliar points of view may not be viewed as practical or business-like. It could feel too much like play – not realistic or too frivolous for "how we do things around here." The organization may not be open to hearing people talk about things from their personal perspective or bringing in ideas from their non-work life.

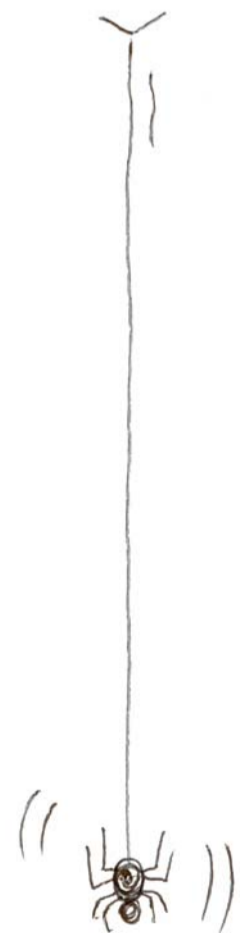
Group think. Even if the organizational culture is not an obstacle, there may be a lack of critical thinking skills at the work group level. Or there may be a lack of diversity in those skills so that there is plenty of data-driven analytical thinking, but very little concept-driven expansive thinking. The group may not trust thinking that comes from intuition. Inertia could also be at work: We've always done it one way and that has worked for us, so we don't even think about another approach.

Personal reticence. Even if there is a wide range of strong thinking skills in the work group, things could get tangled at the individual level. Because of who they are or because of experiences elsewhere, individuals could be afraid to present another point of view. It could feel too dangerous to risk being wrong. Alternatively, individuals could be unable to let go of being right, which makes them unwilling to hear others' points of view, even if they are expressed.



A shift in perspective is not nearly as difficult as the traditional wisdom that "change is hard" would have us believe.

In fact, it can even be fun.



Continued on back page

Passions and Perspectives

Every individual brings to his or her work unique experiences, passions, and perspectives. At The Clarion Group, we are geologists, painters, chartered financial analysts, divinity scholars, parents, teachers, and weavers ... to name just a few. We embrace these differences and enjoy the extra richness of ideas that comes from diversity. When people bring all their interests and passions to their business thinking, the solutions we generate benefit both our organization and our clients.

Darcy Topper and Laura McGann, contributors to this issue of The Clarion Call, offer two examples of how the passions and perspectives of individuals contribute invaluable insights to solve business challenges. Like all members of The Clarion Group, their unique contributions add depth to the distinctive ridge formations of our fingerprints.

One of Darcy's passions is weaving. The rich, tactile quality of fabrics and



the intricate interlacing of thread is a never-ending source of inspiration. It is a fascination that manifests itself in her client work in the ability to quickly recognize patterns in potentially confusing masses of "facts," to follow threads of thought, and to see connections and intersections of ideas.

Laura's perspective brings together the seemingly unconnected realms of fine art and business. It is a view that allows her to shift a "left brain" thought into a "right brain" metaphor, which often

sheds new light on an issue and makes the solution more real for people to understand. This aesthetic yet pragmatic view shows up for clients in various ways. Laura uses images and pictures to capture an organization's competitive landscape as a visual metaphor. She creates fun or challenging physical experiences, seemingly unrelated to the present issue, that deepen the learning. And she connects present challenges to the client's larger agenda or personal values. For our clients, Laura's perspective creates access to ideas and opportunity for choice.

We recognize and value the tremendous contribution of each person on The Clarion Group team. Individually, we each bring our unique passions and perspectives to our work. Collectively, we inspire each other and our clients to consider new views and grow by shifting perspective.

A Shift in Perspective *continued*

They could be programmed to react to others' ideas, but not to come up with their own. They could even, perhaps from a history of being right, forget that there are other ideas.

The Power of a Shift in Perspective

No matter what the challenge, a shift in perspective can shed light on new possibilities and lead to unexpected insights. All that it requires is that you begin with an awareness of your current frame of reference and are willing to allow your mind to wander.

At The Clarion Group, we've seen the often dramatic results of a shift in perspective. It can:

- Break log jams by freeing people from assumptions that they didn't even know they were making.
- Allow people to see things that they couldn't see before.

- Release creativity by asking people to think outside of their comfort zones.
- Create the space for possibilities and alternatives that had been considered impossible.

These benefits provide a solid foundation from which to create unique value in the marketplace. The inspiration to consider new frames and break from habitual thought patterns can be found all around, every day. We only need to be aware and open to observe our organizations and the world around us with fresh eyes. Let your mind wander to find your own spider and be willing to follow it wherever it goes.

The Clarion Group invites you to share your insights with us.

*Please call 860-232-3667
or send us an email at:
info@theclariogroup.com*



The Clarion Group works co-creatively with leaders to help find integrated solutions to support organizational transformation and address complex challenges in the areas of Business Strategy, Management Infrastructure, and Behavior.

The Clarion Group Advisors share a passion for helping clients reframe issues for clarity and possibility.



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