



7 Habits Of Highly Effective People Summary

The Addicted Reader

The Seven Habits represent a holistic, integrated approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness.

The book of 1989 has been called “the most influential business book of the century” (The Wall Street Journal). It stayed on The New York Times best-seller list for five years.

According to Stephen Covey, the 7 habits are natural laws and the only thing he did with his book is to synthesize them for people.

The teachings are timeless because problems and pain are universal and increasing, and the solutions to the problems are and always will be based upon universal, timeless, self-evident principles common to every enduring, prospering society throughout history.

Before you start to think of changing things, you should start by working on yourself and this is done by working on your perceptions.

Keys concepts

The author starts by defining some concepts that he will use throughout the book, which will help you understand everything, he says.

Here are the concepts:

Character Ethic: Success is based on qualities; integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, etc....

Personality Ethic: Success is a function of personality, public image, attitudes and behaviors, skills, and techniques that smoothens the processes of human interactions.

Paradigm: A road map, model, theory, perception, assumption, or frame of reference. In other words, it is the way we see the world. (The lens through which we see the world shapes how we interpret the world).

Principals: Fairness, integrity, honesty, human dignity, service, quality or excellence, growth, patience etc...

Values: They are maps, a gang of thieves can share values, but they are in violation of the fundamental principles.

Territory: Principles, the principles are the territory.

Stephen explains that in the past people considered the character ethic as the foundation of success then personality ethic became the foundation of success.

The Character Ethic and the Personality Ethic are social paradigms.

Character Ethic taught that there are basic principles of effective living and that people can only experience true success and enduring happiness as they learn and integrate these principles into their basic character.

Personality Ethic essentially took two paths: one was human and public relations techniques and the other was positive mental attitude.

According to Stephen Covey, you need to work on your Character Ethic first, and then your Personality Ethic.

Additionally, he says “You can’t be successful in the long run if your character is fundamentally flawed, marked by duplicity and insincerity.”

What we ARE communicate far more eloquently than anything we could SAY or DO.

There are people we trust absolutely because we know their character.

Before you understand the seven habits you need to understand your own “paradigms” and how to make a “paradigm shift”.

If you have the right paradigm or the right map, then your character and personality can help you overcome challenges.

On the other hand, if you have the wrong paradigm or map, you will reach nowhere even if you work on your behavior or attitude.

Each of us has many, many maps in our head, which can be divided into two main categories: maps of the way things are, or *realities*, and the maps of the way things should be or **values**.

We interpret everything we experience through these mental maps. We seldom question their accuracy; we’re usually even unaware that we have them.

Moreover, we simply assume that the way we see things is the way they really are or the way they should be.

And our attitudes and behaviors grow out of those assumptions.

The way we see things is the source of the way we think and the way we act.

The influences in our lives, family, school, church, work environment, friends, associates, and current social paradigms such as the Personality Ethic, all have made their silent unconscious impact on us and help shape our frame of reference, our paradigms, our maps.

In addition, we all have different maps, because of the way we were grown up, as objective and clearly, we think we see things, we begin to realize that others see them differently.

They see things from their own apparently equally clear and objective point of view.

“Where we stand depends on where we sit”.

The more aware we are of our paradigms, maps, or assumptions, and the extent to which we have been influenced by our experience, the more we can take responsibility for those paradigms, examine them, test them against reality, listen to others and be open to their perceptions, we thus gain a larger picture and far a more objective view.

Also, if we want to succeed we have to work on our paradigm, work on the root from which our attitudes and behaviors flow.

We need a deeper level of thinking, a paradigm based on the **principles** that accurately describe the **territory** of the effective human being, and interacting to solve deep concerns, the new level of thinking is the 7 habits.

The Approach

The 7 habits is a principle-centered, character-based, “inside out” approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness.

“Inside-out” means to start first with self; even more fundamentally, to start with the most inside part of self—with your paradigms, your character, and your motives.

The inside-out approach says that private victories precede public victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making promises to others.

In addition, it says it is futile to put personality ahead of character, to try to improve relationships with others before improving ourselves.

Before going over the 7 habits we must define a habit.

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. And desire is the motivation, the want to do.

In order to make something a habit in our lives, we have to have all three.

However, changing a habit is sometimes a painful process.

Your change must be motivated by a higher purpose, by the willingness to subordinate what you think you want now for what you want later. But this process produces happiness, “the object and design of our existence.”

Happiness can be defined, in part at least, as the fruit of the desire and ability to sacrifice what we want now for what we want eventually.

The Seven Habits provide an incremental, sequential, highly integrated approach to the development of personal and interpersonal effectiveness.

Additionally, they move us progressively on a Maturity Continuum from dependence to independence to interdependence.

The habits are effective because they are based on principles.

According to Stephen, they are also effective because they are based on a paradigm of effectiveness that is in harmony with natural law, a principle called the “P/PC Balance,”.

Most people think about the effectiveness as the more you produce, the more you do, the more effective you are.

But it is not.

Effectiveness lies in the balance— what he calls the P/PC Balance. P stands for the production of desired results. PC stands for production capability, the ability or asset that produces the results.

Excessive focus on P results in ruined health, worn-out machines, depleted bank accounts, and broken relationships. Too much focus on PC is like a person who runs three or four hours a day, bragging about the extra ten years of life it creates, unaware he’s spending them running.

Or a person endlessly going to school, never producing, living on other people’s results—the eternal student syndrome.

The 7 Habits

- **Habit 1 – Be proactive**

Proactive means that as a human beings, we are responsible for our own lives. Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions.

Also, proactive people do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior.

It is not what happens to us, but our response to what happens to us that hurts us. Between stimulus and response, we have the freedom to choose.

The commitments we make to ourselves and to others, and our integrity to those commitments is the essence and clearest manifestation of our proactivity.

By making promises, setting goals, and being true to them, we build the strength of character.

- **Habit 2 – Begin With The End In Mind**

Habit 2 means to begin today with the image, picture, or paradigms of the end of your life.

Moreover, it means to know where you are going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.

Think about your funeral, what you would like that your family, friends, co-workers, and group association, say about you at the ceremony.

- **Habit 3 – Put First Things First**

Habit 3 is the personal fruit, the practical fulfillment of Habits 1 and 2.

It's the fulfillment, the actualization, the natural emergence of Habits 1 and 2.

Also, it's the exercise of independent will toward becoming principle-centered. It's the day-in, day-out, moment-by-moment doing it.

The one factor that seemed to transcend all the rest embodies the essence of habit 3 – putting first thing first. It also requires independent will, the power to do something when you do not want to do it, to be a function of your values rather than a function of the impulse or desire of any given moment.

It is the power to act with integrity to your proactive life visualized as stated in habit 2.

Managing your time around your priorities can be best achieved by the time management matrix.

Basically, we spend time in one of four ways or quadrants.

Quadrant 1 is both urgent and important. The activities surrounding it are crises, pressing problems, deadline-driven projects, etc...

Quadrant 2 is not urgent but important. The activities surrounding it are prevention, relationship building, recognizing new opportunities, planning, etc...

Quadrant 3 is urgent but not important. The activities surrounding it are interruptions, some mail, some reports, some meetings, etc...

Quadrant 4 is not urgent and not important. The activities surrounding it are some mail, some phone calls, time wasters, etc...

Effective personal management lies in Quadrant 2 activities.

- **Habit 4 – Think Win/Win**

The habit of effective interpersonal leadership is Think Win/Win.

Win/Win is not a technique; it's a total philosophy of human interaction.

Furthermore, with a Win/Win solution, all parties feel good about the decision and feel committed to the action plan.

It's seeing life as a cooperative, not a competitive arena. Most people tend to think in terms of dichotomies; strong or weak, hardball or softball, win or lose.

Win/Win is based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody, that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others.

It's not your way or my way; it's a better way, a higher way.

A higher expression of Win/Win is Win/Win or No Deal.

No deal basically means that if we can't find a solution that would benefit us both. We agree to disagree agreeably.

No expectations have been created, no performance contracts established.

When you have No Deal as an option in your mind, you feel liberated because you have no need to manipulate people, to push your own agenda, to drive for what you want.

- **Habit 5 – Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood**

This principle is the key to effective interpersonal communication.

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand: they listen with the intent to reply.

You have to perform empathic listening. Listen with the intent to really understand the person you are facing.

Empathic (from empathy) 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.

- **Habit 6 – Synergize**

Synergize means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

One plus one equals three or more.

It means that the relationship which the parts have to each other is a part in and of itself.

It catalyzes, unifies, and unleashes the greatest powers within people.

All the habits we covered prepare us to create the miracle of synergy.

The essence of synergy is to value differences – to respect them, to build on strengths, to compensate for weaknesses.

- **Habit 7 – Sharpen The Saw**

Here the principle of P/PC balance will be covered. More precisely the PC.

Habit 7 is about preserving and enhancing the greatest asset, you have – You –

It's renewing the four dimensions of your nature physical, spiritual, mental, and social/emotional.

You will live a healthy life if you balance your time on those 4 dimensions., regularly and consistently.

We are the instruments of our own performance, and to be effective, we need to recognize the importance of taking time regularly to sharpen the saw in all four ways.

Final Note

The more proactive you are (Habit 1), the more effectively you can exercise personal leadership (Habit 2) and management (Habit 3) in your life.

The more effectively you manage your life (Habit 3), the more Quadrant II renewing activities you can do (Habit 7).

Putting extra effort to seek first to understand (Habit 5), will lead you to opt for more synergetic Win/Win solutions (Habits 4 and 6).

The additional effort put on improving any of the habits that lead to independence (Habits 1, 2, and 3), the more effective you will be in interdependent situations (Habits 4, 5, and 6).

And renewal (Habit 7) is the process of renewing all the habits.