

SKILL BOOSTER 9: SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE



REIGNITE DEVELOPMENT
Reflect, Refocus, Results

Introduction

The habits we cultivate consistently shape the way we tend to act. Some habits are beneficial, some are not!

Successful people tend to demonstrate particular habits and act in very similar ways to one another (by success we are not simply talking about salary and status but factors such as self-worth, helping others in society and personal achievements).

Stephen Covey, highly acclaimed personal development expert and author of the best seller '7 habits of Highly Effective People' defines these beliefs and behaviours as 7 habits:

- 1. Be proactive.*
- 2. Think win-win.*
- 3. Always start with the end in mind*
- 4. Seek first to understand before being understood.*
- 5. Work interdependently not just independently.*
- 6. Sharpen the saw.*
- 7. Manage your time effectively.*

1. Be proactive.

It is a key requirement of self-motivation that we are prepared to take responsibility. This can manifest itself in a variety of ways.

These can include:

- Looking for new ideas without waiting to be told the answers.
- Creating and carrying out your own personal development plan.
- Offering constructive help to others.
- Offering your own ideas for improvement instead of simply criticising.
- Practising self-analysis: being able to look at yourself first before looking at others.
- Accepting the consequences of your own actions.
- Not blaming others if you don't succeed.
- Doing all you can to make a difference.

Remember that *you* choose *your* attitude; *you* choose *your* response to every challenge - it's your call.

2. Think win-win.

Achieving success at the expense of others is the thinking of people who operate in the short term. For successful relationships to develop the highly effective person would operate at a much higher level, considering the impact of their behaviour measured against the goals and values of many stakeholders. For example, achieving a sale may allow you to achieve your targets but what happens if, to do this, the customer was told incorrect or incomplete information leading to the loss of that customer? Ultimately someone must pay the price. If not you, then the customer, a team member, or the organisation.

3. Always start with the end in mind.

Ernest Hemingway, the famous American author, once said 'Never confuse movement with action.' It is very easy to generate lots of 'movement' in our lives, but do we always know where it is leading? Only movement with a purpose can really be described as 'action'.

Planning your approach before starting out on a task will save problems and time later. Also, keeping a mental image of the purpose of the task will shape how we act in the 'here and now'.

4. Seek first to understand before being understood.

This habit is an essential part of win-win. We need self-control to communicate effectively. We must suppress our own desire to speak or act too soon. Effective communicators don't just listen to respond. First, they listen to understand. In doing so they are prepared to demonstrate how highly they value the person they wish to communicate with by showing true respect for their contribution. This is a great way to build a relationship and get people on your side.

5. Work interdependently not just independently.

Frank Sinatra famously sang 'My Way'. The song is a celebration of being independent along life's journey. The lyrics describe a man who is proud that he lived life according to his values and took responsibility for his actions whatever the outcome. Who can argue with that?

However, Frank would not have been a successful artist without the work of musicians supporting his work, the marketing team that groomed his public image, the lyricists who wrote the words that have impacted generations and countless others behind the scenes.

Synergy is a single word that we can use to describe teamwork and community. It is people working together to achieve more than they could as individuals, working on their own. Highly successful people recognise the power of the team and those who have acted as their champions along the way.

6. Sharpen the saw.

Imagine that you are a busy woodcutter. You have a pile of logs to cut, and each day more arrive from the lumberjacks busy in the forest. No matter how hard you work the pile never seems to get any smaller. One day your assistant says, "It's ages now since you stopped to sharpen the saw. Why not send it away to get done?" You can't believe how thoughtless he can be. "Don't be stupid", you say, "How can you think of such a thing when more and more logs are arriving? You know that's a job we do when we are quiet. Now hold that log still and let me get on!"

You work on and on. The job seems to be getting harder not easier. Every saw stroke is an effort.

Being proactive extends to taking care of YOU. One way of doing this is by taking responsibility for developing your capabilities by seeking opportunities for learning. You need to take time-out to sharpen your own saw! Otherwise, you will be ineffective.

7. Manage your time effectively.

Not everyone has direct control over the work and tasks they do in the workplace, but they do at home. How do your dreams and ambitions become a reality? Do you feel that you are on a treadmill or are you purposed in your actions? Effective people are simply those who have learned the principles of time planning and control. They appear to be highly productive because they have created goals and have established resources for getting there.

This Skill Booster provides a quick overview of the 7 Habits, feel free to invest in yourself with a copy of his book or download electronically!