

Here are the habits of highly effective people

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Do you wish to achieve more at work and be more effective in life? However, whatever you want to achieve you need to change yourself first. This is achievable only by developing better habits. This is because, who we are is defined by our habits. Things like our routines define our characters and they pull our behaviour in a certain direction. But, what are the habits that can help you become effective? Stephen Covey published his mega-hit book "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" in 1989 which outlines an incremental and integrated program that will help individuals improve their personal and professional effectiveness.

There are seven habits of highly effective people which were outlined in Steve Covey's book which are:

1. Being proactive
2. Beginning with an end in mind
3. Putting first things first
4. Thinking win-win
5. Seeking first to understand, then to be understood
6. Synergising
7. Sharpening the saw

Being proactive

Proactive people are able to take control of their own fate. These people have the ability to proactively influence the world. Yet while we all have this potential for proactivity, many people often tend to be reactive and allow their actions and emotions to be determined by external circumstances. For instance, if it's rainy outside or if other people have treated them badly, they might be in a crummy mood. When these people talk, you can also hear phrases like "It wasn't my fault" or "It's out of my control" are extremely popular. At the other hand, people who're optimistic make their own environment. They are taking responsibility for their own lives and making deliberate decisions about their actions. They're saying stuff like "I decided..." or "Let's try to find a solution to this problem."

Proactive people focus on their Circles of Power, opting to rely on the issues they influence. And this results in their Circles of Power growing. Proactivity can be a highly strong habit. In the most serious situations it works also. Remember Viktor Frankl, who had been incarcerated in several German concentration camps during World War II. In the midst of this suffering, he determined that he was still free to choose how he reacted to his circumstances while his guards dominated all about his life. He could see himself in the future, despite suffering badly, teaching his students what he had learned in the forest. His liberty resided in the tiny distance between the stimulus he encountered from outside and his reaction to it. No one could take away this last liberty and he nurtured it until it motivated everyone around him, including some of the guards, like a tiny spark that blazes into a raging fire.

You too have the power to determine what's going on in the distance between a stimulus and your response. And you can change your actions and your feelings. To put this into effect, commit to a task of 30 days of proactivity: Whether at home or at work, note that the root cause is your response to the problem if you find yourself blaming someone or something specific for a problem you are facing. Concentrate on finding solutions, rather than criticizing others. Before you answer, exercise the tiny freedom you have and you will find your potential for proactivity thriving.

Begin with the end in mind

If you do an action, you actually do it twice: first in your head, when you visualize it, and then, when you do it physically. For starters, if you build a house, you must first imagine what kind of house you want, make plans for the layout, the rooms and the garden, all before a single brick is laid. If you didn't take the time to do this, the very design will probably be very messy and expensive. There will certainly be expensive missteps without a strategy to execute, including failing to leave space for stairs leading from the ground floor to the second floor. That's why getting the desired end firmly in your mind is crucial before you start any mission. The more accurate and practical the action's mental image is, the better will be its execution – and therefore the better will be the outcomes.

In all possible cases this sort of visual anticipation works. For example, most successful sprinters are well-practiced to imagine how they can bolt from the starting block, complete a perfect race and finish first. Sadly, many people are wasting their time working for objectives that don't really apply to them, since they never stopped to better identify them. In short, they fail to grasp the difference between performance and effectiveness. So how can you clarify your destination in life? One helpful approach is to ask yourself the above-mentioned funeral questions and then use your answers as a basis to compose a personal statement of mission. This is a document in which you describe your own faith, meaning what kind of person you want to be, what you want to accomplish in your life, as well as the basic values and principles that underlie those goals.

You can't just hammer it out in one night, because this is a foundational document of your life. Before you have it right, it will take deep introspection and many rewritings, and even then it should be looked at periodically.

Put first things first

Now that you have a goal, how do you take the responsibility proactively and make it a reality? Simple: Live it, day after day. Of course, this can be difficult in the midst of the daily hassles, responsibilities and relationships and it needs strong time-management skills. Sadly, most methods of time management are based on that performance, not on improving quality. But the good news is that complicated techniques are not really needed. Much of the time the basic maxim: "first things first" is good enough to recall. This ensures that everything you do is rigorously prioritized so that the essential issues are always taken care of first, while everything else is set aside and only dealt with or delegated later. Okay, but how can you say what matters?

A good place to start is by categorizing all your tasks according to two dimensions: urgency and

importance. This gives you a 2x2 matrix with four quadrants:

- In quadrant one are tasks that are important and urgent, like crises that need to be dealt with right away.
- In quadrant two are tasks that are important but not urgent, like, say, writing your mission statement, building important relationships and planning for the future.
- In quadrant three are tasks that are urgent but not important, like, say, a phone ringing while you're working on something else.
- And in quadrant four are tasks that are neither important nor urgent – a pure waste of time, in other words.

Of such, number two is the most relevant quadrant to reflect on. There are those acts that will have a profoundly positive effect on your life. And in quadrant two you can find far fewer problems occurring in quadrant one when you're functioning enough.

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