

Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* helps to gain greater insights into how to lead and manage one's professional and personal life to be effective in both realms.

The seven habits are:

1. Be proactive
2. Begin with the end in mind
3. Put first things first
4. Think win-win
5. First understand, then be understood
6. Synergies
7. Sharpen your saw

Also, these 7 habits move us through the following stages:

Dependence - Independent - Interdependent

Although independence is very much encouraged in today's world, interdependence is the essential quality in today's environment that requires teamwork and good leadership.

To become interdependent, one must first become independent; the first 3 habits deal with self-mastery required for character growth to move from dependence to independence stage.

While habits 4 to 6 concentrate on teamwork, cooperation and communication, they progress one from independence to interdependence.

The 7th stage is an improvement stage; it highlights the habit of renewal and creates an upward spiral of growth, i.e. continual improvement in building one's production capability.



areas, namely direct control, indirect control and no control. You can extend your area of influence on concerns which you have indirect control. They are problems caused by others' behavior, while direct control is for problems caused by your own behavior.

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind.

Stage 2 is the cultivation of the habit to create a clear vision of direction and destination to help in attaining your goal. Personal mission statement, philosophy, or creed is first developed to help you to focus on what you want to be and do, thus guiding your daily activities towards your goal.

This habit is called *Personal Leadership* because leadership is considered to be the first creation of your vision, and management comes in second and productivity third. Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.

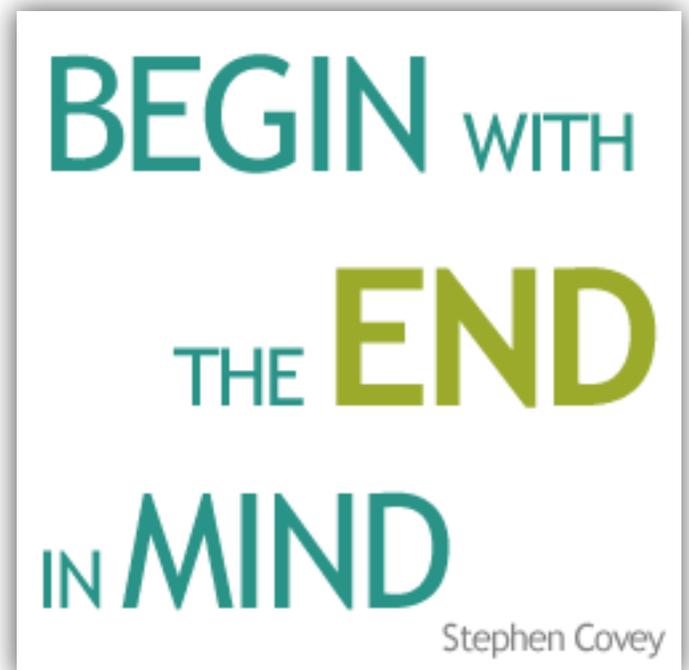
Next, we need to re-examine the center of our life, identifying what is important. The center of your life will be the source of your security, guidance, wisdom, and power. Placing unimportant people or things outside yourself prevent them from influencing you and prevent you to be at the mercy of mood swings. Being self-centered also developed poor mental health, thus by centering your life on correct principles, you will be able to create a stable, solid foundation for your development.

Habit 1: Proactive.

Let us begin with Proactivity as it forms the foundation for the rest of the 6 habits. A proactive person chooses his response to any situation or person, countering different schools of determinism, which say response is determined by stimulus.

Highly effective persons make decision to improve their lives through influencing things around them rather than simply reacting to external force. When faced with a problem, they take initiative to find solutions rather than just reporting the problem and waiting for others to solve for them. As not all things are within your control, you need to identify those you could exert changes and focus your effort on them.

Concerns/problems can be classified into 3



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Habit 3: Put First Things First.

The habit of personal management. By taking full control and staying disciplined, you might still focus on the wrong task, e.g. the most important stuff but not the most urgent. In today's world where there is an ever-increasing commitment and obligation, this habit helps you to prioritize your activities and eliminate those that are urgent but not as important, using your mission statement as a guide.

Covey uses *Time Management Matrix* to manage time and events. The top of the matrix divides the blocks into things that are Urgent and Not Urgent, and the left side divides the matrix into Important and Not Important. With that, we are sure to keep these first things first in our lives.

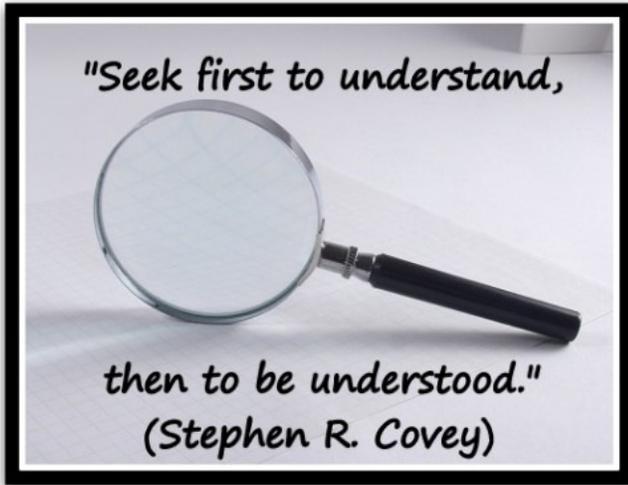
| | URGENT | NOT URGENT |
|---------------|---|---|
| Important | <i>QUADRANT I</i> crises, pressing problems, deadline-driven projects | <i>QUADRANT II</i> prevention, PC activities, relationship building, recognizing new opportunities, planning, recreation |
| Not Important | <i>QUADRANT III</i> interruptions, some calls, some mails, some reports, some meetings, popular activities | <i>QUADRANT IV</i> trivia, busy work, some mails, some phone calls time-wasters, pleasant activities |

Habit 4: Think Win-Win.

This is the habit of Interpersonal Leadership. You must think win-win, as one person's success does not necessarily require another's failure. You should try to seek solutions that are mutually beneficial to you and the other party. Establishing a win-win agreement helps to create foundation for an effective, long-term relationship.

There are six Paradigms of Human Interaction, namely Win/Win, Lose/Lose, Win/Lose, Lose/Win, and Win/Win or No Deal. When creating a win-win situation is impossible, one must also learn to accept that the best alternative is not making any deal.





Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

This is the habit of communication, which is also the most important principal of interpersonal relation. There are 5 levels of listening, i.e. ignoring, pretending, selective listening, attentive listening and empathic listening, which is also the highest form of listening. It contributes to effective communication as it lets you get inside other persons' frame of reference and see the world the way they do. As you learn to listen deeply to other people, you will discover tremendous differences in perception.

Empathic listening involves four developmental stages; mimic content, rephrase content, reflect feeling and lastly, rephrase content and reflect feeling. The key to empathic listening is to genuinely seek the welfare of the individual to whom you are listening, however, it does not mean you have to agree with the other person's views.

And to be understood, you have to present your ideas clearly, specifically, visually and in the context of the paradigms of your audience.

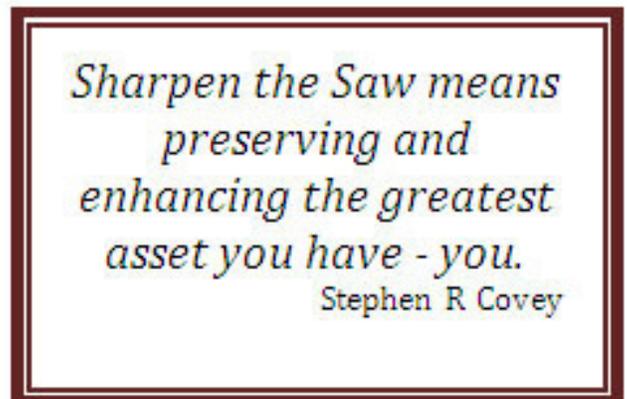
Synergize!

Habit 6: Synergize.

The habit of creative cooperation. Synergy refers to a situation where $1+1 \neq 2$ but $1+1=3$ or more; it is a belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. To achieve this habit, one has to value differences among people and try to build creative solutions/ideas through interactions. Interaction helps to leverage on individual differences to find a creative way out of conflict situations.

Stage 7: Sharpen your saw.

The last habit encompasses all the other habits and ensures our engagement in activities of personal renewal. You will be able to preserve and maintain yourself through seeking balance in the areas of physical, social/emotional, mental and spiritual.



Personal renewal helps you to maintain/increase your effectiveness through striking a balance between your Production (P) and Production Capability (PC). Production refers to the production of desired result and production capability refers to the ability to produce successful results.

P is like an output while PC is the best-mix of inputs that will give you the best result of output given the resources invested. Striking a balance between P and PC not only helps to avoid negative result like burnout or wastage, but also avoid bad decision-making that reduces your production capability, as when one attempts to maximize immediate production with no regard to the production capability, the capability might be lost in the process.

For more information, you can refer to:

Reference Book:

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change, by Stephen R. Covey