



***THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY
SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE -
a SYNOPSIS***

Jonathan Farrington





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INTRODUCTION

When a colleague loaned me Stephen Covey’s “*The Seven Habits Of Highly Successful People*”, many years ago, it took me about three months to get around to reading it - I now realise that I wasted those three months! In fact, I read it three times, in order to ensure that I had fully digested the wisdom.

Whilst I cannot claim to have experienced an epiphany of “Damascus Highway” proportions, it did cause me to make fundamental changes to the way I conducted business. In reality, I was practising much of what Covey suggests, but I was doing so in a fairly unstructured and ill-disciplined way.

However, in what I now term my “Post Covey” period, I do ensure that I audit myself regularly and I would urge you to do the same.

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Covey is also responsible for the book *“Principle Centred Leadership”* and many of his ideas and approaches relate to the management of people. You are encouraged to consider, as you read this summary of his ideas, how any of it might relate to your own particular situation as an individual, as well as a manager.

Covey's view focuses on interdependence on what he calls “mature interaction”. When we are truly interdependent, then we have achieved and are practising all seven habits. The habits are in fact steps, leading us from dependence through independence to interdependence and making use of our innate human characteristics – moving us, in effect, from what Covey terms ‘private victories’ to ‘public victories’.

Einstein observed, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”

In any situation, our natural human response is to look for similarities to experiences we have previously encountered. In doing this, we fail to recognise the situation we are actually in and we also fail to recognise opportunities and challenges presented to us. In effect “the way we see the problem is the problem”, which accounts for why we find ourselves repeating patterns of frustration and feeling unable to respond appropriately to situations facing us.

Einstein observed, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” Covey develops this theme into what he calls an ‘inside-out’ approach. This means to start first with self - even more fundamentally, to start with the most inside part of self (your principles, your values, your motives and your character).





We each have - and can develop further - various assets. Covey's view encourages wider recognition of these assets and their maintenance. Once we take for granted say an effective working relationship, we cease to actively maintain it - the result could well be a reduction in the effectiveness of the relationship and, therefore, of a very important asset. The key is balance between use of any asset and maintenance of it.

HABIT 1: BE PROACTIVE

We all respond to situations in certain ways. Often, this happens without our really thinking about it – that is, we respond to our past and to our conditioning. In effect, we can believe we are “programmed” to respond in a certain way. This is not the case. Among our human attributes are self-awareness, imagination, conscience and independent will. We can choose how we respond - in effect, we can “change our script”. In making this choice, we move from being reactive to being proactive.

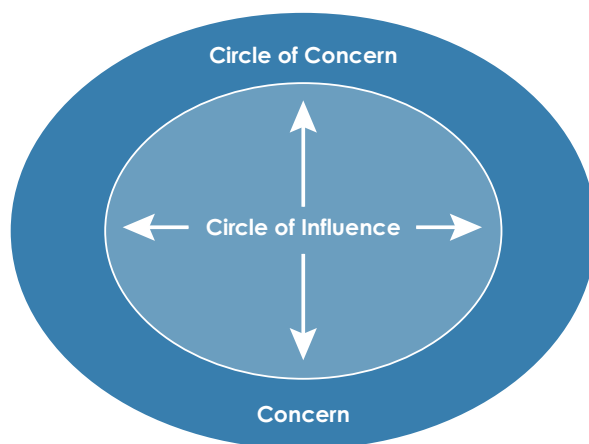
Does your language suggest that you are in control or that you are at the mercy of other's actions?

In being proactive, we need to pay attention to our language, to ensure that it reflects proactivity. Does your language suggest that you are in control or that you are at the mercy of other's actions? When faced with a seemingly impossible situation, do you say, “There's nothing I can do” or “Let's look at the alternatives”?





Being proactive is about considering your areas of influence, as well as your areas of concern. Seek to expand your areas of influence in relation to your areas of concern. Covey illustrates this thus:



PROACTIVE FOCUS

(Positive energy enlarges the Circle of Influence)

Being proactive is about considering your areas of influence, as well as your areas of concern.

Application suggestions:

1. For a full day, listen to your own language, and that of those around you. How often do you hear reactive phrases such as "If only ..." or "I have to"?
2. Identify an experience you are likely to encounter in the near future where, based on experience, you would probably behave reactively. How could you respond proactively? Make a commitment to yourself to exercise your freedom to choose how to respond to this situation.





HABIT 2: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

To begin with the end in mind is to suggest that we have some awareness of the end itself, yet often this is not the case. It is said, *“If you do not know where you are going, how will you know that you have arrived”?* To be aware – or even to have a vision - of the destination or end, is to use those human attributes of imagination and self-awareness.

Habit 2 is based on principles of personal leadership. Leaders need to have vision to know not only where they are going, but also where they are leading others. Drucker said: *“Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.”* If you imagine a group of workers hacking their way through the jungle with machetes, these are the problem-solvers. Behind them are the

Effectiveness does not depend solely on how much effort we expend, but on whether or not the effort we expend is in the right jungle.

managers, sharpening the machetes, writing policy, drawing up procedures, bringing in improved technologies, etc. The leader, on the other hand, is the one who climbs the tallest tree, surveys the entire situation, and shouts: *“Wrong jungle!”* Effectiveness does not depend solely on how much effort we expend, but on whether or not the effort we expend is in the right jungle.

To begin with the end in mind - to have a vision - is to assess whether that vision is realistic, as well as to formulate ways of actually achieving that end. This approach is applicable whether we are managing and leading others, or whether we are seeking to improve our self-management.

One of the most effective ways to begin with the end in mind is to develop a personal mission statement. It focuses on what you want to be, and to do, and on your values and principles. Because each individual is unique, a personal mission statement will reflect that uniqueness - both in content and form.





It is important to start at the very centre of your Circle of Influence, as this is the lens through which you see the world. It is very common for one's life to be centred around others, or around money, or on work. The key to personal effectiveness is to be principle-centred, to be clear about your principles and

This is not something you write overnight. It takes introspection, analysis and much thought.

values and to operate according to them – these are your “bottom line”. Having identified your own values and principles, you will be in a position to set your own priorities and to begin to formulate your own personal mission statement. This is not something you write overnight - it takes introspection, analysis and much thought. It is not even an end in itself, but should be reviewed periodically.

Going through this process increases self-awareness yet further. You will become even more aware of the “scripts” which affect your responses - this awareness is an essential first step to making any effective change.

Application suggestions:

1. Set aside time to completely separate yourself from your daily activities and to begin work on your personal mission statement.
2. Start a collection of notes, quotes and ideas you may want to use as resource material in writing your personal mission statement.





HABIT 3: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST AND CONSIDER THESE TWO QUESTIONS...

1. What one thing could you do (which you are not doing now) that, if you did on a regular basis, would make a tremendous difference in your personal life?
2. What one thing in your work life would bring similar results?

Habit 3 is about effective self-management. Working on the foundation of Habits 1 and 2, you then have to manage yourself effectively to create a life congruent with the answers you elicited. The ability to manage well determines the quality of all that you do. Management is the breaking down, the analysis, the sequencing, the specific application, the time-bound aspect of effective self-management. Leadership is a right-brain activity - Management is very much left-brain.

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It is the endowment of independent will that makes effective self-management possible. Effective management – whether of self or others – is about putting first things first. This is about prioritising according to our objectives. For many years, approaches to this activity have concentrated on various tools of time management - checklists, calendars, goal setting, daily planning etc. More recently though, there has been recognition that the challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves. There has been a shift in focus, away from things and time, and towards relationships, results and maintenance activities – emphasising balance between content and process, and activity and maintenance.





Basically, we spend time in one of four ways. The possibilities are illustrated in the Matrix:

URGENT	NOT URGENT
<p>1. Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Crises★ Pressing problems★ Deadline-driven projects	<p>2. Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Preventative, maintenance activities★ Relationship building★ Recognising new opportunities★ Planning, Recreation
<p>3. Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Interruptions, some calls★ Some mail, some reports★ Some meetings★ Pressing matters★ Popular activities	<p>4. Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Trivia, busy work★ Some mail★ Some phone calls★ Time wasters★ Pleasant activities

Effective people are not problem-minded, but are opportunity-minded.

Quadrant 2 is the heart of effective personal management. It deals with things that are not urgent, but are important. It deals with things like relationships, writing a personal mission statement, long-range planning, exercising, preventive maintenance, preparation – all those things we know we need to do, but seldom get around to doing, because they are not urgent.

Effective people are not problem-minded, but are opportunity-minded. They do have genuine **Quadrant 1** crises and emergencies requiring immediate attention, but – because of their thinking preventively – such crises are relatively few in number.





Go back to the two questions at the beginning of this session and consider your answers. The chances are they fit in Quadrant 2. They are obviously very important to you, but not urgent. And because they are not urgent, you do not do them. The question was phrased to encourage you to think of something which would make a tremendous positive difference - Quadrant 2 activities have that kind of impact. Our effectiveness takes quantum leaps when we do them. The results of concentrating on Quadrant 2 are increases in vision, perspective, balance, self-discipline and control, and a decrease in crises.

The key is not to prioritise what is on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.

Having decided the areas on which to concentrate, it is important to avoid the shortcoming of previous time management tools and approaches. The key is not to prioritise what is on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities. Covey suggests that this is best achieved by planning a week at a time, rather than attempting a daily approach. He further recommends that you:

- ★ Consider and identify each of your roles - in and out of work
- ★ Select goals for the coming week
- ★ Schedule activities to take account of the goals you have prioritised and the roles which you play
- ★ Delegate effectively (at home and at work) in order to increase the time you can spend on Quadrant 2 activities





Application suggestions:

1. Identify a Quadrant 2 activity you know has been neglected in your life – one that, if done well, would have a significant impact on your life, either personally or professionally.
2. Write it down and commit to implement it.

Interdependence

The first three habits relate to the personal sphere, to the “private victory”. Habits 4, 5 and 6 move us into interpersonal spheres, towards “public victory”. There are a number of key issues which contribute to interdependence - things which Covey describes as “deposits in your Emotional Bank Account”:

One that, if done well, would have a significant impact on your life - either personally or professionally.

- ★ Understanding the individual
- ★ Attending to the little things
- ★ Keeping commitments
- ★ Clarifying expectations
- ★ Showing personal integrity
- ★ Apologising sincerely when you neglect any of the above





HABIT 4: THINK “WIN/WIN”

Anything less than “Win/Win”, in an interdependent reality, is a poor second best that will have impact in the long-term relationship.

- ★ Win/Win is a frame of mind that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions
- ★ “Win/Win” means that agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial, mutually satisfying
- ★ With a “Win/Win” solution, all parties feel good about the decision and feel committed to the action plan
- ★ “Win/Win” sees life as a co-operative not competitive arena
- ★ “Win/Win” is based on the concept that there is plenty for everyone, that one person’s success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others.
- ★ Anything less than “Win/Win”, in an interdependent reality, is a poor second best that will have impact in the long-term relationship. The cost of that impact needs careful consideration. If you cannot reach a true “Win/Win” situation, you are very often better off to go for “No Deal”.

The principles of “Win/Win” embrace five interdependent dimensions:

- ★ **Integrity:** operating according to your own deeply held values
- ★ **Maturity:** achieving a balance between courage and consideration
- ★ **Abundance mentality:** the idea that everyone can succeed or “Win”
- ★ **Relationships:** maintaining relationships, based on understanding and trust
- ★ **Agreements:** clear agreements which specify desired results, guidelines/ parameters, resources available, accountability and consequences



In achieving “Win/Win”, the process is as important as the actual outcome. Covey suggests following these steps:

First, see the problem from the other’s point of view. Really seek to understand and to give expression to the needs and concerns of the other party, as well as, or better than they can themselves.

Second, identify key issues and concerns involved.

Third, determine what results would constitute a fully acceptable solution.

Fourth, identify possible new options to achieve those results.

In achieving “Win/Win”, the process is as important as the actual outcome.

Applications:

1. Make a list of obstacles that keep you from applying the “Win/Win” approach more frequently. Determine what could be done within your Circle of Influence to eliminate some of those obstacles.
2. Identify someone who, even in difficult situations, really seeks to achieve “Win/Win”. Determine to learn from this person's example.





HABIT 5: UNDERSTAND ... THEN SEEK TO BE UNDERSTOOD

In seeking to apply Habit 5, we need to **diagnose before we prescribe**. We therefore need to really understand a situation, or a person, as fully as possible, before we can consider how we respond.

Having sought first to understand, the next step is to be understood.

One of the key skills in this area is **empathic listening**. This involves much more than registering, reflecting, or even understanding the words that are said. In empathic listening, you listen with your ears, but you also listen with your eyes and with your heart. You listen for feeling, for meaning. You listen for behaviour. You use your right brain, as well as your left. Empathic listening is so powerful, because it gives you accurate data with which to work – enabling you to avoid the trap of reacting to what you are hearing according to your own “script”.

When we listen autobiographically (from our own experience, rather than from an understanding of the other person’s), we tend to:

- ★ Evaluate
- ★ Probe
- ★ Advise, and
- ★ Interpret

all of which should be avoided if we are to achieve true empathic listening.

Being understood

Having sought first to understand, the next step is to be understood. The key here is to concentrate on three sequential philosophies: **ethos, pathos, logos**.





Ethos is your personal credibility - the faith people have in your integrity and competency.

Pathos is the empathic side - your being in alignment with the emotional thrust of another person's communication.

Logos is the logic - the reasoning.

True practice of Habit 5 is reflected in appropriate use of all three philosophies.

Most people, in communicating with others, go straight to the logos of their ideas - they try to convince others of the validity of that logic, without first taking ethos and pathos into consideration. True practice of Habit 5 is reflected in appropriate use of all three philosophies.

Application suggestions:

1. Watch people communicating, concentrating on their non-verbal messages. What emotions are being communicated?
2. Next time you catch yourself inappropriately probing, evaluating, and advising or interpreting - try to make the situation more positive. If appropriate, acknowledge this with the other person (e.g. "I'm sorry, I just realised I'm not really trying to understand. Could we start again?")

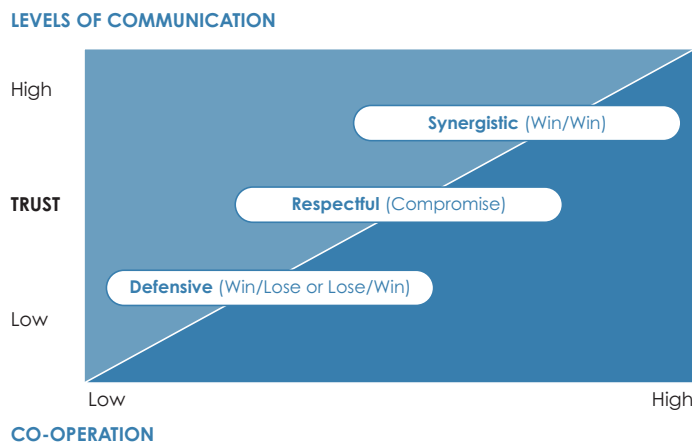




HABIT 6: SYNERGISE

What is synergy? Simply defined, it means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It means that the relationship, which the parts have to each other, is a part in and of itself. It is not only a part, but also the most catalytic, the most empowering, the most unifying, and the most exciting part.

The diagram below illustrates how closely trust is related to different levels of communication.



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Internal synergy – the appropriate use of both left and right brain – also comes into play in Habit 6.

Interpersonal/Interdependent synergy. We achieve this by recognising each person's particular characteristics, their diversity, their strengths and qualities, their life experience – all those elements that make up the unique individual. If we operate in a way that encourages values and makes use of each person's unique qualities, recognising that this is for the benefit of the whole - there is a greater chance of achieving synergy.





Too often, understanding the concept of a “team player” is pressure to conform, to be a clone... But the most effective team is one that works with true synergy, which values diversity and makes use of all contributions. This concept of synergistic teamwork can be summarised as:

Together
Everyone
Achieves
More

In an interdependent situation, synergy is particularly powerful in dealing with negative forces that work against growth and change. Sociologist Kurt Lewin

Synergy is achieved by maximising the driving forces, but also by minimising the restraining forces.

developed a “Force Field Analysis” model in which he identified driving forces and restraining forces. Synergy is achieved by maximising the driving forces, but also by minimising the restraining forces. Imagine the activity of driving - if for some reason the brake is applied, you can only achieve so much by ignoring the braking action and increasing pressure on the accelerator – both need to be considered.

Application suggestions:

1. Identify a situation in which you require greater teamwork and synergy. What conditions would need to exist to support synergy?
2. What can you do to create those conditions?





HABIT 7: SELF-RENEWAL

Remember the lessons of Quadrant 2 – putting first things first – and the importance of such maintenance activities.

Habit 7 is taking time to maintain yourself. It underlies all the other habits, because it is the habit which makes all the others possible. This maintenance helps preserve and enhance the greatest asset you have – you. It is about renewing the four dimensions of your nature – physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional.

- ★ Physical (exercise, nutrition, stress management)
- ★ Spiritual (value clarification, study; meditation)
- ★ Mental (reading, planning, writing, visualising)
- ★ Social/emotional (interaction with others, empathy, synergy)

Should you be concerned about having time to do any of the above? Covey would say you do not have time not to do them! Remember the lessons of Quadrant 2 – putting first things first – and the importance of such maintenance activities.

Application suggestions:

1. Consider what you do currently to achieve effective self-renewal. Identify one of the four dimensions above, and commit yourself to improving your self-renewal activities in that area.
2. Repeat step 1. for all other dimensions.



THE SEVEN HABITS ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT

Consider the extent to which each of the Habits is part of your self-management.

Mark an "x" where you feel yourself to be on the scale.

1. Be proactive

A real need for development	Fundamental to the way I operate
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2. Begin with the end in mind: living by values

A real need for development	Fundamental to the way I operate
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3. First things first: prioritising

A real need for development	Fundamental to the way I operate
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4. Think win/win: mutual success

A real need for development	Fundamental to the way I operate
-----------------------------	----------------------------------

5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood

A real need for development	Fundamental to the way I operate
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6. Synergise

A real need for development	Fundamental to the way I operate
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7. Sharpen the saw: self-renewal

A real need for development	Fundamental to the way I operate
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Use your findings to help you identify action needed. Formulate a **Personal Action Plan** to extend and enhance your capacity for self-management and for principle-centred leadership.





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Jonathan Farrington is a globally recognized business coach, mentor, author and consultant, who has guided hundreds of companies and thousands of individuals around the world towards optimum performance levels. He is Chairman of The JF Corporation and CEO of Top Sales Associates.

Formerly, Jonathan was the Managing Partner of The jfa Group which he established in 1994. Prior to that, he earned his spurs in some of the most demanding and competitive market sectors i.e. IT, Telecommunications and Finance: Outstanding achievement at an early stage in his career provided a 'fast-track' passage to several board level appointments working with a number of the largest and most successful international corporations including: - IBM, Wang, Legal and General, Andersen Consulting, Litton Industries and The Bank of Tokyo.

Early in 2007, Jonathan formed Top Sales Associates (TSA) to promote the very best sales related solutions and products. TSA is now a subsidiary of The JF Corporation, www.jfcorporation.com based in London and Paris. Jonathan's highly popular daily blog for dedicated business professionals, which attracts thousand of visitors every day, can be found at www.thejfblogit.co.uk

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