

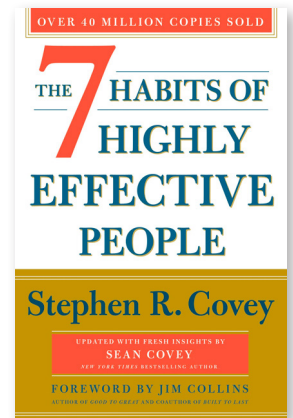


Executive Book Summaries®

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

30th Anniversary Edition

by **Stephen R. Covey** with fresh insights by *Sean Covey*



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

For three decades, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* has transformed the lives of presidents, heads of state, CEOs, educators, students, parents, and families—millions of people of all ages and occupations. Presenting a principle-centered approach for solving both personal and professional problems, Stephen R. Covey reveals a step-by-step pathway for living with fairness, integrity, honesty, and human dignity. These principles give us the security to adapt to change and the wisdom and power to take advantage of the opportunities that change creates.

Now, this 30th anniversary edition commemorates the wisdom of the 7 Habits®, with personal insights from Covey's son, Sean Covey. In the current fast-paced world of nonstop information, 24/7 connectivity, and constant change, Sean Covey reflects on how the habits have been used over the past 30 years and offers valuable new insights on how we can apply the habits in our lives today. With these exciting additions, this edition refreshes the wisdom of the 7 Habits for a new generation of leaders.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why the 7 Habits are more relevant now than ever.
- The power of the inside-out approach.
- How the 7 Habits develop maturity by taking you from dependence to independence to interdependence.
- Exciting new data and stories illustrating how the 7 Habits change lives.

PART I: PARADIGMS AND PRINCIPLES

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

A paradigm is the way we “see” the world—not in terms of sight but in perceiving, understanding, interpreting. Our paradigms, correct or incorrect, are the sources of our attitudes and behaviors, and ultimately our relationships with others. Both the Character Ethic and the Personality Ethic are examples of social paradigms. To try to change outward attitudes and behaviors does very little good if we fail to examine the basic paradigms from which they flow.

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 deeper 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 level of thinking is what *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is about. It’s a principle-centered, character-based, “inside-out” approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness.

The inside-out approach says that private victories precede public victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping promises to others. It says it is futile to put personality ahead of character, to try to improve relationships with others before improving ourselves.

Take outside challenges—a difficult boss, a personal addiction, a big opportunity—and start inside with yourself. All change starts with you.

The 7 Habits in the Digital Age

Now is the greatest time to be alive. You can navigate with your phone’s GPS instead of stopping at a gas station to ask for directions. You can fly to any city in the world. You can influence and reach millions around the globe instantly through books, blogs, videos, or a dozen other communication channels.

On the other hand, challenges have increased. Trust in our institutions is declining. Depression and anxiety have become a global epidemic. The family unit is hurting. Much of the world lives in terror, psychologically or literally.

For individuals, the pace of life is at light speed. We are connected 24/7. We are saturated in social media. Screens have taken over. There is too much information, too many choices. Something has to give.

This is why the 7 Habits are needed more than ever. They provide a sure foundation upon which you can build a better life. They offer stability in the midst of an increasingly crazy world. The 7 Habits give people their lives back. They remind us that, despite our psychic baggage or past, we have the power to choose. They encourage us to envision and pursue exciting purposes. They communicate that we have it within us to build quality relationships and find third alternatives that bring people together.

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 a 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

Being proactive means more than taking initiative. It means we are responsible for our own lives.

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®

The 7 Habits move us progressively on a maturity continuum from **dependence** to **independence** to **interdependence**. 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. They move a person from dependence to independence. They are the private victories, the essence of character growth. Private victories precede public victories. You can't invert that process any more than you can harvest a crop before you plant it. It's inside-out.

As you become truly independent, you have the foundation for effective interdependence. You have the character base from which you can effectively work on the more personal-

ity-oriented public victories of teamwork, cooperation, and communication in Habits 4, 5, and 6.

PART II: PRIVATE VICTORY

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.

Our basic nature is to act and not be acted upon. As well as enabling us to choose our response to particular circumstances, this empowers us to create circumstances. Taking initiative does not mean being pushy, obnoxious, or aggressive but recognizing your responsibility to make things happen.

What the Data Says

We now have a great deal of empirical data that backs up these ideas about proactivity. Stanford professor Carol Dweck found that most people have one of two mindsets, or paradigms, about their ability to learn: a "fixed" mindset or a "growth" mindset. People with a fixed mindset believe their intelligence and talent are fixed and that there's not much they can do about it. This is a reactive view of the world. "I'm not good at math" or "I've never been good with people, so why try?"

On the other hand, people with a growth mindset believe their basic abilities can be developed and enhanced through dedication and hard work, a belief that they are in the

driver's seat and can, therefore, improve and change. This proactive view of the world results in proactive thinking and language. "I need to get better with numbers," or "I can be more considerate of my partner."

Circle of Concern® and Circle of Influence®

Another excellent way to become more self-aware regarding our own degree of proactivity is to look at where we focus our time and energy. 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.

Dr. Martin Seligman, the distinguished director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, explores the benefits of focusing on your Circle of Influence. In his book *Authentic Happiness*, he concludes that your happiness depends on (1) genetics, (2) circumstances, and (3) things you can control.

However, his research found that genetics and circumstances have less to do with happiness than the third category—

the things you can control. To be happy, Seligman suggests, focus on things you can control.

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.

The Ladder of Success

At a Harvard Business School reunion, renowned management thinker Clayton Christensen told a story about his first job out of school at a prestigious consulting firm. As a young consultant, he worked hard, long hours Monday through Friday and was devoted to his colleagues and his clients. But juggling work and life demands became challenging.

One day one of his managers told him to clear his Sunday so that the team could prepare for an important client meeting on Monday. Clayton paused and told his manager he couldn't come in for the meeting. "I'm sorry," he explained, "I don't work on Sundays. That is the day that I reserve for my faith."

The manager walked away grumbling but came back a short while later. "Okay, fine. I've been able to move everything to Saturday. We'll have the preparation meeting then."

Clayton paused before responding. "I'm so sorry," he explained again. "I don't work on Saturdays. My wife and I made the decision long ago to prioritize our family on Saturdays. I spend Saturdays with my family."

His colleague stormed away for a third time before coming back with, "Do you happen to work on Fridays?"

Clayton explained how he got through that decision, which was the first of many that shaped his life for the better, propelled his career, and kept him near to his

family and faith. He sensed that if he were to compromise staying late or working weekends “just this once,” it would become a slippery slope.

He learned over the years that it’s easier to stick to your principles 100 percent of the time than 98 percent of the time.

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. 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.

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.

The personal power that comes from principle-centered living is that of a self-aware, knowledgeable, proactive individual, unrestricted by attitudes, behaviors, and actions of others.

Habit 3: Put First Things First®

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. Learning to put first things first is hard. In fact, this is the habit, in general, that people struggle with most. Why is Habit 3 so hard? It’s urgency, plain and simple. And the reality is most of us are addicted to urgency.

The Time Management Matrix

We spend time in one of four ways, depending on the two factors that define an activity: urgent and important. Urgent means it requires immediate attention. 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:

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I THE PROCRASTINATOR Crises Emergency meetings Last-minute deadlines Pressing problems Unforeseen events	II THE PRIORITIZER Proactive work High-impact goals Creative thinking Planning and prevention Relationship building Learning and renewal
Not Important	III THE YES-MAN Needless interruptions Unnecessary reports Irrelevant meetings Other people’s minor issues Unimportant email, tasks, phone calls, status posts, etc.	IV THE SLACKER Trivial work Avoidance activities Excessive relaxation, television, gaming, internet Time-wasters Gossip

The solution to overcoming your urgency addiction is to shift your paradigm from one of urgency to one of importance. Thanks to smartphones, social media, and the like, it is increasingly difficult to stay out of Quadrants I and III. In fact, data shows that 51.2 percent of our time is spent responding to things that are urgent.

People who live in Quadrant I can be called the Procrastinator. The results of spending too much time here include stress and anxiety, feeling burned out, and mediocre performance.

The Yes-Man is those who live in Quadrant III. They have a hard time saying no to anything that is urgent or popular, resulting in staying incredibly busy while getting nothing of importance done.

Quadrant IV is where a lot of people live. Meet the Slacker. Anything done to excess falls into Quadrant IV. Yes, chilling out and streaming a good movie is part of a healthy lifestyle. It's only when that single movie leads to two or three in a row that it becomes a waste of time, leading to feelings of guilt and apathy.

Moving into Quadrant II

Quadrant II is where the Prioritizer lives. It's too bad, on average, that we only spend 30.8 percent of our time here. Time in Quadrant II results in improved relationships, high performance, and balance. This is where we make time to fix the screen instead of continually swatting the flies.

The return on the time and energy you spend in Quadrant II is exponential, while the return on Quadrant I is only equivalent to the input, and the return on Quadrants III and IV is virtually nonexistent.

The key to spending more time in Quadrant II is to reduce the amount of time you spend in Quadrant III, the quadrant of deception. QIII seems important because it is urgent, and thus, it tricks us. When time is scarce, we go through what psychologists call "tunneling," meaning we can only concentrate on the most immediate, often low-value tasks. This urgency mode causes us to lose about 13 IQ points.

The remedy to Quadrant III is to start saying no. Say no to responding immediately to every email or text that comes your way. Say no to serving on that community board when you might be neglecting your family or your health. Say no to filling out that report no one reads. The key to saying no is to have a deeper yes burning inside of you. Clarify the few things you do well, and then start saying no to everything else.

Of all that FranklinCovey has learned about time management after working with millions around the globe, one main idea stands out: Set aside 30 minutes each week to plan your week, and watch it change your life.

PART III: PUBLIC VICTORY

Habit 4: Think Win/Win®

Think Win-Win is an attitude toward life that says "I can win and so can you." It's not me or you, it's both of us. Think Win-Win is the foundation for getting along with other people. It begins with the belief that we are all equal, that no one is inferior or superior to anyone else, and no one needs to be.

Win/Win is not a technique; it's a total philosophy and one of the six paradigms of human interaction. 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. The other five paradigms are as follows:

- **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.

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.

Win-Win Is the Only Alternative

A few years ago, FranklinCovey was working with a telecommunications company that was laying cable in cities across the United States. In most cases, cities were eager to have the cable laid, in spite of the temporary disruptions it caused. One ma-

Habit 5 is powerful because it is right in the middle of your Circle of Influence. You can always seek first to understand.

major city, however, was not keen on the idea. They knew that if they allowed one cable company to tear up the city, they would have to allow the same for every cable company that followed them. They did not want their city repeatedly torn up.

Negotiations ultimately came to a standstill. The city was not willing to proceed unless the company paid them a fee. The result would have been no cable access for the citizens (a loss for the city) and no access to thousands of customers (a loss for the company). They were headed for lose-lose.

One of the negotiators for the telecommunications company had recently been through the 7 Habits training. Under his leadership, the company went back to the city and said, "What if when we lay our cable, we also laid cable for two or three future providers? We'd turn over the cable access to them for less cost than what they would typically incur. Then the city would be torn up only once."

The Better Choice

The city loved this idea. The cable was laid. When the competitors arrived, they were delighted to learn that the cable was already in the ground and at a much-reduced cost. So the city and its citizens won because their streets were not constantly torn up and they got their cable, and the competition won because they got their cable laid at lower rates.

But the biggest win was for the initial company: The two competitors paid them more than the installation had cost! They had laid their cable for free and picked up some spending money on the side.

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

Seek first to understand involves a deep shift in paradigm. We typically seek first to be understood. Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. They're either speaking or preparing to speak.

Empathic listening is listening with the intent to understand. Empathic listening gets inside another person's frame of reference. You look out through it, you see the world the

way they see the world, you understand their paradigm, you understand how they feel.

Empathic 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.

Then Seek to Be Understood

Seek first to understand. . . then to be understood. 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.

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.

Select a relationship in which you sense the emotional bank account (a metaphor for trust) is in the red. Try to understand and write down the situation from the other person's point of view. In your next interaction, listen for understanding, comparing what you are hearing with what you wrote down. How valid were your assumptions? Did you really understand that individual's perspective?

Listening Empathically: For Leaders

Listening empathically gets even harder when you're in a leadership position, because people tend to defer to authority. That is why so many senior leaders are poor listeners and do most of the talking anytime they're in the room.

If you are in a leadership role, do a gut check. The next time you're in a team meeting, ask yourself, "What percent-

age of the words spoken in this meeting today came from my own mouth?” If there were six people in the room and 80 percent of the words came from you, that is a problem.

There is a time and place for empathic listening. Use empathic listening when the topic is important, sensitive, or really personal, like when a colleague needs career advice, or if you’re having a communication problem with a loved one. These conversations take time and can’t be rushed. A good rule of thumb is to use empathy any time emotions are high. You don’t need to do it in casual conversation or everyday small talk.

We increasingly communicate via text and email. Does that change anything about this habit? Yes. The use of technology strips out the tone of voice and facial expressions that help us empathize. So anytime you’re dealing with an important, emotional issue, do not email or text. At some point, meet face-to-face, or at least talk it out over the phone. An emoji just isn’t going to cut it.

Note that Habits 4, 5, and 6 are different but work together. Over the years, Franklin Covey has taught students the mnemonic root, route, and fruit. Habit 4: Think Win-Win is the foundation, or root, of effective relationships. The route for getting there is to practice Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood. And the fruit you produce by practicing Habits 4 and 5 is synergy, Habit 6.

Habit 6: Synergize®

Exercising all the other habits prepares us for the habit of synergy. 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, the most empowering, the most unifying, and the most exciting part.

Life is a team sport, and with the right attitude and skills, you can find synergistic answers to complex problems—not all of the time but most of the time. You have to believe in the idea that by working together, we can find a solution that is better than what either of us had in mind.

A key building block to finding third alternatives (a solution that is mutually beneficial and is better than what either person originally proposed) is to set aside your ego and

acknowledge that you need the collective intelligence of everyone involved to find the best solution.

Another building block is conversation. We must learn to communicate with one another. We need to brainstorm, talk through issues, bounce ideas off each other, and go back to the drawing board again and again and again.

Synergy and Communication

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. Consider three different levels of communication and how closely they relate to trust:

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 empathically. 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 Tale of Tech Synergy

Sergey had been studying computer science at Stanford University for two years when he was assigned to help new students at spring orientation. That morning, he was slated to show a guy named Larry around the campus. They didn’t hit it off right away and found each other quite obnoxious. They disagreed on nearly everything—but eventually they had so much fun contradicting each other on every topic that they became friends.

While both Sergey and Larry liked computers, they were total opposites. Sergey was a party guy; Larry was private

Essentially Habit 7 is preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have—you.

and reserved. Sergey couldn't sit still; Larry had once painstakingly built a printer out of LEGO bricks.

When they later worked together as part of Larry's dissertation, they experimented with a new way to search the internet. At that time, you would type a word into the computer, and the internet would spit back how many times the word showed up and where.

Larry thought it would be interesting to search for links, not for words. He figured the more often a website was linked to other websites, the more important it was. Using his approach, search results would come up on your screen in order of importance.

The Birth of BackRub

Sergey and Larry called their new program "BackRub" because it counted the number of links back to an original website. To run the program, they filled Larry's room with so many cheap computers that the university's network nearly shut down. So they moved their project into a friend's garage.

Years later, more than a billion people use BackRub—now called Google, the company Larry Page and Sergey Brin started in a dorm. The two college guys who founded Google rarely agreed on anything. What would have happened if they had always seen eye to eye?

Clearly, they needed each other's strengths to build one of the world's greatest companies. Neither could have done it alone.

Think about a person who typically sees things differently than you do. Consider ways in which those differences might be used as stepping stones to third alternative solutions. Perhaps you could seek out his or her views on a current project or problem, valuing the different views you are likely to hear.

PART IV: RENEWAL

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—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.

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.

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. 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.

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. The social and the emotional dimensions of our lives are tied together because our emotional life is primarily, but not exclusively, developed out of and manifested in our relationships with others.

This dimension centers on Habits 4, 5, and 6—principles of interpersonal leadership, empathic communication, and creative cooperation. If our personal security comes from sources within ourselves, then we have the strength to practice the habits of public victory.

A Masterpiece from Sharpening the Saw

In 2008, Lin-Manuel Miranda had been working nonstop for seven years to bring his first musical, *In the Heights*, to the Broadway stage. After winning four Tony Awards for his debut, he finally made time for a vacation to Mexico. He packed “a little light reading” for the beach: *Alexander Hamilton*, by Ron Chernow—the exhaustive biography of a mostly forgotten founding father.

“The moment my brain got a moment’s rest, *Hamilton* walked into it,” Miranda said in an interview with Arianna Huffington. “It’s no accident that the best idea I’ve ever had in my life—maybe the best one I’ll ever have in my life—came to me on vacation.” From that seed of an idea, *Hamilton* went on to shatter records, become a cultural phenomenon, and win Miranda a Pulitzer Prize, an Emmy, a Grammy, and 11 Tony Awards!

So many jobs in today’s knowledge worker age depend on wise decisions and good judgment. So much of our happiness depends on the quality of our relationships. You may think you don’t have time to exercise, go to lunch with a friend, read a book, write in your journal, attend that conference, take a break, or go on a family vacation. In reality, you don’t have time not to.

Change—real change—comes from the inside out. It doesn’t come from hacking at the leaves of attitude and behavior with quick-fix Personality Ethic techniques. It comes from striking at the root—the fabric of our thought, the fundamental, essential paradigms, which give definition to our character and create the lens through which we see the world.

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.



Stephen R. Covey was an internationally respected leadership authority, family expert, teacher, organizational consultant, business leader, and author who dedicated his life to teaching principle-centered living and leadership to build both families and organizations. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was named the #1 most influential business book of the 20th century and has sold more than 40 million copies in over 40 languages. Sean Covey is a business executive, author, speaker, and innovator. He is the president of FranklinCovey Education and is devoted to transforming education throughout the world through a principle-centered leadership approach. He directs FranklinCovey’s whole school transformation process, called Leader in Me®, which is now in more than 5,000 schools and 50 countries throughout the world.



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