

## The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People by Stephen Covey (book notes)

“I believe that a life of integrity is the most fundamental source of personal worth. I do not agree with the popular success literature that says that self-esteem is primarily a matter of mindset, of attitude—that you can psych yourself into peace of mind. Peace of mind comes when your life is in harmony with true principles and values and in no other way.”

~ Stephen R. Covey from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

In the Good Life, we call peace of mind that comes from having your life in harmony... being one true person.

There's a reason *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was named the #1 Most Influential Business Book of the Twentieth Century and over 15 million copies have been sold: It's a powerful book.

If you haven't read this book yet, I think you'll really like it. If it's been a while since you've read it, it may be time for a re-read! In this Book Note, we're going to take a quick look at each of the 7 Habits and help you make a “paradigm” shift into living your best life and pursuing your personal greatness.

Let's start by recognizing the fact that, as Covey advises: “Private Victory precedes Public Victory. Algebra comes before calculus.” PRIVATE victory comes BEFORE public victory. Simply: If we want all the joys of outward success, first we must master ourselves. Let's not start by **chasing** outward success. Let the public

acclaim flow OUT OF our own self-mastery. And may this *Book Note* be a part of the next step in your self-mastery!

## THE BIG IDEAS

1. Habit #1: Be Proactive

You are not Pavlov's dog.

2. Habit #2: Begin with the End in Mind

Blueprints & funerals.

3. Habit #3: Put First Things First!

Quadrant II, saying no, planting priorities, schedule keys, roles & goals.

4. Habit #4: Think Win/Win

Are you thinking win/win?

5. Habit #5: Seek First to Understand

Well, are you?

6. Habit #6: Synergy

$1 + 1 = 3+$ .

7. Habit #7: Sharpen The Saw

Renew! Meditate, journal, exercise, love.

8. Missions

What's yours?

## HABIT #1: BE PROACTIVE

“Look at the word responsibility—'response-ability'—the ability to choose your response. Highly proactive people recognize that responsibility. They do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a

product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feeling.”

**Be Proactive.** That’s Habit #1. So what’s it mean to “be proactive”? In short, to be proactive simply means to be “response-able”—to be capable of consciously choosing how you respond to any given situation.

Are you a Pavlovian dog—mindlessly responding to a given stimulus in your life? Not so good. Can you step BETWEEN the normal stimulus—> response patterns of your life and CHOOSE a new response to a given stimulus? Good, now we’re talking!

So... How can *you* be more proactive and less reactive today?

Let’s be proactive. Let’s be response-able to the challenges we face in our lives.

Being **proactive as an agent** is as simple as visiting open houses and previewing listings either in person or via the MLS to “get to know” the market. Do this enough times and you’ll be an expert in no time.

## **Commitments**

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

Do you honor your commitments? Are you making commitments you don’t want to make or have no intention of following through on? Pay attention to what you’re committing to and to whom you’re making those commitments.

As Covey says, your integrity to the commitments you make is one of, and perhaps THE, most important factors in living your greatest life and achieving a consistent level of joy and happiness.

Although you may not be aware of it consciously, if you have a bunch of (or a string of hundreds of) broken commitments over the last day/week/month/year/decade, you're energetically drowning in the weight of that lack of integrity.

You *know* when you're not doing the stuff you say you're going to do—whether it was getting up at a certain time this morning, working out or following a certain routine, whatever. To the extent you're not honoring those commitments, you are, to state it bluntly, not going to get very far in your life. Simple as that.

Good news is that the solution is simple as well: Start honoring your commitments. Most importantly the commitments you make to **YOURSELF**.

Recommendation: Make an inventory of the commitments you have outstanding right now and get on completing those! As a real estate agent, the biggest obstacle to success will always be YOU. Too often agents are in ***motion*** but lack or are incapable of ***action***.

*"If not now, when?" ~ Hillel*

*"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."*

-Oliver Wendell Holmes

## HABIT #2: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

“Begin with the end in mind” is based on the principle that all things are created twice. There’s a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation to all things.”

*“Begin with the end in mind.”* It’s Habit #2.

The idea is very simple: All great things (well, technically, all things good or bad) are created twice: First in the mind and then in reality. FIRST, we must get clear on what we want. Then we create it in reality.

Have a client thinking of building a house? What’s the first step? You discuss with your client what they want to have in a house (style, size, square footage, etc), right? You don’t just drag the buyer into a builder meeting and yell, “Build them a house!” We need the client to envision what the house will look and feel like when it’s done and then we help them explain that to the builder.

And yet, in our personal lives and in our real estate sales businesses, we rarely begin with the end in mind. Whether it’s a short term goal or a long term Mission. We need to know where we’re going so we know when we get there!

It's stunning to me how little time we spend getting really clear on what we want—whether it's with a specific lead generation campaign for our business or WHY we really got into the business in the first place. Ironically, we're typically MUCH better at planning a family vacation than planning the construction of a lovable business that provides us with a life that feels like we're always on vacation.

It's rather simple: Get clear on your highest “end” goals (your Missions) and line up every thing you do today (and tomorrow and ...) to be in alignment with these ideals. If you tell me you want to be recognized as a kind, generous, loving person who always had time for his/her family, then guess what? BE a kind, generous, loving person who always has time for his/her family NOW.

Let's begin with the end in mind and live with integrity to our ideals as we transform our lives towards personal greatness.

## **Funerals**

Imagine going to the funeral of a loved one. You're getting out of your car, walking into the chapel or funeral parlor. You see the flowers and the other people entering. You feel the sadness of loss and the joy of having known. Feel into that.

You walk to the front and look into the casket and suddenly come face to face with yourself. You realize this is your funeral. Feel that. You sit down and look at the program in your hand—reading the description of your life and seeing the people who will be talking about you. What do they say? How does the program capture your life? What do your closest loved ones say about you? Your spouse or children? Your friends and colleagues?

...Now, fast-forward several years from today. Imagine that scene of your own funeral. You have that program in your hand. What does it say? You watch your loved ones get up and speak about you and their love for you. What do they say? Who were you in their eyes?

Take some time today/this week (right now?!?) to sit down and really reflect on this. It's a *\*really\** powerful way to gain clarity on your highest values.

Remember, we're doing EVERYTHING possible to avoid the deathbed dilemma: "in walks the person you could've been... the person you should've been!"

**Carpe Diem:** seize this day and every day (from now on)!

## HABIT #3: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

“Put First Things First.”

The Big Idea? In Goethe’s words, *“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least.”*

So, how do you spend your days? Do you waste your time and energy doing stuff that simply isn’t that important? (Uh, yes... I know I do from time to time.)

Recommendation: Do “first things first.” Identify the truly important things in your life, business, and in your day - and in the moment. Do them.

And start focusing on:

Quadrant II

“Effective people stay out of Quadrants III and IV because, urgent or not, they aren’t important. They also shrink Quadrant I down to size by spending more time in Quadrant II... Quadrant II is the heart of effective personal management.”

Covey has a 4-quadrant model for time management.

|                      | <b>Urgent</b>  | <b>Not Urgent</b>   |
|----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Important</b>     | <b>Quadrant I</b><br><i>Time spent in:</i> fire drills, crises, deadlines<br><i>Results:</i> stress, burnout   | <b>Quadrant II</b><br><i>Time spent in:</i> growth, exercise, relationships<br><i>Results:</i> happiness :) |
| <b>Not Important</b> | <b>Quadrant III</b><br><i>Time spent in:</i> pressing stuff, interruptions<br><i>Results:</i> short-term focus | <b>Quadrant IV:</b><br><i>Time spent in:</i> time wasters<br><i>Results:</i> you're fired!                  |

Notice the two factors that define an activity in this model: Is it urgent? And, Is it important?

Pretty straight-forward. Urgent means it's demanding our attention (NOW!) Important means it's worth doing. Take a very close look at Quadrant II: the Important but Not Urgent stuff. We want to play there.

Unfortunately, most of us don't spend anywhere near enough time there—we're dancing in and out of the other three quadrants: distracting ourselves (IV), allowing interruptions to pester us throughout the day (III), or putting out one fire-drill-crisis after another (I).

We're in a business that can swallow us whole if we allow. Stay with the big picture, begin with the end in mind, and put first things first.

**“No.”**

“You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—pleasantly, smilingly, unapologetically, to say “no” to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger “yes” burning inside. The enemy of the “best” is often the “good.””

“No.” Please pronounce that for me. (We’re going to do a little practicing.)

Say it out loud. “No.”

Pleasantly. Smilingly. Non-apologetically. “No.” Practice again. “No.” Different tone. Bigger smile. More confidence. “No.”

“Will you cut your commission?” - HELL NO!!!

Good. Now, please use that “No” the next time you’re asked to do something that compromises your path to personal greatness. (Please say, “Yes!!” to that request.)

## Planting Priorities

Question from Dr. Covey: “If you were to fault yourself in one of three areas, which would it be: (1) the inability to prioritize; (2) the inability or desire to organize around those priorities; or (3) the lack of discipline to execute around them? ... Most people say their main fault is a lack of discipline. On deeper thought, I believe that is not the case. The basic problem is that their priorities have not become deeply planted in their hearts and minds. They haven’t really internalized Habit 2 [Begin with the end in mind].”

I’ll disagree here with the author. When it comes to real estate agents and nearly all people in general... the lack of discipline to execute is 100% the reason for either failure or close to just as bad... mediocrity.

You’ll hear me say this 1000 times: The difference between mediocre and meteoric is **IMPLEMENTATION** (execution in doing one thing until done).

Do you *really* know who you are and what you’re here to do? Begin with the end in mind. Get your priorities CRYSTAL clear. The rest will follow.

**P.S.** Read email #8 inside the Inner Circle private member site, listen to the accompanying podcast episode, and read the B-Notes for How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci (and try out the 100 questions exercise).

## **Efficiency & Effectiveness**

“While you can think in terms of efficiency in dealing with time, a principle-centered person thinks in terms of effectiveness in dealing with people.”

How do you treat people? Are you looking to be “efficient” with them? Um. Time for a new intention.

As per Covey, leave efficiencies for dealing with time. Interacting with people? Think about how you can be effective. There are times, as he advises, “when principle-centered Quadrant II living requires the subordination of schedules to people.”

The #1 skillset to develop as a real estate agent (bar none) is the ability to build genuine rapport with people.

## **Roles & Goals**

Covey provides a useful tool to help us imagine and create our ideals. He likes to say that we all have “Roles” that we play and that, to be effective, we need to create “Goals” for all those roles.

Roles and Goals. Hey that rhymes!

So, what Roles do you have? Perhaps Husband or Wife? Mother or Father?  
Friend? Agent, broker, team leader?

Identify these Roles. Then create your Goals for each.

*“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time; for that’s the stuff life is made of.”*  
~Benjamin Franklin

*“Effective people are not problem-minded; they’re opportunity-minded.”* ~Stephen R.  
Covey

“You’re either getting results or making excuses!” - Bart Vickrey

## HABIT #4: THINK WIN/WIN

Win/Win. Good for the goose and the gander.

We've all heard of it. The idea is simple (as all good ideas are): entering a relationship with someone? Think win/win. Think how you AND your prospective partner can BOTH win.

Very simple. But do you LIVE it?

Same is true for real estate. You don't have to ruin a relationship with another agent because of the ego based bully inside of you trying to "right" or "win" the negotiation. Do the best possible job for your client and respect the other side.

Do you approach relationships (business or personal) with a true desire to see the other person "win"? Or, are you focused on win/lose relationships where you're more concerned about "winning"/being right/getting the better end of the deal. (OR, are you in LOSE/win situations where you're showing up weakly and losing while the other wins?!)

Let's think about how we can truly create win/win energy in our lives.

What's one relationship you need to spend more time thinking win/win about?  
And, what are you going to do about it? Today?

*“We have committed the golden rule to memory; let us now commit it to life.” ~ Edwin Markham*

## **HABIT #5: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND**

*“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”*

It’s amazing how easy it is to spend all our time trying to make sure WE are understood—forgetting to slow down and see the other person’s perspective, eh?

What can you do today to try to see the other person’s perspective before working so hard to make sure they get yours?!?

*“When getting ready to reason with a man, I spend one-third of my time thinking about myself and what I am going to say and two-thirds thinking about him and what he is going to say.” ~ Abraham Lincoln*

## HABIT #6: SYNERGY

“Synergy is everywhere in nature. If you plant two plants close together, the roots commingle and improve the quality of the soil so that both plants will grow better than if they were separated. If you put two pieces of wood together, they will hold much more than the total weight held by each separately. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. One plus one equals three or more.”

Synergy.  $1 + 1 = 3+$ .

What a beautiful concept. The word finds its roots in the Greek *sunergos* “working together.”

And, as Covey points out, when we work together, one plus one equals more than two. That’s amazing. I know I feel it in my personal and business relationships. And have such a deep sense of gratitude for the power of our “working together.”

What synergistic relationship can you be more grateful for today?

## HABIT #7: SHARPEN THE SAW

Covey tells a brilliant story of a man in the forest sawing down a tree with a blunt saw. He saws and saws (and saws and saws). Working feverishly but not getting far. A passerby suggests he take a break and sharpen his saw and gets the reply, “*But I don’t have time for that.*”

Hmmmm... I've seen this throughout my career as a real estate agent, team leader, and broker. Agents seem to have the toughest time seeing the forest through the trees. And then banging their head against the wall attempting to chop down said trees with a dull axe!

That sound like you? Definitely sounds like me on occasion!

Covey's 7th Habit is very straightforward: Take the time to renew. Sharpen your saw.

Sharpen, sharpen, sharpen!

## MISSIONS

That was a (very) quick look at *The 7 Habits*. If you haven't read it yet and you're feelin' it, read the pdf copy of the entire book inside the Library of the private Inner Circle membership site.. We've only touched on a tiny amount of the wisdom Covey's packed in there. If you have read it, consider going back through it or diving into more of Covey's work. (The *8th Habit* is fantastic as well.)

Let's wrap up with the important question: What are YOU here to do? What's your specific vocation or **Mission** in life? We all have one. What's yours?

Clear? Write it down! Live it!

Stuck? Write down the question: “*What is my specific mission in life?*” Then simply write down “*My specific mission in life is to ...*” and let it flow. Don’t censor yourself or need it to be “right.” Just write.

You can also ask this even easier question, “What is my current **Mission** in life?” Put that in your Good Life pipe and smoke it up!

The process of discovering who we are and what our greatest gifts are AND how we give those to the world is, at least in my experience, an arduous one. We don’t just snap our fingers and say, “Aha! That’s it!” At least I didn’t...

I’ve had many amazing ideas/breakthroughs/distinctions, but they come in the midst of (pretty much constantly) living in the question of what my mission in life is. AND having the courage to start taking the baby (and/or BIG) steps I feel intuitively called to make as I strive to live in deeper alignment to my highest calling and personal greatness.