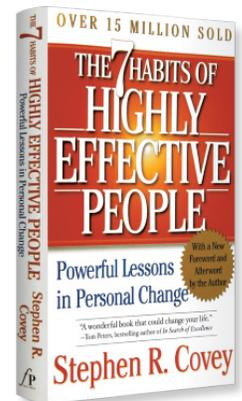


The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Powerful Lessons for Personal Change

by **Stephen R. Covey**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The world has changed dramatically since *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was first published in 1989. Life is more complex, more stressful, more demanding.

These sweeping changes in society and rumbling shifts in the digitized global marketplace give rise to a very important question: “Are the 7 Habits still relevant today?” The answer: The greater the change and more difficult our challenges, the more relevant the habits become.

How you apply a principle will vary greatly and will be determined by your unique strengths, talents and creativity, but ultimately, success in any endeavor is always derived from acting in harmony with the principles to which the success is tied.

Through insight and practical exercises, Covey has presented a step-by-step pathway for living with fairness, integrity, service and human dignity — principles that give you the security to adapt to change, and the wisdom and power to take advantage of the opportunities that change creates.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why the personality ethic has supplanted the character ethic.
- How to write a personal mission statement.
- Why leveraging productivity is a function of “putting first things first.”
- How the challenge is not to manage time, but yourself.

Inside–Out

Almost all literature written about success in the first 150 years of this country focused on the **Character Ethic** — integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity, modesty and the Golden Rule.

Shortly after World War I the basic view of success shifted to the **Personality Ethic**. Success became more a function of personality, of public image, attitudes and behaviors, skills and techniques that lubricate the process of human interaction. Elements of the Personality Ethic are beneficial and sometimes essential for success. But they are secondary, not primary traits. Many people with secondary greatness — i.e., social recognition for their talents — lack primary greatness or goodness in their character.

The Power of Paradigm

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People embody many of the fundamental principles of human effectiveness. They represent the internalization of correct principles upon which enduring happiness and success are based. But before we can understand these Seven Habits, we need to understand our own “paradigms” and how to make a “paradigm shift.”

The word paradigm was originally a scientific term and today is used more commonly to mean a model, theory, perception, assumption or frame of reference. It is the way we “see” the world — not in terms of sight, but in perceiving, understanding, interpreting. To try to change outward attitudes and behaviors does very little good if we fail to examine the basic paradigms from which they flow.

A New Level of Thinking

Albert Einstein observed, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” As we look at the problems we create as we live and interact with the Personality Ethic, we realize they are deep, fundamental problems. We need a new level of thinking — a paradigm based on the principles that accurately describe the territory of effective human being and interacting — to solve these deep concerns. This new, deeper level of thinking is a principle-centered, character-based, “inside-out” approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness.

The 7 Habits: An Overview

Our character is a composite of our habits, which form a powerful factor in our lives. Because habits are consistent,

unconscious patterns, they constantly express our character and produce our effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Habits also have a tremendous gravity pull. Breaking deeply imbedded, habitual tendencies such as procrastination, impatience, criticalness or selfishness that violate basic human principles of human effectiveness involves more than a little willpower and few minor changes in our lives.

‘Habits’ Defined

A habit is the intersection of knowledge, skill and desire:

- **Knowledge** is the theoretical paradigm, the *what to do* and the *why*.
- **Skill** is the *how to do*.
- **Desire** is the motivation, the *want to do*.

Knowing you need to listen and knowing how to listen are not enough. Unless you want to listen, it won’t be a habit. Creating a habit requires work in all three dimensions. By working on knowledge, skills and desire, we can break through to new levels of personal and interpersonal effectiveness as we break from old paradigms.

The Maturity Continuum

On the maturity continuum, **dependence** is the paradigm of *you* — *you* take care of *me*; *you* come through for *me*, *you* didn’t come through; I blame *you* for the results.

Independence is the paradigm of I — I can do it; I am responsible; I am self-reliant; I can choose.

Interdependence is the paradigm of *we* — *we* can do it; *we* can cooperate; *we* can combine our talents and abilities and create something greater together.

True independence of character allows us to act rather than be acted upon. It frees us from our dependence on circumstances and other people and is a worthy, liberating goal. But it is not the ultimate goal in effective living.

Interdependence is a more mature, advanced concept. As an interdependent person, you have the opportunity to share yourself with others and have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings. Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make. Dependent people cannot choose to become interdependent. They don’t own enough of themselves.

That’s why Habits 1, 2 and 3 deal with self-mastery. As you become truly independent, you have the foundation for effective interdependence.

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Being proactive means more than taking initiative. It means we are responsible for our own lives. Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. “Response-ability” is the ability to choose your response. Highly proactive people do not blame circumstances, conditions or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of those conditions, based on feeling.

Reactive people are often affected by their physical environment. If the weather is good, they feel good. If it isn't, it affects their attitude and performance. Proactive people carry their own weather with them. They are still influenced by external stimuli, but their response, conscious or unconscious, is a value-based response or choice.

Taking the Initiative

Taking initiative does not mean being pushy, obnoxious or aggressive, but recognizing your responsibility to make things happen. People who end up with good jobs are the proactive ones; they are solutions to problems, not problems themselves. They seize the initiative to do whatever is necessary, to be consistent with correct principles and to get the job done.

Act or Be Acted Upon

If you wait to be acted upon, you will be acted upon. Language, for example, is a real indicator of the degree to which you see yourself as a proactive person. The language of reactive people absolves them of responsibility. A serious problem with reactive language is that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Examples of reactive language are: *There's nothing I can do; That's just the way I am; I have to do that; and I can't.*

On the other hand, proactive language takes responsibility. Examples are: Let's look at our alternatives; *I can choose a different approach; I control my own feelings; and I will.*

Circle of Concern and Circle of Influence

We each have a wide range of concerns — health, children, problems at work, the national debt and nuclear war. We could separate those from things in which we have no mental or emotional involvement by creating a “Circle of Concern.” Within our Circle of Concern are some things over which we have no control and some we can do something about. We could identify those in the latter group as within our Circle of Influence.

Proactive people focus their efforts in the Circle of Influence. The nature of their energy is positive, enlarging and magnifying, causing their Circle of Influence to increase. Reactive people focus their efforts on the Circle of Concern, which results in blaming, accusing attitudes and increasing feelings of victimization, causing their Circle of Influence to shrink.

Direct, Indirect and No Control

The problems we face fall in one of three areas:

1. Direct control problems are solved by working on our habits, which are within our Circle of Influence. These are the “Private Victories” of Habits 1, 2 and 3.
2. Indirect control problems are solved by changing our methods of influence. These are the “Public Victories” of Habits 4, 5, 6 and 7.
3. No control problems involve taking responsibility to smile, to genuinely and peacefully accept and learn to live with these problems, even when we don't like them.

Proactivity: The 30-Day Test

For 30 days, work only in your Circle of Influence. Make small commitments and keep them. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem. When you make a mistake, admit it, correct it and learn from it — immediately. Don't get into a blaming, accusing mode. Work on things you have control over.

Habit 2: Begin With the End in Mind

To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. You need to know where you are going in order to better understand where you are now so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.

It's easy to get caught up in an activity trap, in the busyness of life, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall.

“Begin with the end in mind” is based on the principle that *all things are created twice*. There is a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation. Look at a business: If you want to have a successful enterprise, you must clearly define what you're trying to accomplish. The extent to which you begin with the end in mind often determines whether or not you are able to create a successful enterprise.

Leadership and Management — Two Creations

Habit 2 is based on principles of personal leadership, which

means leadership is the first creation. Leadership is not management. Management is the second creation. Management is a bottom-line focus: How can I best accomplish certain things? Leadership deals with the top line: What are the things I want to accomplish?

A Personal Mission Statement

The most effective way to begin with the end in mind is to develop a *personal mission statement*. It focuses on what you want to be (character) and to do (contributions and achievements) and on the values or principles upon which being and doing are based.

To write a personal mission statement, you must begin at the very center of your Circle of Influence. Whatever is at the center of your life will be the source of these four factors, which are interdependent:

- **Security:** Your sense of worth, identity, emotional anchor, self-esteem, basic personal strength or lack of it.
- **Guidance:** Your source of direction in life, an internal frame of reference that includes standards or principles or implicit criteria that govern moment-by-moment decision-making and doing.
- **Wisdom:** Your perspective on life, sense of balance, judgment, discernment, comprehension.
- **Power:** The faculty or capacity to act, the strength and potency to accomplish something.

A mission statement takes deep introspection, careful analysis, thoughtful expression and often many rewrites. It may take several weeks or months before you feel it is a concise expression of your innermost values and directions. Writing or reviewing a mission statement changes you because it forces you to think through your priorities deeply and carefully, and to align your behavior with your beliefs.

Alternative Centers

Briefly examine these centers or core paradigms people typically have for a better understanding of how they affect the four fundamental dimensions, and ultimately, the sum of life that flows from them.

1. **Spouse Centeredness:** Your life perspective surrounds things that may positively or negatively influence your spouse or relationship.
2. **Family Centeredness:** Your decision-making criteria are what is good for the family, or what family members want.

3. **Money Centeredness:** Moneymaking is the lens through which life is seen and understood, creating imbalanced judgment.
4. **Work Centeredness:** You see your life as your work.
5. **Possession Centeredness:** You make decisions based on what will protect, increase or better display your possessions.
6. **Pleasure Centeredness:** You see the world in terms of what's in it for you.
7. **Friend Centeredness:** You see the world through a social lens.
8. **Enemy Centeredness:** You are counter-dependently guided by your enemy's actions and base decisions on what will thwart your enemy.
9. **Church Centeredness:** You see the world in terms of "believers" and "non-believers," and "belongers" and "non-belongers."
10. **Self-Centeredness:** You view the world by how decisions, events or circumstances will affect you.

A Principle Center

By centering your life on correct principles, you create a solid foundation for development of the four life-support factors:

- **Security** comes from knowing that, unlike other centers based on people or things subject to change, correct principles do not change.
- **Wisdom** and guidance come from correct maps, from the way things really are, have been and will be.
- **Power** is that of a self-aware, knowledgeable, proactive individual, unrestricted by attitudes, behaviors and actions of others.

As a principle-centered person, you try to stand apart from the emotion of the situation and other factors that would act on you, and evaluate your options. Looking at the balanced whole — the work needs, family needs and other needs that may be involved and all possible implications of the various alternative decisions — you try to come up with the best solution, taking all factors into account.

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Take a few minutes and write down a short answer to each of these two questions:

1. What one thing could you do (that you aren't doing now) that if you did on a regular basis would make a tremendous positive difference in your personal life?
2. What one thing in your business or professional life would bring similar results?

Habit 3 is the practical fulfillment of Habits 1 and 2. Habit 1 says, "You are the creator. You are in charge." Habit 2 is the first mental creation, based on imagination, the ability to envision what you can become. Habit 3 is the second creation, the physical creation. It's the exercise of *independent will* toward becoming principle-centered.

The Power of Independent Will

Independent will makes effective self-management possible. It is the ability to make decisions and choices and act in accordance with them. It is the ability to act rather than be acted upon, to proactively carry out the program you have developed through the other three endowments.

Effective management is *putting first things first*. While leadership decides what "first things" are, it is management that puts them first, day by day, moment by moment. Management is discipline carrying them out. If you are an effective manager of your self, your discipline comes from within; it is a function of your independent will.

Four Generations of Time Management

In time management, each generation builds on the one before it, moving us toward greater control of our lives:

The **first generation** is made up of notes and checklists, an effort to give some semblance of recognition and inclusiveness to the many demands placed on our time and energy.

The **second generation** of time management consists of calendars and appointment books, reflecting an attempt to look ahead, to schedule events and future activities.

The **third generation** focuses on the prioritization of clarifying values.

Finally, the **fourth generation** is an emerging generation that recognizes that the challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves.

The Four Quadrants of Time Management

We spend time in one of four ways, depending on the two factors that define an activity: urgent and important. *Urgent* things

act on us and are usually visible. A ringing phone is urgent. *Importance*, on the other hand, has to do with results. It contributes to our mission, values and high-priority goals. We react to urgent matters. Important matters that are not urgent require more initiative, more proactivity.

Consider the Time Management Matrix (see chart below). As long as you focus on Quadrant I, it keeps getting bigger and bigger until it dominates you. Some people are beaten up by problems all day, every day. The only relief they have is to escape to the not important, not urgent activities. Ninety percent of their time is spent in Quadrant I, and most of the remaining 10 percent is in Quadrant IV. That's how people who manage their lives by crisis live.

Quadrant II is the heart of effective personal management. It deals with things that are not urgent but are important — things we know we need to do but somehow seldom get around to doing because they aren't urgent.

Look again at your answers to the two questions posed at the beginning of this section. They probably fit into Quadrant II.

The only place to get time for Quadrant II in the beginning is from Quadrants III and IV. You can't ignore the urgent and important activities of Quadrant I, although it will shrink in size as you spend more time with prevention and preparation in Quadrant II. Nonetheless, you have to be proactive to work on Quadrant II because I and III work on you. To say "yes" to important II priorities you have to learn to say "no" to other activities, sometimes apparently urgent things.



The Quadrant II Tool

The objective of Quadrant II management is to manage our lives effectively from a center of sound principles, from a knowledge of our personal mission, with a focus on the important as well as the urgent, and within the framework of maintaining a balance.

This is an ambitious objective for people caught in the thick of things in Quadrants III and IV, but striving to achieve it will have a phenomenal impact on personal effectiveness. To do so, an organizer dedicated to Quadrant II needs to meet six important criteria:

1. **Coherence.** A tool to provide harmony, unity and integrity between your visions and mission, your roles and goals. In your organizer there should be a place for your personal mission statement so you can refer to it.
2. **Balance.** A tool to identify your roles and keep them in front of you so you don't neglect important areas such as your health, family, professional preparation or personal development.
3. **Quadrant II Focus.** A tool to encourage you, motivate you and help you spend the time you need in Quadrant II so you're dealing with prevention rather than prioritizing crises. The best way to do this is to organize your life on a *weekly* basis.
4. **A "People" Dimension.** A tool that deals with people, not just schedules. A principle-centered person thinks in terms of *effectiveness* in dealing with people.
5. **Flexibility.** A tool to be your servant, never your master. Your organizer needs to work for you and should be tailored to your style, needs and particular ways.
6. **Portability.** A tool you can carry with you most of the time. If your organizer is portable, you will keep it with you, so important data is always within reach.

Delegation

We accomplish everything we do through delegation — either to time or to other people. If we delegate to time, we think efficiency. If we delegate to other people we think effectiveness. Effectively delegating to others is the single most powerful high-leverage activity there is. There are basically two kinds of delegation:

- **Gofer delegation:** One-on-one supervision. "Go for this, do this, do that, and tell me when it's done."
- **Stewardship delegation:** Focuses on results instead

of methods. It makes individuals responsible for results and takes more time in the beginning than gofer delegation, but it's time well invested.

Habit 4: Think Win/Win

Win/Win is not a technique; it's a total philosophy and one of the six paradigms of human interaction. The other paradigms are: Win/Lose, Lose/Win, Lose/Lose, Win, and Win/Win or No Deal.

- **Win/Win.** — This is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions. It's not your way or my way; it's a better way, a higher way.
- **Win/Lose.** In leadership style, it is the authoritarian approach: "I get my way, you don't get yours."
- **Lose/Win.** This is worse than Win/Lose because it has no standards, no demands, no vision. In leadership, it's permissiveness or indulgence, being a nice guy, even if "nice guys finish last."
- **Lose/Lose.** When two Win/Lose people get together, the result is Lose/Lose. Both will become vindictive and want to get back at each other.
- **Win.** People with this mentality don't necessarily want someone else to lose. What matters most is that they get what they want.
- **Win/Win or No Deal.** If we can't find a solution that benefits us both, we agree to disagree agreeably.

Which Option Is Best?

Most situations are part of an interdependent reality, and then Win/Win is the only viable alternative of the five. Think of Win/Win as the bait of interpersonal leadership. Character is the foundation of Win/Win. There are three character traits essential to the Win/Win paradigm:

- **Integrity** — the value you place on yourself.
- **Maturity** — the balance between courage and consideration.
- **Abundance mentality** — there is plenty out there for everyone.

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

"Seek first to understand" involves a deep shift in para-

digm. We typically seek first to be understood. Instead, most people listen to the reply. They're either speaking or preparing to speak. Empathetic listening is listening with the intent to *understand*.

Empathetic listening is powerful because it gives you accurate data to work with. It takes time, but nowhere near the time that it takes to back up and correct misunderstandings when you're already miles down the road.

As you learn to listen deeply to other people, you will discover tremendous differences in perception. You will also begin to appreciate the impact these differences can have as people try to work together in interdependent situations.

Knowing how to be understood is the second half of Habit 5 and equally critical to reaching Win/Win solutions. Seeking to understand requires consideration; seeking to be understood takes courage. Win/Win requires a high degree of both. So it becomes important in interdependent situations for us to be understood.

There are three words that contain the essence of seeking first to understand and making effective presentations:

- **Ethos** — your personal credibility, the trust you inspire.
- **Pathos** — your empathetic side, showing you are in alignment with the emotional thrust of another person's communication.
- **Logos** — the reasoning part of the presentation.

Habit 5 is powerful because it is right in the middle of your Circle of Influence. You can always seek first to understand. That's something within your control. And as you do it, your Circle of Influence begins to expand. Habit 5 is also something you can practice right now.

Habit 6: Synergize

Exercising all the other habits prepares us for the habit of synergy. When properly understood, synergy is the highest activity in all life — the true test and manifestation of all the other habits put together. The highest forms of synergy focus the four unique human endowments, the motive of Win/Win and the skills of empathetic communication on the toughest challenges we face in life. What results is almost miraculous. We create new alternatives.

Synergy is the essence of principle-centered leadership. It catalyzes, unifies and unleashes the greatest powers within people. Simply defined, synergy means the whole is greater

than the sum of its parts. It means that the relationship the parts have to one another is a part in and of itself. And it is not only a part, but the most catalytic and most empowering.

Synergy and Communication

Synergy is exciting. Creativity is exciting. It's phenomenal what openness and communication can produce. The possibilities of significant gain and improvement are so real that it's worth the risk such openness entails. Trust is closely related to different levels of communication: defensive, respectful and synergistic.

Defensive. The lowest level of communication coming out of low-trust situations would be characterized by defensiveness, protectiveness, and often legalistic language, which covers all the bases and spells out qualifiers and the escape clause. Such communication only produces Win/Lose or Lose/Lose. It isn't effective, creating further reasons to defend and protect.

Respectful. The middle position is respectful communication, a level where fairly mature people interact. They communicate politely but not empathetically. They may understand each other intellectually, but they really don't deeply look at the paradigms and assumptions underlying their own positions and become open to new possibilities. Respectful communication works in independent situations, but the creative possibilities are not opened up. Compromise is the position usually taken, meaning that $1+1=1\frac{1}{2}$. Both give and take. It produces a low form of Win/Win.

Synergistic. Synergy means that $1+1$ may equal 8, 16 or even 1,600. The synergistic position of high trust produces solutions better than any originally proposed, and all parties know it. They also genuinely enjoy the creative enterprise. A miniculture is formed to satisfy in and of itself.

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree.

"What are you doing?" you ask.

"Can't you see?" comes the impatient reply. "I'm sawing down this tree."

"You look exhausted!" you exclaim. "How long have you been at it?"

"Over five hours," he returns, "and I'm beat! This is hard work."

“Well, why don’t you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?” you inquire. “I’m sure it would go a lot faster.”

“I don’t have time to sharpen the saw,” the man says emphatically. “I’m too busy sawing!”

Habit 7 is about taking time to sharpen the saw. It surrounds the other habits on the Seven Habits paradigm because it is the habit that makes all the others possible.

Four Dimensions of Renewal

Essentially Habit 7 is preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have — you. It’s renewing the four dimensions of your nature: physical, spiritual, mental and social/emotional.

Physical — exercise, nutrition, stress management.

The essence of renewing the physical dimension is to sharpen the saw, to exercise our bodies on a regular basis in a way that will preserve and enhance our capacity to work and adapt and enjoy. Exercise is one of those Quadrant II, high-leverage activities that most of us don’t do consistently because it isn’t urgent. And because we don’t do it, sooner or later we find ourselves in Quadrant I, dealing with the health problems and crises that come as a natural result of our neglect.

Spiritual — value clarification and commitment, study and meditation. Renewing the spiritual dimension provides leadership to your life. It’s highly related to Habit 2. This dimension is your core, your center and your commitment to your value system. It’s a very private area of life and a supremely important one. Spiritual renewal takes an investment of time. But it’s a Quadrant II activity we don’t really have time to neglect.

Mental — reading, visualizing, planning, writing.

Most of our mental development and study discipline come through formal education. But as soon as we leave the external discipline of school, many of us let our minds atrophy. We don’t do any more serious reading, we don’t

explore new subjects in any real depth outside our actions fields, we don’t think analytically, we don’t write — at least not critically or in a way that tests our ability to express ourselves. Instead, we spend our time watching TV.

Wisdom in watching TV requires the effective self-management of Habit 3, which enables you to discriminate and select the informing, inspiring and entertaining programs that best serve and express your purpose and values.

There is no better way to inform and expand your mind on a regular basis than to get into the habit of reading good literature. That’s another high-leverage Quadrant I activity. You can get into the best minds that are now or have ever been in the world.

Writing is another powerful way to sharpen the mental saw. Keeping a journal of our thoughts, experiences, insights and learning promotes mental clarity, exactness and context.

Social/emotional — service, empathy, synergy, intrinsic security. This dimension centers on Habits 4, 5 and 6 — principles of interpersonal leadership, empathic communication and creative cooperation. Renewing our social/emotional dimension does not take time in the same sense that the other dimensions do. We can do it in our normal everyday interactions with other people. It definitely requires exercise.

Success in Habits 4, 5 and 6 is not primarily a matter of intellect; it is primarily a matter of emotion. It’s highly related to our sense of personal security. If our personal security comes from sources within ourselves, then we have the strength to practice the habits of Public Victory.

By centering our lives on correct principles and creating a balanced focus between doing and increasing our ability to do, we become empowered in the task of creating effective, useful and peaceful lives for ourselves, and for our posterity.



Dr. Stephen R. Covey (1932-2012), an internationally respected leadership authority, co-founder and was vice chairman of FranklinCovey, a world leader in consulting and training. Dr. Covey received an MBA from Harvard and a Ph.D. from Brigham Young University.

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