

# Seven Habits Revisited

*You and I need now to be highly effective.*



by Stephen R. Covey

**L**IGHTHOUSE PRINCIPLES never change. They are classic, enduring, universal, timeless, and self-evident. And in this turbulent world, we face a new economy characterized by the globalization of markets and technology, the democratization of information and expectations, universal connectivity, an exponential increase in competition, and new wealth centered in people and social capital.

This turbulent whitewater economy has virtually dissolved old lines of positional authority based on command and control and elevated moral authority based on character and competence. It has caused you and me to benchmark our mindsets, skillsets, and toolsets against the "best in class" worldwide.

Hence, we have a greater need now than ever before to be highly effective. And the simple answer to the question of how is to be clearly focused on purpose, centered on principles, and to execute around priorities.

And yet as I ask people, "What is the purpose of this group or company?" I get an amazing diversity of opinion. Even if the mission statement is framed and hanging on the wall, people wander all over the place. There is neither agreement on what constitutes "true north," nor is there a sharp focus. The culture is characterized by control, contention, and confusion.

Again, the reason for this tragic ineffectiveness is a lack of focus and execution. Focusing on principle-centered priorities unleashes talent and energy and creates over time a culture of principle-centeredness, where each person has his or her own internal compass, shares a common focus, and executes around priorities. When we change at an accelerated rate, old successful processes and practices don't work. Nothing fails like past success.

On a placid lake, we can operate like a rowing team where the coxswain sits

back and gives orders. But in whitewater, everyone must have the same purpose, principles, and focus inside them—they must know who they are, what they are trying to do, where they are trying to go, why they need to get there, and how they will cooperate. It must be internalized, because they can't even hear each other for the roar.

There are three constants: change, principles, and choice. Choice enables you to adapt to the other two constants. We need a changeless core, principles at the center. The work of leadership is to ensure each person has the same commitment to common vision, purpose, and principles. Leaders give people a sense of direction. Everyone is then pointing to "true north." We don't get hung up in false dichotomies like leadership versus management, people versus things, effectiveness versus efficiency, and direction versus speed. We recognize that both have value.

Effective leaders are constantly modeling to build trust; pathfinding to create clarity and commitment; aligning structures, systems, and processes; and empowering people to translate strategy into action plans and disciplines. Leaders get people on the same page, executing around priorities, which releases talent and energy.

## Habits, Principles, Traits

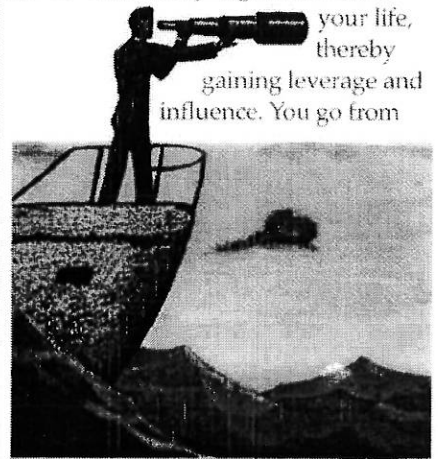
Seven governing principles and character traits underlie the *Seven Habits*:

**Habit 1: Be proactive.** Principles: responsibility and initiative. Character traits: self-awareness or self-knowledge. This enables you to choose your response (response-ability). Ineffective people transfer responsibility by blaming anything or anybody "out there." But if I blame you, I empower you. I give my power to your weakness. Then I create evidence to support my perception that you are the problem. Self-awareness enables you to know your tendencies or scripts, and to rewrite them. You are not the victim of conditions or conditioning. You can choose your response to any situation or per-

son. You can exercise your freedom of choice and make decisions based on lighthouse principles. Proactivity cultivates this freedom of choice.

**Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind.** Principles: vision, values, and purpose. Character traits: imagination and conscience. Decide what you'll do with your time, talent, and tools. Within your circle of influence, make decisions. If you have vision and purpose, you can imagine a new course of action, and pursue it. Your conscience monitors all that you imagine, envision, and engineer. Your model behavior will activate the conscience of others and allow the desired results to happen. When you exercise imagination, you rely less on memory. Memory ties you to your limits and past. Imagination points you to your potential and future.

**Habit 3: Put first things first.** Principles: priorities and integrity in execution. Character traits: volition and willpower. You can replace ineffective habits of coasting, avoiding responsibility, taking the easy way out, and exercising little initiative or willpower with the discipline to focus on the important but not necessarily urgent matters of



your life, thereby gaining leverage and influence. You go from

victim to creative resource, from futility to hope, from having can't and won't power to being focused and having can and will power and the discipline to realize your top priorities.

**Habit 4: Think win-win.** Principles: mutual respect and mutual benefit. Character trait: an abundance mentality. When your security comes from principles, you see everything through principles. When your boss or colleagues make mistakes, you're not accusatory. Why? Your security does not come from them living up to your expectations. It comes from within you.

You share recognition and power. You see an ever-enlarging pie. The assumption about limited resources is flawed. The abundance mentality produces more profit, power, and recognition for everybody. You go from a scarcity to an abundance mentality by desiring mutual benefit.

**Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood.** Principle: mutual understanding. Character traits: courage balanced with consideration. When you face problems, you tend to think, "I understand you, but you don't understand me. So let me tell you my story first." But, when you show your "home movies" or tell some chapter of your autobiography, the other person tunes out. When you truly listen, you transform the relationship. You don't need to agree or disagree, just listen with empathy and capture how they see the world. This requires restraint, respect, and reverence. And making yourself understood requires courage and consideration. You go from fight and flight to two-way communication.

**Habit 6: Synergize.** Principle: Cooperation. Character trait: creativity. Most negotiation is positional bargaining and results in compromise at best. But when you get into synergistic communication, you understand basic needs and interests and find solutions to satisfy them both. If you get the spirit of teamwork, you start to build a powerful bond, an emotional bank account, and people subordinate their immediate wants for long-term relationships. Synergy means producing solutions that are far better than what either party originally proposed. You move from defensive communication to creative alternatives.

**Habit 7: Sharpen the saw.** Principle: Constant renewal. Character traits: self-improvement, self-renewal. If you don't constantly improve and renew yourself, you'll fall into entropy, closed systems and styles, where everything breaks down. Sharpening requires continuous improvement, innovation, refinement, and renewal.

These are the principles and character traits that underlie the *Seven Habits*. So, the key to enhanced performance is having mutual vision, mission, values and focus—and then creatively cooperating to execute the solution. We then think win-win; we seek to understand

first; we create a spirit of synergy; we focus on execution; we know what we are about; we're all on the same page; we put first things first; we're proactive and responsible; we're a product of our decisions, not our conditions; and we regularly renew our focus and execution.

When we moved from the hunter/gatherer era to the agriculture era, we increased productivity 50 times. And when we next moved to the industrial era, we again increased productivity 50 times. And when we moved to the knowledge worker/information era, we again boosted productivity. Now we are now entering the era of principles. This new model has the power to boost productivity again by 50 times because it's a release model that features a common focus and execution.

We all give our lives for what we believe. Courage is not the lack of fear but an awareness that there is something more important. Be a change catalyst. Go for primary greatness: character and moral authority. You can never have enduring trust without trustworthiness. You can't talk yourself out of problems you behave yourself into.

Most people possess far more talent, capability, intelligence, resourcefulness, and creativity than their present jobs require or even allow them to use. We see a profound disempowerment of people. We feel pressure to produce more with less because of shrinking budgets and increasing demands. So, we tend to control all talent, energy and creativity. Most people spend at least 25 percent of their time and energy in dysfunctional activities—interpersonal conflict, interdepartmental rivalry, finger pointing, blaming, kissing up, political game playing, and other forms of protective and defensive communication—and the numbers go up the higher you move up in the organization.

When the five "cancers" of criticizing, complaining, comparing, competing, and contending metastasize, every person and unit reflects negative energy.

My hope in revisiting the *Seven Habits* is that you will use the seven principles and character traits associated with them to benefit many other people. EE

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**ACTION:** What change in mindset or skillset do you need to make to be effective today?

# Fast-Track Mentoring

Engage your top talent.



by Beverly Kaye

**T**HE CASE FOR mentoring is now more compelling than ever. Mentoring supports the retention, development, and engagement of high performers. It is a direct link to productivity and profitability. It can upgrade employee skills and knowledge; promote diversity of thought and style; develop leadership talent; preserve institutional memory; create inclusion; develop successors; foster collaboration; ease the transition to new assignments; and strengthen competitive advantage. Dynamic mentoring can elevate corporate dialogue from the mundane to the transformational—if managers can learn the skills, find the time, and build the relationships.

Managers and leaders need to make mentoring a positive experience, part of their on-going responsibilities. Rather than take people offsite for extended training, provide an easy, self-study process or brief program that highlights the keys and gets mentors started.

## What Mentors Do

Allowing mentors to begin with their strengths gives them confidence and comfort with the process. Here are four ways mentors can work with partners:

- **Guide.** Shows partners different paths and warns of potential pitfalls. Shares strategic views. Helps partners reflect on their attitudes, skills and patterns of behaviors and whether these help or hinder their success. Asks questions that challenge partners to think.
- **Ally.** Provides a risk-free environment in which partners can vent frustrations, share difficulties, and seek perspectives. Appraises behaviors and helps partners see how others perceive them. Talks straight: neither critic nor judge, but a candid and honest partner. Provides feedback to spur growth.
- **Catalyst.** Motivates partners' enthu-