



## The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People

### STEPHEN COVEY

Dr. Stephen Covey (1932-2012) was a highly influential management guru who inspired millions of people with the power of universal principles throughout his lifetime. His most famous book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" led him to be recognized as one of Time Magazine's 25 most influential Americans.

He was also one of the world's foremost organizational expert, thought leader and respected leadership authority who inspired millions of clients around the world and taught them the concept of mindset, skillset and toolset found in "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People".

### Summary:

In "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People", Stephen Covey talks about a framework for personal effectiveness.

This is his most popular book and has sold more than 15 million copies worldwide as it is a collection of practical, easy to understand and simple techniques laid out in a simple blueprint to achieve personal development. They help anyone who harbors desires of living a full, purposeful and good life.

He famously proclaims:

"Although values govern people's behavior, principles ultimately determine the consequence".



Covey suggests principles to be external natural laws whereas values are internal and subjective. Our character is a collection of our habits and habits play a very powerful role in our life. Habits can consist of various factors such as knowledge, skill or desire. Skills give us the ability of how to do certain things, knowledge gives us the ability of knowing what to do and desire provides the motivation to do that thing.

Covey also talks about Dependence or the paradigm under which we are born. This makes us rely on others to take care of us.

- **Independence** is the paradigm which allows us to make our own decisions and take care of ourselves.
- **Interdependence** on the other hand is the paradigm under which we co-operate and work together to achieve something which can't be achieved independently.

Out of the seven habits he discusses in the book, the first three habits focus on self-mastery and talks of the importance of achieving internal victories to move from a state of dependence to interdependence. They are:



### Habit 1: Be Proactive

This habit is the ability of controlling your environment rather than letting it control you. Focus on things that you can control and remember change always starts from within. Highly effective people understand this and make the internal decision of improving their lives through things they can influence, rather than simply reacting to external forces. Being in a position where you are simply reacting to external forces leaves you vulnerable whereas if you influence your environment, you can remain in control of the situation.



### Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

You need to always have a clear picture of your ultimate goal. Highly effective people will develop a principle centred, personal mission states which form the cornerstone of their long term goals and objectives. This is something you should do. It can help you understand the power of goal setting and leading yourself toward your aims through personal leadership. Develop habits of only concentrating on activities that are relevant and avoid distractions. Start to become more productive and successful.



### Habit 3: Put First Things First

Highly effective people are experts at prioritizing. You need to start understanding what is urgent, what is important and what can be done later. You can then laser focus on the urgent and important tasks, according to their needs and priorities. You will then be able to strike a balance between production and building production capacity. This can be referred to as the habit of personal management and is more about organizing and implementing high-priority activities.

## The next 3 habits talk about interdependence:

### Habit 4: Think Win-Win

Highly effective people value integrity in themselves as well as people they associate with. Start sticking with your true feelings, values and commitments. Be mature and have an abundance mentality which allows you to be considerate of others. Always seek agreements or relationships that are mutually beneficial. This cultivation of win/win behavior leads to many successful relationships and networking which helps for further growth. The author also calls this as interpersonal leadership and encourages you to assume that there is always plenty for everyone.



### Habit 5: Seek First to Understand

Highly Effective people understand how important it is to first understand others which is why they learn to communicate clearly. Start focusing heavily on listening to others. This can help you build interpersonal skills which is an essential skill for career and professional growth. Effective listening is about putting yourself in the perspective of the other person with empathy for both feeling as well as meaning. The author calls this the habit of communication and suggests to "diagnose before you prescribe" to maintain positive relationships across all aspects of life.

### Habit 6: Synergize

Highly effective people understand the power of synergy. Find ways of leveraging individual differences to create a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. Conflicts can often be avoided or minimized through mutual trust and understanding which is why it is critical to work in harmony as part of team. The author refers to this as the habit of creative co-operation.



# The Seventh Habit is about renewal and continual improvement:



## Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

Highly effective people understand that the four important areas of their lives are physical/social or emotional/ mental and spiritual dimensions. Prioritize taking time out to focus on growing those areas of your life to lead a balanced life. The author also refers to this as the habit of self-renewal.

To sharpen the saw means to renew yourself, in all four aspects of your nature:

- **Physical** - Regular exercise, correct nutrition and stress management
- **Mental** - Daily reading, visualizing, planning and writing
- **Social/Emotional** - Service, empathy, synergy, security
- **Spiritual** - Spiritual reading, study and meditate

Finding the proper balance between actually producing and improving individual capacity to produce is critical to be effective. The fable of the goose and the golden egg is used to illustrate this concept:

In the fable, there was a poor farmer and he had a goose. One day, the goose started laying a solid gold egg every day and the farmer became richer than his wildest dreams. But with wealth, came greed and he started scheming of other ways to become wealthy. He also thought the goose had many golden eggs inside her and he wanted all of those eggs at once. He killed the goose but to his dismay didn't find any golden eggs inside the goose.



What is trying to be illustrated is, if someone tries to maximize immediate production regardless of capacity of production, the capability will be lost. Being effective means striking a fine balance between production and the capacity to produce. It can be applied to both financial, physical as well as human assets.

## Key Quotes:

1. "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." (Pg. 54)
2. "Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions." (Pg. 78)
3. "It is important to immediately admit and correct our mistakes so that they have no power over that next moment and we are empowered again." (Pg. 91)
4. "Trust is the highest form of human motivation." (Pg. 178)

## Key Takeaways:

- Take control of your environment
- Don't react to outside resources
- Have a clear picture of your ideal, end goal
- Only take part in activities that are relevant to this goal
- Become an expert at prioritizing the important things
- Stick with your true values and feelings but be considerate of other people's values and feelings
- Listen to other people
- Have mutual trust in the teams you have
- Lead a balance lifestyle.

## The One Action To Take:

Grab yourself a pen and a piece of paper and write down 3 things that you need to start doing in order to make a tremendous difference in your personal or business life. They can be anything from being organized, going for a daily run or reading more.

Now pick the most important one of these 3. This will become your priority and you will need to make sure you accomplish it either every day, or in the amount of time it takes to complete.

Once a week, make it a habit to self-reflect on things that could improve your life.

Make it a habit to prioritize just one thing a week and see how much more of an effective person you can become.