

Book Review

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

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OVERVIEW

The international best seller '*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*' is the Dr. Stephen Covey's first and most influential book published in 1989. The book describes powerful ideas that became bases for his another best seller *Principle Centered Leadership* and provided a wide range of resources for the empowerment of individuals, organizations, businesses and entrepreneurs. The book has record breaking sale of its own kind where reportedly over 15 million copies in nearly 36 languages are sold worldwide since its first publication in 1989 not including over one million of its audio version. The underlying idea of the book proclaims that values govern people's behavior, but principles ultimately determine the consequences. The book is a treasure of promising habits‡ for improving personal and professional management and forming productive relationships at work place and around. The reviewer agrees with the author believes that integration of 7 Habits in sequential order would help in personality development in such a way that could end up at personal effectiveness moving from the state of dependence to independence and

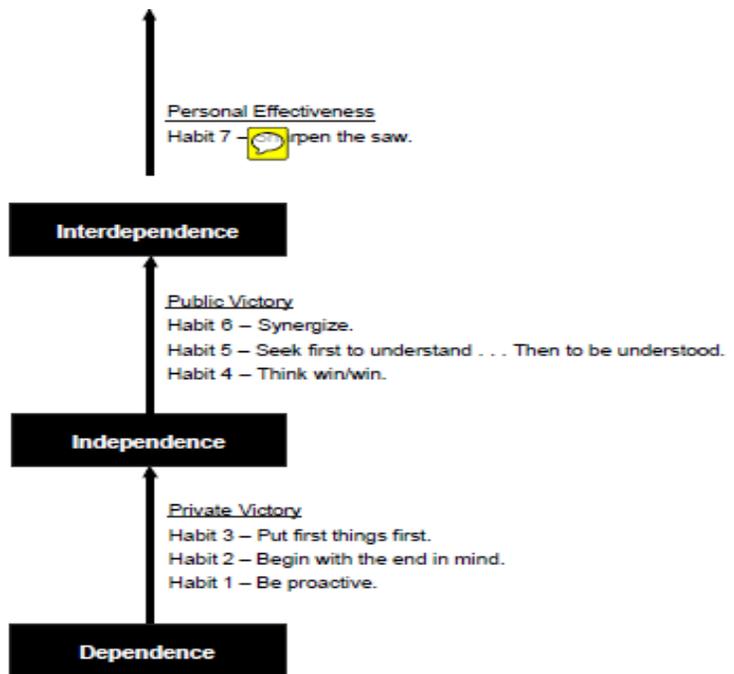
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‡ . The habit is defined as the "intersection of knowledge, skill, and desire" and an effective habit as an "internalized principle and pattern of behavior" (p.47).

then interdependence. The book is organized in to this book into four parts as follows:

- Part-I titled as Paradigms and Principles presents a brief overview of the Seven Habits and sets stage for the subsequent debate on the proposed seven habits.
- Part-II titled as Private Victory presents first three habits defining three sets of principles; principles of personal vision, personal leadership and personal management. Skillful use of these three habits can take a person from dependence to independence, or self-reliant mode.
- Part-III under the heading of Public Victory and Renewal groups three habits (habit 4 to habit 6) emphasizing paradigms of interdependence. According to Covey this paradigms of interdependence is centered along principles of interpersonal leadership, emphatic communication, and principles of creative cooperation.
- Part-IV explains habit number seven that describes principles of balanced self-renewal.



REVIEW

*We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.*
Aristotle

Paradigms & Principles

This part of the book describes paradigms, principles and some concepts for the people to understand in order to grasp the success in a most effective way. The Paradigm is a lens we see the happenings around, perceive, understand and interpret according to our perceptions. The Oxford and other English Dictionary offer its meaning as; pattern, archetype, model, example, standard, theory, perception, assumption, or frame of reference. In a more general sense, it is the way we see the world in terms of perceiving, understanding, and interpreting. The paradigm may be based on reality i.e. the way things are, or values; the way things should be. However, as Einstein (Covey, 1989) observed that the significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them. This new thinking is called a paradigm shift[§]. A paradigm shift is when we abandon an incorrect paradigm for a correct one. According to Kuhn (1962) every significant break through in the field of scientific endeavor is a first a break with tradition, with old ways of thinking, with old paradigms. And the key to effectiveness is in locating and maintaining correct paradigm by keeping eyes, ears and mind open with the believe that there is always more to the picture we see.

Principles can be defined as natural laws that are self evident and part of human consciousness (p.32). Dr Covey surveyed success literature of over last 200 years and concluded that the success of last 150 years can be attributed to the ‘character ethics. These character ethics are the absolute Principles that govern human effectiveness and serve as foundation of true success. They result in to

[§]. the term Paradigm shift was introduced by Thomas Kuhn in his book ‘*The Structure of Scientific Revolution*’

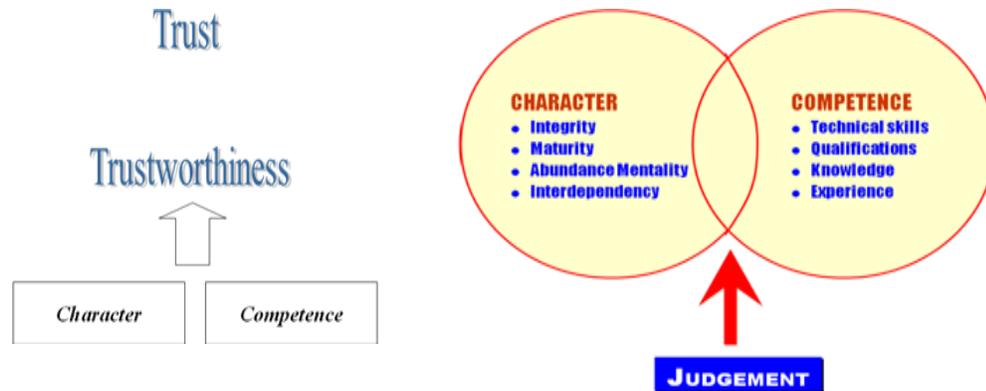
enduring happiness provided; people integrate these principles in to their basic character. Principles are not abstruse practices or impenetrable values but have a universal application. The numbers of principles enumerated in this part of the books are (p.18):

- Fairness
- Integrity/honesty
- Human dignity
- Quality/excellence
- Potential
- Courage
- Modesty
- Justice
- Growth
- Patience
- Nurturance
- Encouragement

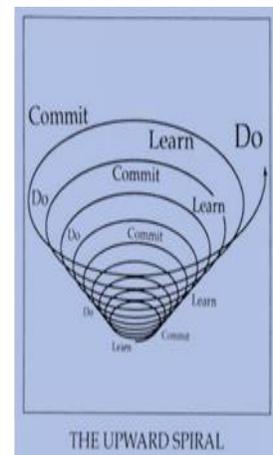
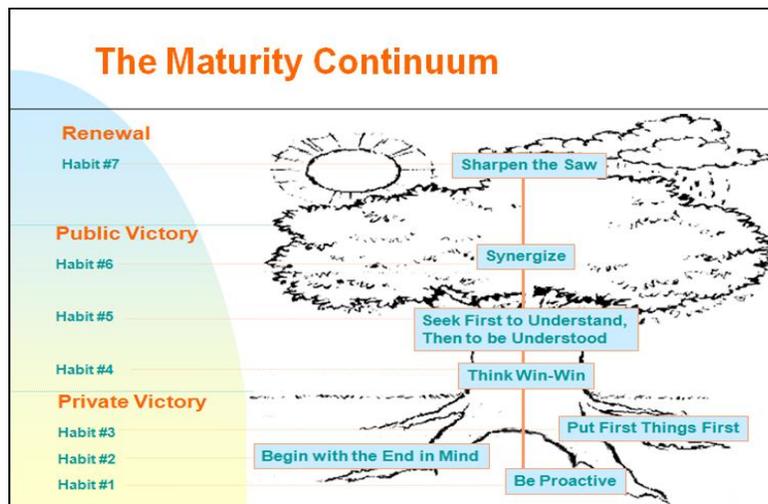
The foremost key concept that author deliberates upon is “inside-out”, which also serves as the title of the first chapter. The ‘in-side’ approach encapsulates that *in order to change the situation; we first had to change ourselves*. And to change ourselves effectively, we first had to change our perceptions (p.18).

The effectiveness is defined by the term ‘P/PC Balance’. Here ‘P’ stands for production or desired results, and ‘PC’ stands for production capability, the ability or asset (physical asset, financial asset, or human asset) that produce the desired results. Hence, effectiveness is a balance that brings equilibrium between the two. In case of imbalance or disequilibrium between the system will tilt on one side and effectiveness would be reduced.

Though image, techniques and skills can influence outward success however, the weight of real effectiveness lies in good character. A person with high character exhibits integrity, maturity and an abundance mentality. A person with high competence has knowledge and ability in a given area. And balance in character and competence builds personal trustworthiness and their trust with others.



The other key concept defined in the book is the Maturity Continuum which states that the effective application of the seven habits moves a person progressively on a continuum from dependence to independence to interdependence. The first three habits move a person from the state of *dependence* to the *independence* state, and next three habits move an independent person to *interdependence* with other independent person in a synergy. Every one begins its life as infant totally dependent upon others. With gradual nurturing the one becomes more independent-physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. As, one continues to grow and mature, becomes aware that all of nature is interdependent.



Private Victory:

Private Victory denotes to three step spiral process of conscious growth; mastering commitment, learning and doing. These private victories will allow us to break through any dependency we have towards others and allow for full interdependency within our lives. However, this process of change is attained through Habits 1-3:

Habit 1 – Being Proactive

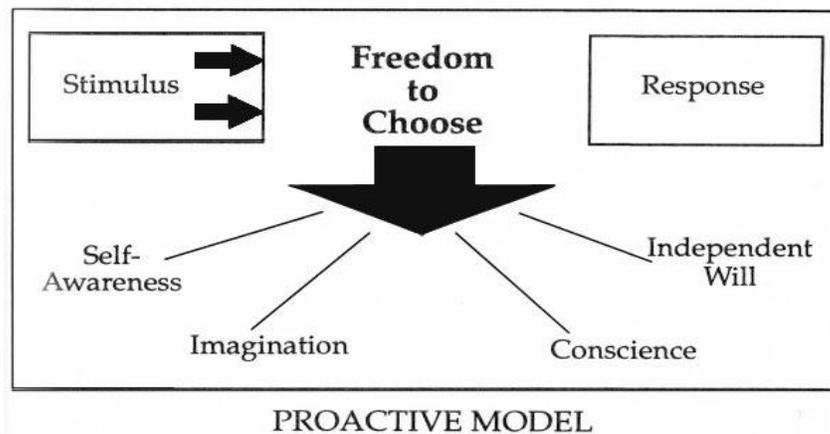
Habit 2 – Begin with the end in mind

Habit 3 – Put first things first

Habit 1: Be Proactive-Principle of Personal Vision: Proactively is the individual or group response to make choices based on their self awareness, creativity and independent will. Being proactive means taking initiative, not waiting for others to act first, and being responsible for what you do. Our life doesn't just happen, rather intentionally or un-intentionally it is designed by us. Therefore, being proactive is the endowment of awareness. Be Proactive is about taking responsibility for your life and choosing behavior. Proactive people recognize that they are "response-able" and don't blame genetics, circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. They know they choose their behavior. Whereas, reactive people are often affected by their physical environment and find external sources to blame for their behavior.

Since, environmental stimulus dominates choice and response therefore; most people take an outside-in approach. Hence, Covey categorizes people response to stimuli into two areas: Re-active focus and Pro-active focus. Proactive people focus their efforts on their Circle of Influence. They work on the things they can do something about: health, children, and problems at work. Reactive people focus their efforts in the Circle of Concern--things over which

they have little or no control: the national debt, terrorism, the weather. Gaining an awareness of the areas in which we expend our energies in is a giant step in becoming proactive. According to Covey, proactively is grounded in facing reality but also understanding we have the power to choose a positive response to our circumstances.



Habit- 2: Begin with the End in Mind: To begin with the end in mind means to have clear understanding of your destination and where you are at now. Habit 2 is endowment of imagination and conscience. It is envisioning in mind what one cannot see with his eyes. It is based on the principle that all things are created twice; firstly creation in mind and then physical creation. Begin with the End in Mind means to begin each day, task, or project with a clear vision of your desired direction and destination, and then continue by flexing your proactive muscles to make things happen. Therefore, Habit 2 puts your goals in focus, and moves your ideas into the real world. You create your own destiny and secure the future you envision.

Habit 3: Put First Things First: It is the Principles of Personal Management once one moves from state of dependency to independency. This

habit builds on the previous two and the actual exercise of independent will to create a life congruent with your values, goals and mission. Covey suggests, we should lead from the right brain (creatively) and manage from the left brain (analytically). To set the context for effective management, he discusses what he refers to as the fourth human endowment, Independent Will, which is the ability to make decisions and choices and act upon them. He also notes integrity, our ability to make and keep commitments to ourselves, as important to effective personal management. Time management is an essential skill for personal management. The essence of time management is to organize and execute around priorities. Covey presents a matrix made of the characteristics of activities, classifying them as urgent or not urgent, important or not important. List the activities screaming for action as "Urgent." List the activities contributing to your mission, value or high-priority goals as "Important." The following are some of his descriptions of each quadrant of the matrix:

- Quadrant I activities are urgent and important - called problems or crises. Focusing on Quadrant I results in it getting bigger and bigger until it dominates you.
- Quadrant II activities are important, but not urgent. Working on this Quadrant is the heart of personal time management.
- Quadrant III activities are urgent and not important, and often misclassified as Quadrant I.
- Quadrant IV is the escape Quadrant - activities that are not urgent and not important.

Effective people stay out of Quadrants III and IV because they aren't important. They shrink Quadrant I down to size by spending more time in Quadrant II.

Habit 3 is all about life management, prioritizing about what are "first things?" If you put first things first, you are organizing and managing time and events according to the personal priorities you established in Habit 2.

Public Victories:

Public victory evolves paradigms of interdependence. Covey stresses that private victory precedes public victory. Hence, effective interdependence can only be built upon the foundation of true independence. Public victories create harmony and synergy in our relationships with others. This process of growth is formed by working on habits four through six:

Habit 4 – Think win/win

Habit 5 – Seek first to understand ... Then to be understood

Habit 6 – Synergize

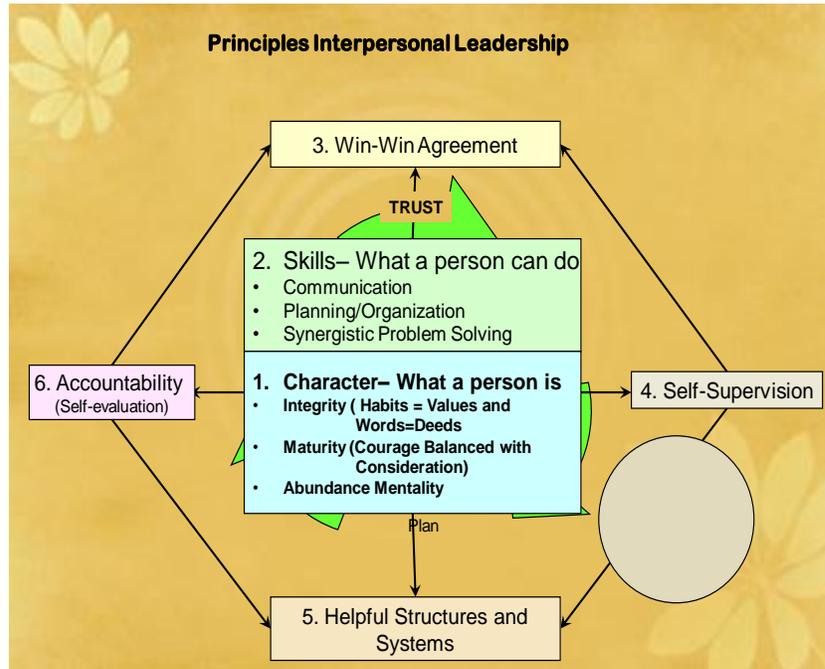
Habit 4: Think Win/Win-Principles of Interpersonal Leadership: In win/win situation people seek mutual benefit in all interactions. Win-win does not focus on competition rather on a corporate arena. Win-win means agreements that are mutually beneficial and satisfying. Covey clarifies his view on competition and the win/win paradigm as follows:

“Competition has its place against market competitors, last year's performance, or another location or individual where cooperation and interdependence aren't required, but cooperation in the workplace is as important to free enterprise as competition in the marketplace. The spirit of Win/Win cannot survive in an environment of competition or contests. All of the company's systems should be based on the principle of Win/Win. The Compensation system of the managers should be based on the

productivity and development of their people. Reward both P (production) and PC (building production capacity)” (p.230)

The five dimensions of the Win/Win model s described by the author are:

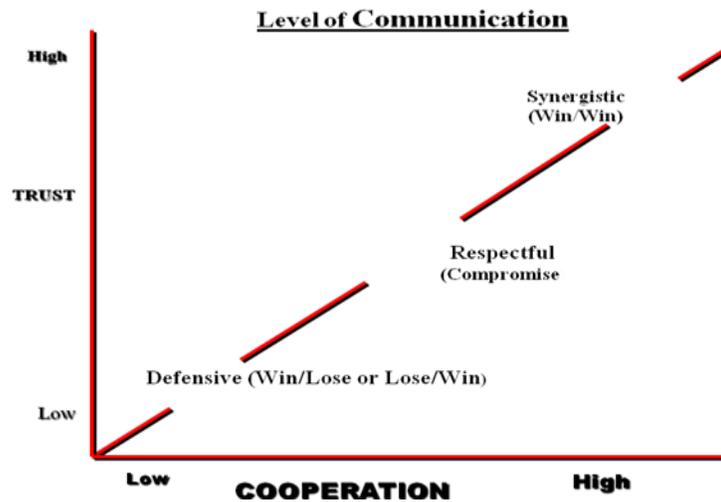
- Character is the foundation of Win/Win. There must be integrity in order to establish trust in the relationship and to define a win in terms of personal values. A key trait is the abundance mentality that there is plenty for everybody (v. the Scarcity Mentality). The abundance mentality flows from a deep inner sense of personal worth and security.
- Relationships are the focus on Win/Win. When there is a relationship of trust and emotional bank account balances are high, there is a much greater probability of a successful, productive interaction. Negative energy focused on differences in personality or position is eliminated; positive, cooperative energy focused on understanding and resolving issues is built.
- Performance agreements or partnership agreements give definition and direction to Win/Win. They shift the paradigm of production from vertical (Superior - Subordinate) to horizontal (Partnership/Team). The agreement should include elements to create a standard by which people can measure their own success and clearly contain: results, guidelines, resources, accountability, and consequences.
- The Reward System is a key element in the Win/Win model. Talking Win/Win but rewarding Win/Lose results in negating the Win/Win paradigm. If the outstanding performance of a few is rewarded, the other team members will be losers. Instead, develop individual achievable goals and team objectives to be rewarded.



Habit 5: Seek first to understand then to be Understood- Principles of Empathic Communication.

The root cause of almost all people problems is the communication problem because most of the time people don't listen with empathy. By seeking first to understand, one has to get on the same side of the table looking at the problem instead of staying on opposite sides staring at each other. One of the most basic steps in seeking to understand is properly listening. People usually "listen" at one of four levels: ignoring, pretending, selective listening, or attentive listening. The ability to listen requires restraint and veneration, and ability to make your self understood requires and consideration (Covey, 1992, 42). Covey (1989) suggests that we should be using the fifth, highest form of listening - empathic listening. Empathic listening is listening with intent to

understand the other person's frame of reference and feelings. You must listen with your ears, your eyes and your heart. By understanding the other person, one can learn their paradigms through which they view the world and their needs. Then we can try to resolve our differences to work together.



Knowing how to be understood is the other half of the Habit5 and is equally critical in reaching win/ win situation. The author uses the Greek philosophy of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos to establish the sequence for effective communication. Ethos is your creditability, the faith people have in your integrity and competency. Pathos is the feeling of the emotional thrust of the other person’s communication. Logos is the reasoning and logic side of the presentation (255). This Greek philosophy of ethos, pathos and logos arranges your character- relationship and the logic of the presentation- which is a paradigm shift in routine communication. When you can present your own ideas clearly, specifically, visually and most importantly contextually - in the

context of a deep understanding of their paradigms and concerns - you significantly increase the creditability of your ideas.

Habit 6: Synergize- Principles of Creative Cooperation: The synergy is the creative achievement of the previous habits because if the seven habits are used together then the result is very powerful. Communication and cooperation are two legs of synergy.. The essence of synergy is to value the mental, emotional, and psychological differences between people. Synergy builds a closely knit team with a high emotional bank account of trust. High trust generates upper level of cooperation and open communication. To produce synergy, the concepts of win/win, mutual understanding and seeking synergy are used to work directly on the restraining forces.

Blocks to Synergy



According to Covey synergy means;

- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It means that the relationship which the parts have to each other is part in and of itself- the most empowering, unifying and exciting part” (p.263).

- The essence of synergy is to value differences- to respect them, to build strengths, and to compensate for weaknesses” (p. 263).
- Synergy can be unnerving unless one has a high tolerance for ambiguity and gets security from integrity to principles and inner values.
- To achieve synergy in business requires that people become open and authentic. When we open ourselves up to the influence of others, we gain new insights and facilitate the generation of new options.

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw- Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal: This habit is focused on renewing the four dimensions of human nature; physical, spiritual, mental and social/emotional, so that one can work more quickly and effortlessly:

- The physical dimension involves eating the right foods, getting enough rest and relaxation, and exercising on a regular basis. A good program builds your body's endurance, flexibility and strength.
- The spiritual dimension is your center, your commitment to your value system. It draws upon the sources that inspire and uplift you and tie you to timeless truths of humanity.
- The mental dimension, important keeps your mind sharp by reading, writing, organizing and planning.
- Emotional life is primarily developed out of and manifested in our relationships with others. Renewing our social/emotional dimension requires focus and exercise in our interaction with others

Renewal is the principle and process that empowers a person to move on an upward spiral of growth and change, of continuous improvement Self-renewal must include balanced renewal in all four dimensions in individual or organizational context. The things done to sharpen the saw in any one dimension have a positive impact in the other dimensions, because they are so highly interrelated. .

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF RENEWAL

PHYSICAL
Exercise, Nutrition,
Stress Management

MENTAL
Reading, Visualizing,
Planning, Writing

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL
Service, Empathy,
Synergy, Intrinsic Security

SPIRITUAL
Value Clarification
& Commitment, Study
& Meditation

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