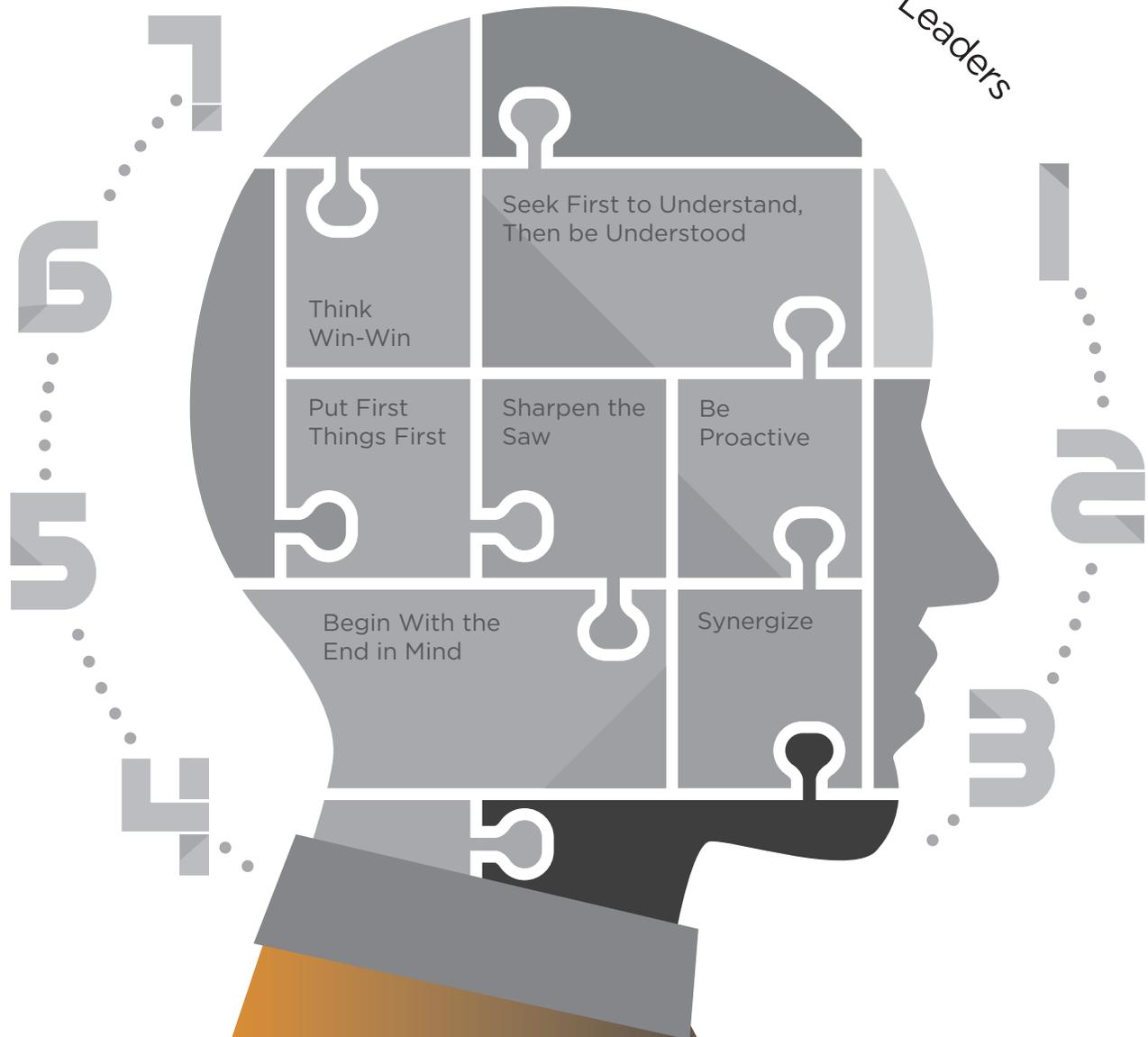




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THE ULTIMATE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Sales Leaders



The Complete Series
Articles Spanning Habits 1-7

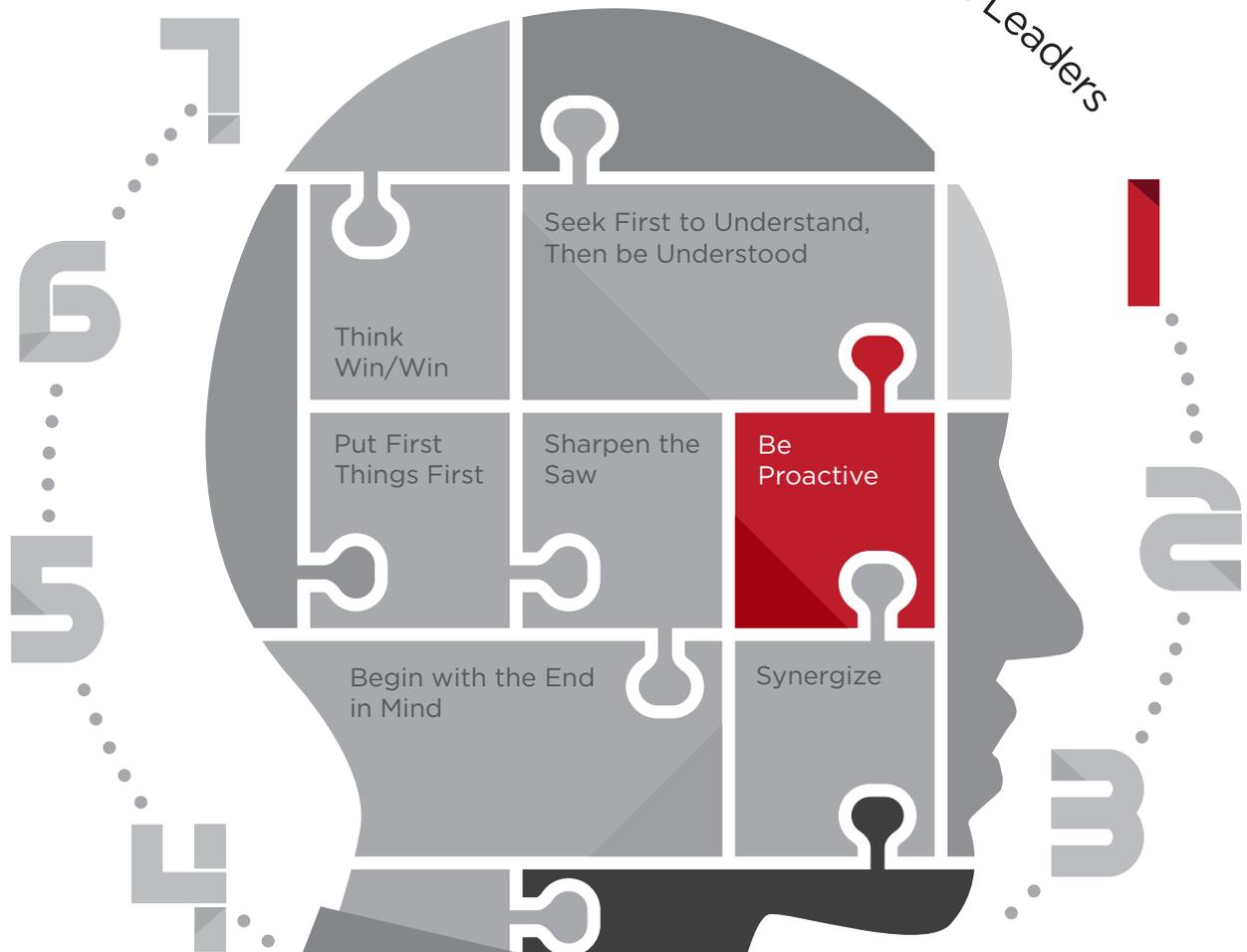
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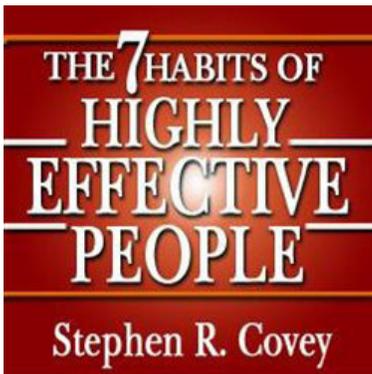
THE ULTIMATE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Sales Leaders



Habit 1 — Be Proactive

By David Marcum
FranklinCovey Sales Performance Practice



This is the first point of view in a series of articles on the current issues facing sales leaders, based on the principles of Dr. Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* — the groundbreaking bestseller on personal and organizational change.

Proactivity is the root of all growth, improvement and success for individuals and organizations. That's a huge statement, but I have no hesitation in making that claim. In the past 20 years, I've seen proactivity deliver on it every time. For a sales leader, this concept is the most powerful tool in your leadership arsenal, if you use it.

By proactivity, I mean much more than "taking initiative." Proactivity is the ability to act rather than to be acted upon; it is the awareness that you are the creator of your life, and what you accomplish (or don't) is your responsibility and yours alone. "I know of no more encouraging fact," said Henry David Thoreau, "than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor." I love how true and liberating that thought is!

The foundation for proactivity stems from a very powerful model called the Stimulus Response model. The basic idea is we are conditioned to respond in a particular way to a particular stimulus. If someone mistreats you, then you may respond the way you learned when you were young—and so it has become the way you've always responded. Or, you can choose *any other response*. The key is to realize there is a space between any stimulus and your response. And in that small space—and sometimes it's very small—rests our ability to choose and is the source of our ultimate power as human beings.

Therefore, we can make or break our habits. We can rise above our moods. We are not even our thoughts. We can choose to think and be different. As humans we have the power to control our feelings and impulses and subordinate them to a higher purpose. Proactivity is personal leadership and mastery at its best; it is the ability to identify what goals are most important, complemented by an unbending commitment to reach those goals.

A proactive culture then is one where each contributor takes responsibility for their choices and how they respond to circumstances, even though many are beyond their control. They

don't merely react to the social or emotional "weather" around them. They are "grounded" because they carry their own weather. They don't point fingers to shift blame to someone or something else. They regularly assess their own performance and take responsibility for corrective action where needed or apply creativity if necessary. But this doesn't just happen. As a sales leader you must lead it into existence because if you don't build proactivity on purpose, you're automatically saying "Yes" to reactivity.

Sadly, it's far too common that sales organizations have fallen into a habit of reacting to the mass of pressures constantly pushing on them, both from internal stakeholders as well as customers. Reactive sales organizations rely heavily on the "carrot-and-stick" approach that has become the norm to "motivate" salespeople, but it's more likely to squelch proactivity rather than encourage it. Of course that isn't the intention behind it, but that's what occurs.

Seeing this happen time and time again, I've become more passionate about helping sales leaders see how proactivity can fundamentally transform their day-to-day experience, as well as the long-term success of their teams. Of course, being proactive isn't a new concept—it's the #1 Habit introduced 25 years ago by Dr. Stephen R. Covey in his groundbreaking bestseller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. It just doesn't get very much time or attention in today's sales environment.

As a sales leader, when you choose to consistently build proactivity as a competitive capability within your organization, sales will increase year over year. Burnout will drop. Your people will become more energized and creative. The best part is your own satisfaction as a sales leader goes straight up, along with the satisfaction of your teams and—most importantly—your customers.

I invite you to flex your own proactive leadership muscles and do something about it now. Here are five ways you can build proactivity.

#1 Stop Being So Responsible

As sales leaders, we tend to be afraid that if we don't use pressure, then results will drop because people won't work hard to hit numbers. So it's common to manage results by constantly monitoring daily activity reports, inspecting deals, assessing forecasts, checking up, pouring over pipeline reports, controlling, deciding, directing, and holding people accountable.

Let's assume for a minute that it's true: no pressure = no results. That means the responsibility for all the numbers is on you. Otherwise, nothing happens if you don't make it happen. If that's true, then you have the biggest and most difficult job of all. Indeed, when you use pressure as your primary mode of motivation, you keep all the responsibility for results squarely on your shoulders. It's exhausting.

But when you stop to consider intrinsic motivation as the primary factor of human achievement, it's clear there has to be another way. The good news is, there is.

It's hard to believe sales leaders haven't more aggressively pursued proactivity, which is validated by the findings in Daniel Pink's book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. As Pink reports, behavioral researchers found that carrot-and-stick incentives do work when there's a step-by-step process to follow that always results in the same outcome. But that's not the case with sales. Sales is a profession where there is no set formula for success—instead, there are a variety of factors that constantly shift and choosing the best course of action requires judgment. That's not an inconsequential difference. It makes all the difference!

For years, most sales organizations have operated on the premise that giving an extra percent or two in commission, or a bonus here, or President's Club there, is somehow going to motivate people to work harder. Yet salespeople often don't need another big-screen TV, and they don't want another trip—but there is something they *do* want. They do want to make a contribution. They do want to make a difference. And they do want autonomy, driven by a belief they can reach a level of mastery, and that there's purpose in what they're doing. The drive towards self-actualization—and this is backed up by mounds of research—is more motivating than financial incentives.

Consider your own experience and see if top salespeople validate this point. They're the ones who go outside the norms and the rules, and they don't just coast as soon as they hit their number. They crush their numbers because they're driven by autonomy, purpose and mastery. With this in mind, how can you move your organization away from a being driven by outside pressure, quotas, measurement and numbers, even while acknowledging that those are still very important? Stop taking responsibility away from your people so you can shoulder the load. Give them the responsibility. They want it.

#2 Circle of Influence vs. Circle of Concern

A very powerful way to boost proactivity is to think in terms of the Circle of Influence versus the Circle of Concern and determine where your team is focused. As defined in *The 7 Habits*, your Circle of Influence encompasses factors you can directly control, do or change, while your Circle of Concern includes all the things outside your direct control, e.g. the weather, the economy or a customer's actions (or inactions).



Many sales organizations don't achieve what's possible because too much focus, conversation and effort is targeted at things beyond their control. To make matters worse, they are mired in reactive habits and don't realize it. As a sales leader, help your teams by asking them to identify factors in their Circle of Concern that slow them down and require time and attention. Take them off their plate as those factors often fall into your Circle of Influence. Tell them you will handle those issues and get them focused on the things they do control.

Taking into account the Circle of Concern vs. the Circle of Influence can make a powerful difference in your ability to coach and guide the people on your team to be more proactive. Working together to understand issues and determine what types of resources or actions are needed in a given circumstance—and which ones are within your power to control or influence or not—can help in identifying where you and your team are going to spend your time moving forward. A coaching sequence that begins with questions like, “How can I help? What do you need from me? What do you not need from me?” invites the salesperson's engagement and better results. Similarly, asking “Would you be open to some suggestions from me?” makes a recipient much more open to the suggestions you can make.

#3 Better Under Pressure? I Doubt It

Do you use pressure as a tool to “motivate” salespeople? If you think they'll perform better when they're under pressure, think again.

When you look at a typical Olympic athlete minutes before the start of an event, it's not hard to imagine they are (or could be) under extreme pressure. If the pressure gets to them—if they let it affect them at the moment it's time to perform—then they won't perform at their best.

A clear sign they're making good use of pressure is when they give up time with friends (and often family) to hone technique. They practice 12 hours a day, six days a week, for four years in anticipation of the Olympic event. The vision they have of success, the desire to perform, and the pressure to outperform is what triggers their discipline and hard work *before* it's time to perform. And after all the sweat, tears and effort are behind them, they know they will still fail if they let the pressure of the moment get to them.

Similarly, high-performers “freak out” about how they're going to close a deal in order to hit their numbers long before the “finals” meeting happens. They make different choices than other average performers—they do research to gain insight, talk with lots of people at the customer, they have more strategic conversations vs. product or point-solution discussions, they pretest solution elements beforehand, they practice handling tough questions and rehearse with the delivery team—all before the final meeting.

In addition, wise sales leaders can help remove pressure in salespeople before important meetings. How? Encourage them to listen more than they talk. Help them feel at ease before the meeting. That way, as soon as they start talking with the customer, there's no pressure around the numbers during the discussion. Their only focus in the meeting is to help the customer succeed at that which the customer cares about the most. The goal isn't to sell a product; it's not to make a pitch or to “close the deal,” but to make a contribution to the customer and their business.

As a sales leader you can be an ally that lifts people to their best performance, or you can be the factor that shuts them down in a New York minute. Which one are you? The answer to that question has to do with pressure and how—and most importantly *when*—you use it. Even though it's counter-intuitive, that's how you handle pressure at a world-class level.

#4 Practice Doesn't Make Perfect—Perfect Practice Makes Perfect

It all goes back to the stimulus response model and the principle of proactivity, which says that regardless of where you find yourself, you can choose your response and you can elevate your performance by choice.

For example, let's say there's a salesperson who is intimidated and "shuts down" whenever a certain "title" joins a meeting. What's on the line is an important opportunity—and when that person feels the pressure, he or she goes silent. Sometimes they over-react and oversell. Or they may agree to do more for the customer than they should for the price, and margins evaporate.

However, simply because that's how someone has always responded doesn't mean that's how they have to respond in the future. As a leader you can help them examine their reactions and start choosing different responses. And you can practice those responses with them so that when that situation comes up in a customer meeting, it's not the first time the salesperson has said the words they need to say. They've practiced them, perfectly. That's how proactivity can put a sales organization on a different trajectory.

#5 It All Flows Downhill, But It Doesn't Have to

I met someone at a workshop recently who had just become the leader of her sales team two months earlier. She asked if we could have lunch to discuss a situation she needed help with, explaining: "We're not going to make our number this quarter, and we missed last quarter. A senior executive noticed an opportunity that's been sitting in the pipeline

for a long time, and it's potentially worth quite a bit of revenue. So he called my boss and said he wants to see this deal closed. My boss called me yesterday and told me I have to close this opportunity by the end of the month. That's it, there was no discussion. But what's happening on the ground is the whole team on this account was reassigned two months ago because they failed to perform. We have no relationships with anyone on the customer side and I'm supposed to close this by the end of the month. Can you help me?"

If you were in her shoes, how would you respond to this demand, especially from your boss? You could pass the pressure right on down to the team and give them a pep talk to motivate them. I've watched salespeople respond to that pressure and reactively push ahead—knowing all along that it wasn't the right thing to do for the customer. A reactive person follows "orders" and blames the boss if it backfires.

On the other hand, you could take a more proactive approach and say to your boss, "I'd love to respond to your call to action. I believe that's why you put me in this position. I also have to be honest to say that this isn't going to happen by the end of this month, and these are the reasons (spell them out). But here's our plan for how we're going to go about this, and we'll move it along as quickly as we can." And you don't stop there. "Here's another opportunity," you point out, "where I think we do have a good chance of winning and it's going to fill in 65 percent of the revenue. I know we still have a gap and we'll uncover every stone to make sure we make the best number we can."

As Stephen R. Covey says, practicing proactivity consistently and building it within the members of a team can affect those types of interactions and lead to much more productive outcomes as people eventually begin to talk and work with one another differently.



Are You Proactive—or Reactive?

A more proactive organization starts with you. Mentally do a self-assessment to determine if your leadership style is reactive or proactive.

1) Listen to language

Ask: Do I use reactive language?

Is it common for you to say, “I *have* to go to this meeting” vs. “I have a meeting.” While you may think this isn’t very different, the latter is a statement of someone who takes responsibility for an action or a decision—while the former shifts responsibility to someone else, as if it’s beyond their control.

When you want someone to do something, do you tell them to do it? Or do you say something like, “If it were me, I’d do this, and there are more options than that. But you choose the best path.” You can often tell whether someone is reactive or proactive based on their language.

Ask: How reactive do I encourage my people to be? Do I transmit a sense of fear through emails or in meetings?

When coaching salespeople, don’t talk as if you have all the answers. It comes off as inspecting or judgmental when you say, “How come you haven’t done this?” and “I would have said this.” Rather, you could ask, “What’s going on? How can I help?” This sends a message that your people are capable, bright, talented and competent—and it encourages them to take responsibility and come up with answers. After they’re done, you can always present options they haven’t considered.

Ask: Am I too numbers-focused?

When reviewing an opportunity, many sales leaders fire off these questions *first*:

- 1) How big is this deal?
- 2) How come you haven’t included (fill in the blank)?
- 3) What will it take to “get this deal done?”
- 4) When is this deal going to close?
- 5) How close are you to hitting your monthly goal?
- 6) What else are you working on that can help us hit our number as a team?

These questions are okay to ask (at some point), but it changes the tone of the discussion if you say, “Walk me through the opportunity and tell me where you need help.”

2) Look at your own behavior

Ask: How much do I merely react to the pressures I feel?

Let's say a product development team created a new product offering. Your boss is excited about it and wants your salespeople to talk to all their customers about the new product. Your approach with your team might be, "We don't get new products to take to the market very often. I'm excited about it and we want to push it out to all our customers. So I expect you to talk with all your customers about this by the end of the month." Believing they're doing the right thing on behalf of company, salespeople will naturally respond to the pressure to "do what their boss told them to do."

But many top salespeople *don't* do that, and they get away with it. That's because they push back in a proactive way—not negatively or by complaining about the pressure, but by proactively evaluating their situation and saying, "I love the new product. I think it fits with a number of my customers and I'll talk with them about it in our very next meeting. But with my two largest customers, right now it would be a distraction. Take company XYZ, their most important priority is (fill in the blank)—and together we're pushing hard on that. And if I were to walk in with this product, I believe it would be a miss for them in terms of our relationship because it's not directly related to their top priority."

That type of mature, responsible conversation raises the game for everyone and can ultimately result in much greater success.

3) Consider how you think about production and production capability

Ask: Am I too busy as a sales leader that I don't have time to sharpen my own saw?

If you aren't regularly working out or involved in a personal fitness program, then you've lost sight of production capability. Reading books that are related to your own development, regularly taking time out for meditation or strategic thinking—these are also areas that typically get put on the back burner in the name of busyness.

Ask: Do I believe that building production capability in the people on my team is equally important as producing (hitting our numbers)?

Sales leaders tend to hire the people who get results. And then they run them hard. Without noticing, work-life balance can suffer, but you see pretty good results and so you keep the pressure on for even bigger numbers the next month or quarter. Then, to keep the momentum going, it's tempting to say, "We don't have time to spend an entire day out of the field to do training." If that's how you feel, then that's usually not the only thing you don't have time for. Chances are you also don't spend enough time to do "ride alongs." Or perhaps you don't take the time to build the culture of the team with fun events.

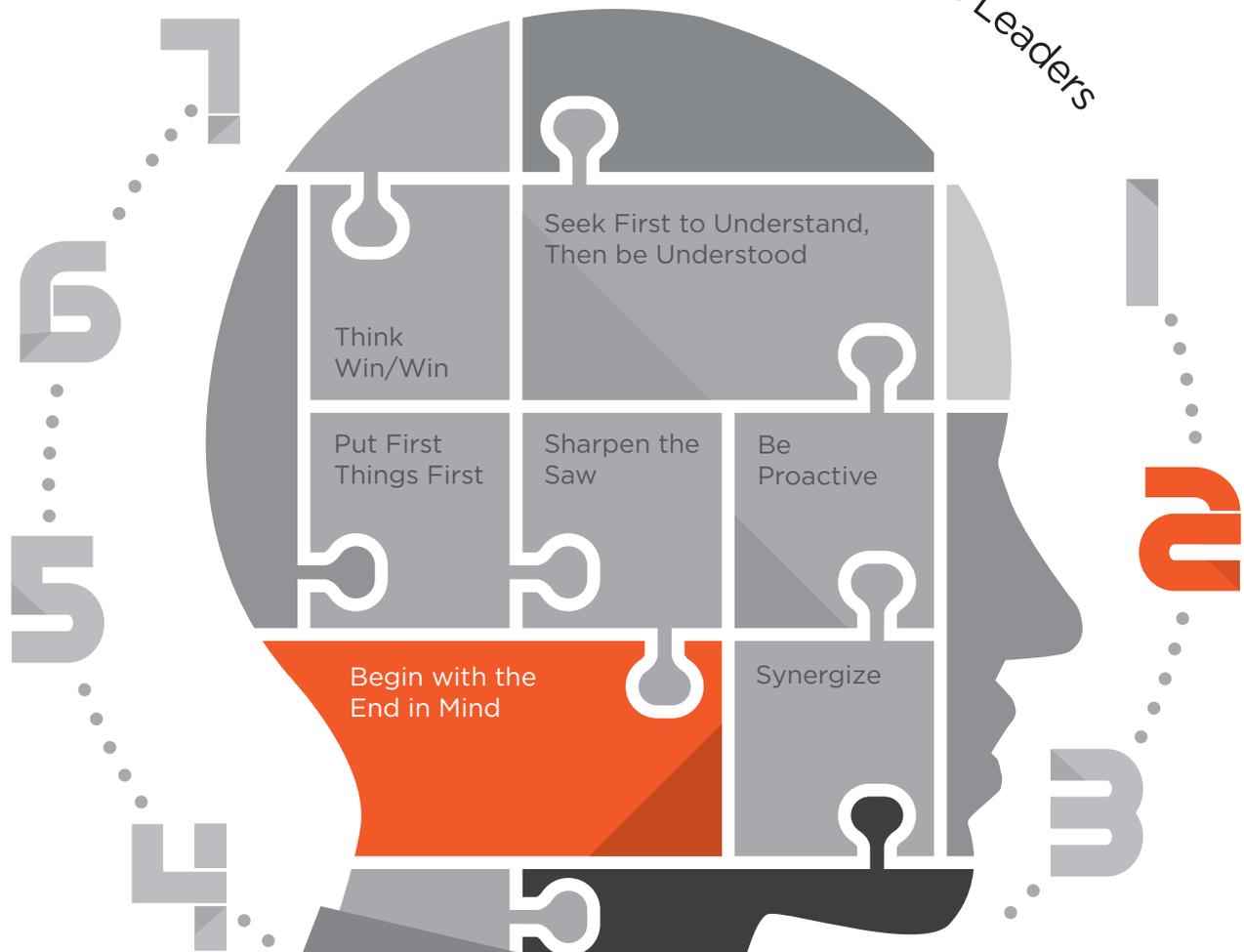
The amount of time you've spent building production capability in the last year suggests a lot about your belief in regards to production capability.



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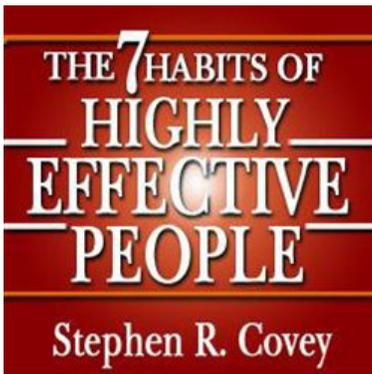
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Sales Leaders



Habit 2 — Begin with the End in Mind

- Why a “Mission” is Critical
- Center on Principles
- Stay on Course

By David Marcum
FranklinCovey Sales Performance Practice



The second point of view article in a series on the current issues facing sales leaders, based on the principles of Dr. Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*—the groundbreaking bestseller on personal and organizational change.

Imagine yourself stepping into the crowds on Rio's Copacabana Beach with an easel and a canvas, and inviting everyone you see to pick up a brush and paint whatever they want onto the picture. It might make for an interesting afternoon, but would you expect such a random process of individual contribution to result in a masterpiece?

A creation that shows mastery and results in something considered as a masterpiece typically requires vision, planning and coordinated action. It's no different when it comes to leading a sales organization. Rather than allowing outside factors and others' actions to determine what you create, or executing someone else's vision, you can take control of what you ultimately accomplish. Begin by asking yourself exactly what you want to achieve and how you want your organization to operate. Beginning with the End in Mind—having a clear vision of your destination—and then executing around that vision is far more likely to ensure you get where you want to be.

The habit of "Beginning with the End in Mind" was introduced 25 years ago by Dr. Stephen R. Covey in his groundbreaking bestseller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Here's how this principle of leadership can help you take charge of what you create and make you more likely to achieve it.

Declare Your Own Mission

I've talked with hundreds of sales leaders who've said, "I wasn't trained to be a sales leader. I was just a good individual contributor hitting my numbers, and someone asked me to take on this role. I didn't get the role because I was already a great leader." A powerful first step in becoming one is to define your End in Mind by developing a mission statement.

Whether you've just been promoted to sales leader or you've been one for many years, the habit of beginning with the End in Mind involves setting your own goals and intended accomplishments, identifying the roles you play, fixing your priorities, and then sharing those frequently with your team. This is a best practice for success whether you're leading a small salesforce or a larger regional organization, or you're in a more senior sales executive role. Then periodically re-center to your mission to make sure you're still on track.

Why have a mission? It seems so old-school. But as Dr. Stephen R. Covey pointed out in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the inarguable fact is there are always two creations to everything you see or experience. The first creation happens in your mind—it's where you envision what you want to accomplish. And the second is when you align your actions to your imagination. Nothing happens without those two creations. If you ignore this principle, it's essentially the same as passively letting everyone and everything else around you decide what you will be and what you will do.

There's power in envisioning what you intend to accomplish and even more so when you write it down, whether you call it a "mission," a "purpose," or anything else. (See "**Mission Accomplished?**" on opposite page.) According to Dr. Gail Matthews, a psychology professor at Dominican University of California, you are 42 percent more likely to achieve your goals just by writing them down.

Mission Accomplished?

How do you go about developing a mission statement? You can't just go to an offsite and bang it out in half a day wedged between other agenda items. Among other things, a mission statement should be aspirational and inspirational—and it should be realistic. In our experience that takes time, including soak time. FranklinCovey has created a mission-statement builder that walks you through the process: <http://www.franklincovey.com/msb/>

You may decide to create both a professional (team) and an individual mission statement. It's a good idea to have your team contribute to your team's mission statement—when there's no sense of contribution, there's no commitment.

Refresh and Anchor to Your End Game

I drafted a personal mission statement a few years ago, and writing this point of view has reminded me to check it and see how much I've drifted. It's interesting—and alarming—to realize how easily old habits creep back in.

Social situations or day-to-day pressures can cause us to behave in a certain predictable ways, and unless you periodically check yourself against what you envisioned, chances are good you'll drift from your blueprint.

Stephen Covey used to teach the principle of Beginning with the End in Mind every week. No matter where he was in the world, he would review his goals each week in the context of his mission statement. He set goals for each of the roles he played. And he reviewed his mission statement periodically to make sure his day-to-day actions and decisions were aligned to his mission. He also occasionally and purposefully changed his mission as the context of his life changed, sometimes affected by major events.

Don't hesitate to update or change your mission statement.

Plan for Your “Oscar”

An exercise that can prompt you to “Begin with the End in Mind” is to imagine that you’ve just received an invitation to attend a ceremony celebrating the best and the brightest of your organization within the last five years—you’ve been nominated to receive an “Oscar” for sales. Your sales team members, your colleagues, and anyone else who works with you would have had to say something about you to warrant you receiving this award.

Ask yourself, what would each group have had to say about you, as a leader? Think in terms of what you would have had to accomplish in results, numbers, people, relationships and any other factor that you would have to take into account. You may use the chart below to organize your thoughts. If you can imagine what people would say

that would qualify you for that honor, you have the beginnings of your mission statement.

One of the things you may quickly realize as you go about this exercise is there are different “centers” you can be anchored to in your day-to-day actions and decisions. For example, in the context of a sales leader: When looking at your responses in the chart, you might recognize that you’re quota-centered, customer-centered, glory-centered, profit-centered or one of many others. We all make decisions based on where we’re centered—so it’s critical, not to mention highly insightful, to identify your patterns and determine which center is really driving you day to day. Your center drives your actions, performance and results.

Returning to your qualifications for a “Sales Oscar,” think about whether, if you were presented with a given situation and responded

Begin with the
End in Mind

Stakeholder	Character	What Contributions You Made	How You Achieved Goals
Executives			
Peers			
Team Members			
Other Stakeholders			
Customers			
Family Members			

to it from your usual center, it would be the best long-term strategy to qualify for the “Oscar” discussed earlier. Just because you (or your organization) has always “done it this way,” is it possible it’s no longer relevant to the need? Do you respond from that center because you perceive it to be easier, faster or better—when in fact another way may be more effective?

Like Stephen Covey, I recommend always centering to principles. You will notice that I didn’t say values. Principles do not change regardless of external conditions or circumstances, whereas centers based on social values change as rapidly as the blowing wind. When you’re centered on social values, you often end up reacting to circumstances and trying to manipulate people or consequences, with outcomes that are not necessarily desirable. Principles can’t be violated, and by choosing to be principle-centered, people usually find that they’re able to be more inclusive of any number of factors,

and their judgment about what’s important, as well as their actions and responses, are more likely to be balanced.



Begin with the End in Mind

Ride Out the Withdrawal Symptoms

Be aware that when you begin to move away from an alternate center to a principle-centered way of operating, both you and your team may experience a kind of “withdrawal” from the old way of responding. For example: If a sales leader is hero-centered, when a deal is about to go off-track, everyone is accustomed to that leader stepping in with the authority to make decisions, change strategy or cut prices, and do whatever is needed to save the deal.

If you’re that sales leader, you have to recognize that your whole sales team is used to that. And so are you. When you decide that’s not how you’re going to respond anymore—that it’s not drawing out the best in your people or making them more responsible—both you and your team will experience some withdrawal, because you won’t be as available and you won’t be as willing to help. And in turn, as you shift the responsibility to your salespeople, you’re withdrawing from your previous responses in order to focus on the vision and the strategy of the team, rather than the tactical, action-oriented habit or taking charge of every individual deal. Resistance and discomfort will diminish as each of you increasingly takes responsibility and aligns your own center to principles.

From a Sales Perspective...

If you're centered around... You could tend to...

GROWTH (top-line revenue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversell • Over-engineer solutions • Manipulate (filter, magnify or fabricate) data in your favor to get what you want
QUOTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversell • Ignore yellow lights or reasons why a deal doesn't make sense • Take shortcuts
PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be inauthentic or less truthful to avoid hurting or upsetting customers • Be too willing to give discounts
HERO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be motivated by glory • Hog the credit • Talk about yourself rather than the team • Put yourself in the limelight • Over-assess the value of your contribution and under appreciate others
MONEY (personal basis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game the system for your own benefit • Not be customer-oriented or give discounts when warranted • Lose sight of contribution
BOSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only do things that will show yourself in the best light • Make sure your boss knows what you've done, whether it's in the best interests of the customer or your own best interests • Behave one way when your boss is present and behave a different way when your boss is absent • Say "yes" to unreasonable requests that come from your boss and put the burden on your people
CUSTOMER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more interested in creating friends than having hard discussions • Be too willing to give discounts • Be willing to violate the principles of trust and candor • Be disloyal to team members or your company behind their backs
CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be unwilling to extend authority • Need to approve everything • Inspect frequently • Tell rather than ask • "Fix" things yourself
PROFIT (bottom-line contribution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be unwilling to give warranted discounts in the name of maintaining high profits • Overcharge or nickel-and-dime customers • Be tightfisted when it comes to investing in people and relationships
COMPETITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only respond to what a competitor does rather than focus on your own unique talents, strengths and contributions • Oversell, undersell or price more aggressively based on what you think the competition is doing • Become win-lose centered

Begin with the
End in Mind

Stay on Course

Let's return to the question, *Why have a written mission statement?* The simple answer is, because it's surprisingly easy to drift away from what's most important to you. When your mission is written down and you review it frequently, it becomes a personal constitution—the benchmark against which you measure your actions and decisions. It helps ensure you don't drift unnoticeably off course, just as an airplane can be blown off course unless the pilot (or computer) makes adjustments to arrive at the right airport.

Here's an exercise to demonstrate what I mean about running off course: Let's say you're leading a sales team and your regional vice president is profit-centered. That's the equivalent of a wind that blows, because in order for you to achieve your mission you have to learn how to continually adjust based on that condition. How would you keep on track? You have a large team, you're pursuing a new opportunity, and after the VP reviews the proposal he says, "You have to raise your prices because we're not going to make enough profit on this deal." Maybe he or she is new to the role, and profit is for the all-important goal. That's the mission.

Even though the VP is profit-centered, you can still respond reasonably and successfully from a principle-centered basis. You might say, "I'm glad you're bringing up profitability. That's important to me too. I'd like to add some information that didn't come up in the review on this opportunity. This customer has done business with us for years. They know how we've priced this in the past, and to do what you're suggesting would undermine our credibility, our pricing and all that we've accomplished over the last several years. We've raised prices by 23 percent in the last two years. We're in much better shape than we used to be and we'll continue to raise rates on new work where we can. That will continue to raise the overall profitability on this account."

Starting the conversation that way is the response of someone who's principle-

centered, proactively involved in their account, aligned to helping their customer succeed at their customer's priorities, considering the long-term success of the business, and not just being driven about by every wind that blows. You're not likely to have that conversation if you're boss-centered because you'll be too anxious to please him or her. For more detailed discussion of similar situations and possible responses, see our point of view on "Habit 1: Be Proactive."

By focusing on the End in Mind and centering on principles, you should find you're able to push back in more constructive ways, balance day-to-day problems and needs with good judgment about where your priorities lie, and (metaphorically, at least) collect that Sales Oscar.

Intent is an End in Mind

If you've taken part in any of FranklinCovey's sales performance training, you'll know that the first thing we ask salespeople to fill out on a Call Plan is, "What's the End in Mind for this meeting?" Beginning with the End in Mind isn't just about building a mission statement. You can apply that concept on a smaller scale. Remember, all things are created twice, first in your mind and then in reality as you align your actions to your vision.

Can you envision a perfect meeting before you have the meeting? Can you anticipate questions and/or concerns your customer is likely to have? Can you anticipate your responses and practice them? What questions do you want to ask? Even though this is a best practice, very few do it well or consistently before a meeting.

More than anything, it's a question that encompasses your intent. FranklinCovey's Helping Clients Succeed™ methodology focuses on advancing your client's goals first and foremost, because when you're focused on helping the client succeed, everything else becomes easier, including claiming value for your own company.

In this commercial endeavor that we call sales, trust is a function of reliability, credibility, plus intimacy, divided by self-interest—that's the equation spelled out by the authors of *The Trusted Advisor*. This equation means that as soon as you put your needs ahead of a customer's needs, it's going to cost you something. It's very likely it will cost you some relationship capital and it almost always will cost some cash (or margin) in the form of a discount. Chances are you don't have the relationship where occasionally your needs as a sales professional get to come first—it just never is.

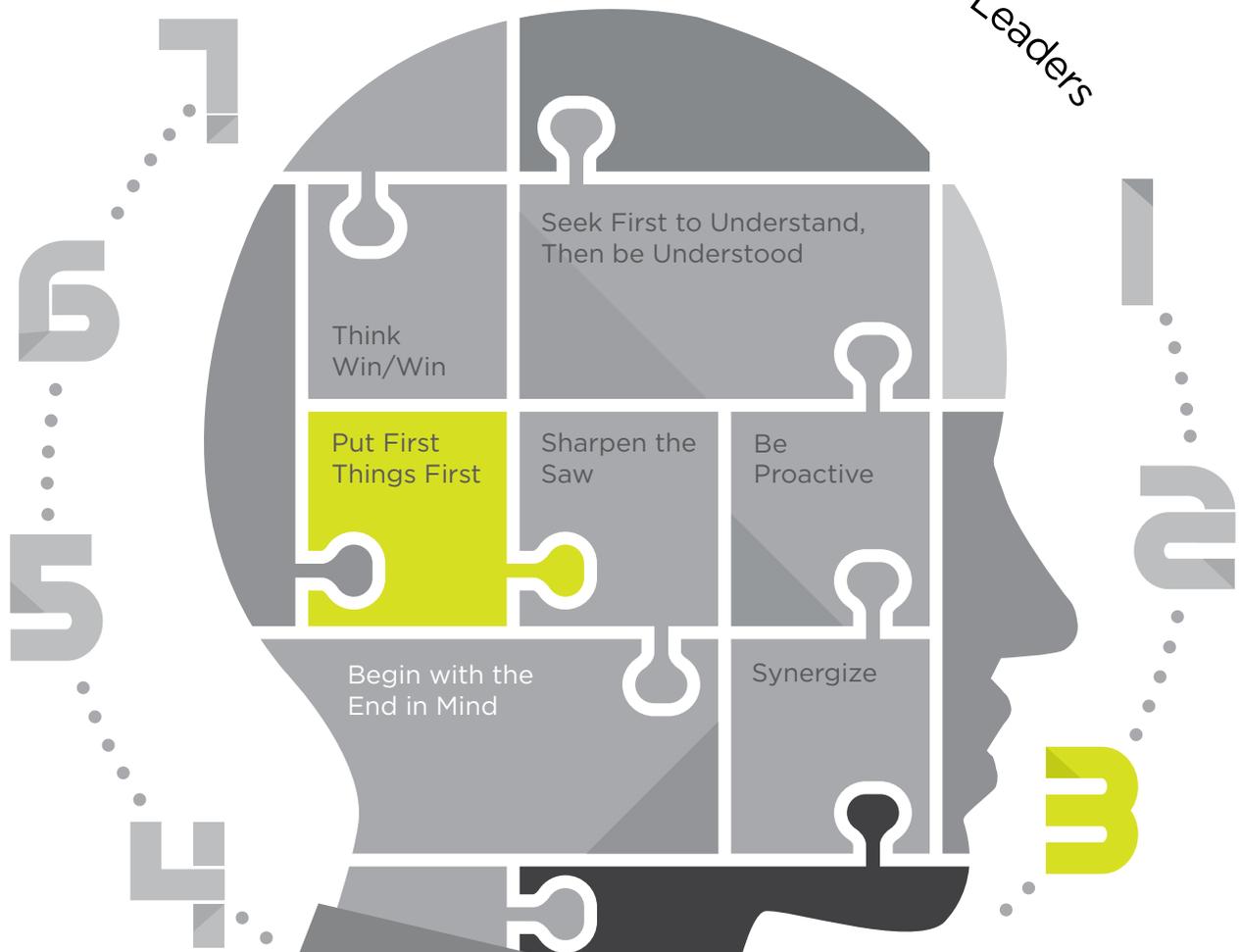
The question in a customer's mind is always, "How can you make a contribution to what I care about?" Not the other way around.



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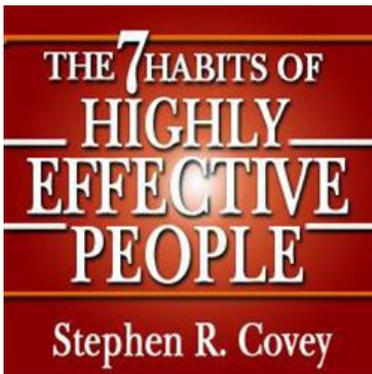
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Sales Leaders



Habit 3 — Put First Things First

- What's Eating Your Time?
- Schedule Your Priorities
- Know When to Delegate

By David Marcum
FranklinCovey Sales Performance Practice



The third point of view article in a series on the current issues facing sales leaders, based on the principles of Dr. Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*—the groundbreaking bestseller on personal and organizational change.

Have you ever heard the expression, “It’s better to have a ‘B’ strategy and an ‘A’ execution than an ‘A’ strategy and a ‘B’ execution”?

For a long time, I thought this made sense, until it occurred to me, why can’t you have both? Why can’t you have an “A” strategy that is deeply meaningful to you and inspires you, and also have an “A” execution? The options are usually presented as mutually exclusive, but Habit 3—“Put First Things First”—is about giving you both.

As Dr. Stephen R. Covey wrote in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and as I’ve been discussing in this series, the essence of Habit 1 (Be Proactive) is to realize that you are the creator of your life and you are solely responsible for what you accomplish (or don’t). Habit 2 (Begin with the End in Mind) is about creating that clear vision in your mind’s eye, and it results in a written document—a mission statement or a constitution—that will help keep you on course as you bring it into being.

When you have invested the time in developing the habit of proactivity and envisioning what you want to accomplish, then Habit 3 is how you execute on your mission at an A level.

While the first two habits are habits of leadership (the “first creation”), Habit 3 is a management habit. It’s what Covey calls “the second creation,” where things get real. The key mindset Habit 3 teaches is to schedule your priorities rather than to “prioritize” your schedule.

Coming to Terms with Day-to-Day Choices

I love the first line of Jim Collins’s book *Good to Great*: “Good is the enemy of great.” It’s a key reminder that the enemy of great isn’t “bad,” and it’s not “horrible.” It’s all the “good” things we get done. Most of us are good, and that is precisely why there are few that are great. It’s easy to fill a schedule with good meetings, good activities and good projects. But what you lose sight of in all the good you accomplish is that this puts your most important priorities on the back burner.

As a sales leader, you’ll find Habit 3 helps conquer good as an enemy in your day-to-day choices, which includes your responses to unplanned events, by making sure you’ve blocked out time first for those activities that contribute to your mission. What good are Habits 1 and 2—the habits of personal vision and imagination—if they’re unraveled by the day-to-day press of things that demand your attention?

The principle of “Putting First Things First” is to execute on your priorities and take responsibility for accomplishing them by proactively planning your time, your day and your week. Instead of coming into the office on Monday and looking at all the emails waiting, the people wanting answers, the meeting invitations to accept, and trying to prioritize your schedule around them, you use time management differently. As Stephen Covey suggests, the phrase “time management is really a misnomer—the challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves.”

This is an important discipline to build as a sales leader, especially since there’s no end to the list of internal meetings, visits with important customers, proposals to prepare, reports that are due, and decisions that need to be made to fulfill your role. Absent this skill, your most important priorities end up not getting done. But if you’re already overwhelmed with more than you can possibly get to in a day, how can you start to take control?



What's Eating Your Time?

We all have the same amount of time in a given week. How can you allocate yours to achieve the things that are most important? Franklin Covey's Time Management Matrix helps identify what activities eat up your time. "Urgent" matters require immediate attention. As Covey writes, "Urgent things act on us... They press on us; they insist on us. They're usually popular with others. They're usually right in front of us." "Important" matters have to do with whether something contributes to your mission, your high-priority goals and the results you want to achieve. The danger is they don't act on you, they wait for you to act on them. They require your proactive attention.

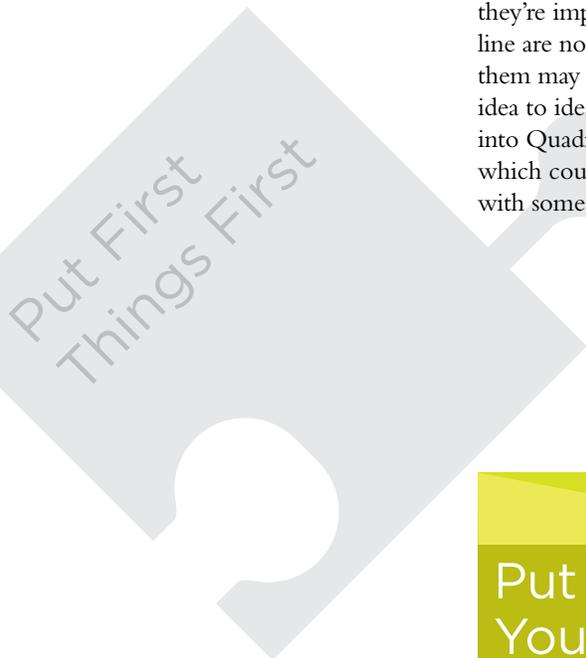
Given those descriptions, you can see that Quadrant 1 is "urgent and important"—this is the quadrant of crisis. These are things that must be done because they are first "important" and second they are "urgent." Many people live their lives in a constant state of firefighting because they have put off doing something until it is a crisis. Beware though, this is an addictive quadrant and when you're done with Quadrant 1 activities you typically move to Quadrant 3.

Being addicted to Quadrant 1 is dangerous because we don't often judge well between activities that fall into Quadrant 1 and Quadrant 3. The difference is big because Quadrant 3 represents those things that may be good to do, but they eat your time and don't contribute to your mission. It's easy to fall prey to this quadrant because it still is laced with a sense of urgency. But by definition they are not important, just urgent. Say 'No' to these activities in order to steal time for Quadrant 2. This ability to judge is like a muscle and can be developed and strengthened.

I've found that other people habitually invite you to Quadrant 3. A quick example: I was on the phone in my home office and one of my kids appeared in the doorway. It was obvious he wanted to ask a quick question. But since I didn't look at him and allow him to distract me he stood and waited. Sensing I wasn't going to be done with the call for longer than he was willing to wait, he wrote me a note and handed it to me. I turned it face down on the desk so I wouldn't be interrupted. Finally, he tapped me on the shoulder. I waited for an opportunity in the conversation and said, "Can you hold on a moment? Someone's just walked into my office." I turned to my son

Time Management Matrix

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Crisis ➤ Pressing problems ➤ Fire fighting ➤ Major scrap and rework ➤ Deadline-driven projects 	II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prevention ➤ Production capability activities ➤ Relationship building ➤ Recognizing new opportunities ➤ Planning ➤ Re-creation
NOT IMPORTANT	III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interruptions ➤ Some calls ➤ Some mail ➤ Some reports ➤ Some meetings ➤ Proximate pressing matters ➤ Popular activities ➤ Some scrap and rework 	IV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Trivia ➤ Busywork ➤ Some mail ➤ Some phone calls ➤ Time-wasters ➤ Pleasant activities



and asked, “What do you need?” He replied, “Do you know what happened to the potato chips?” I allowed this trivial interruption because it seemed urgent. Similarly, our attention may be interrupted by colleagues frequently throughout the day.

A good exercise for a sales leader is to look at the Time Management Matrix in the context of one of your typical weeks, and estimate the amount of time you spend in each quadrant. The ones above the line are important—they fall into the two categories of urgent or not urgent, and you should focus on these because they’re important. The ones that fall below the line are not important, even though some of them may be urgent. It also might be a good idea to identify who or what pulls you most into Quadrant 3 and take steps to reduce it, which could be a Quadrant 2 conversation with someone.

Put Energy into Your Schedule

Have you ever considered the way your energy changes throughout the day? Not only is it a good idea to schedule your priorities, it’s an even better idea to plan to do them when you’re at your best. There are times of the day when you’re better, sharper, more filled with energy—and other times when energy dips. With this in mind, consider scheduling your priorities at the times during the day or week when your energy is highest. This can also boost your results!

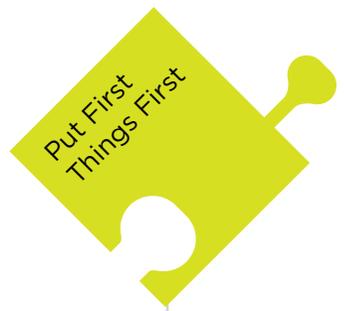
Getting in the Game is a Priority

I’ll often ask a group of salespeople: If there is one thing that you could do consistently well that would make the most significant difference in your ability to get results, what would it be? The answer I most frequently hear is: “We need to spend more face-time with our clients.” That makes enormous sense. And in my experience, most salespeople overestimate the time they do spend with clients.

Then I ask sales leaders, “What one activity could you do that would make you more effective as a sales leader with your team?” The answer is usually along the same lines: “I need to spend more time with my people.” It’s likely that one of the things that made you successful as an individual contributor was the amount of time you actually spent with customers, not back at the office building engaged in “good” meetings.

If it’s mission-critical for you to get out of your office and be with your salespeople and with customers, so that you can observe your team in action, hear them and coach them, then how will you do it? It’s my direct observation that most coaching is done in the office and not in the field, and isn’t regularly scheduled. It’s more a matter of random happenstance.

It turns out, often the reason why sales leaders don’t do this is this issue we’ve been talking about: There are lots of things that require their immediate attention, which may or may not be important. As a sales leader, you need to block out time proactively. Schedule your priorities, rather than prioritize your schedule.



Be Effective, Not Just Efficient

What you'll find is that if you schedule your priorities, then all the other nibbles at your time may still fill in the spaces, but you'll have a deeper sense of satisfaction because you're actually making choices that are aligned with your purpose, your mission and the constitution of your life.

And, generally, you find that those priorities are around people and relationships, not things. It brings up the difference between effectiveness and efficiency. It's fine to be efficient with things, such as reports, statistics and numbers. But it's a very different thing to try to be efficient with people. With people, you have to think more about effectiveness rather than efficiency.

Once, when I was a sales leader and about to dive into a project for an important client, someone walked in my office and dumped a problem on me. I'd blocked out the time for my client's project, but I jumped up and solved the problem, and I lost all of that time. I thought to myself, "That's okay, I'll squeeze it in later." But then I never did, and it violated a commitment to a client, simply because I was addicted to the urgency. I wanted to be seen as a problem-solver for someone on my team, when I could have asked my colleague, "What do you think ought to be done about it?" And when she answered, I could have asked if she needed my help. I also could have asked if it could be done at another time as I'm currently involved in an "important" project.

Being effective with people and not efficient with them is the essence of staying true to your values and what's important to you. And to be effective, you don't need to take the monkey onto your own shoulders. Often, your people probably know what needs to be done and can do it. Very seldom does it require your authority as the sales leader to solve something. And if it does, you can say: "You have my authority, tell them (the person in accounting, the client, etc.) that you talked with me and I agree, and you can work it out."

The temptation or the risk is that most sales leaders buy into the idea that they're the leader, they have the authority, and have to be involved to get things done. It can be addictive, and you have to get out of that mindset, Put First Things First, and stay focused on the things that are most important to you.

Do You Delegate Enough?

Sales leaders tend to be overwhelmed by requests for help and need to get better at asking, "Is this something I must do, or can I delegate it?"

It's not about shirking work. It's about working on what's most important. And just because something isn't important to you doesn't mean it shouldn't be done, because it may be important to someone else.

You can use delegation to make sure you get the important things done, rather than being reactive.

It sounds easy but can be hard to do. Consider a sales team that always wants the sales leader to solve problems. They think they always have to tell him or her what's going on and get them to solve problems or fight battles. You can give up your day and your energy doing that, instead of expecting your people to be resourceful and use initiative to solve some of the problems they bring you.

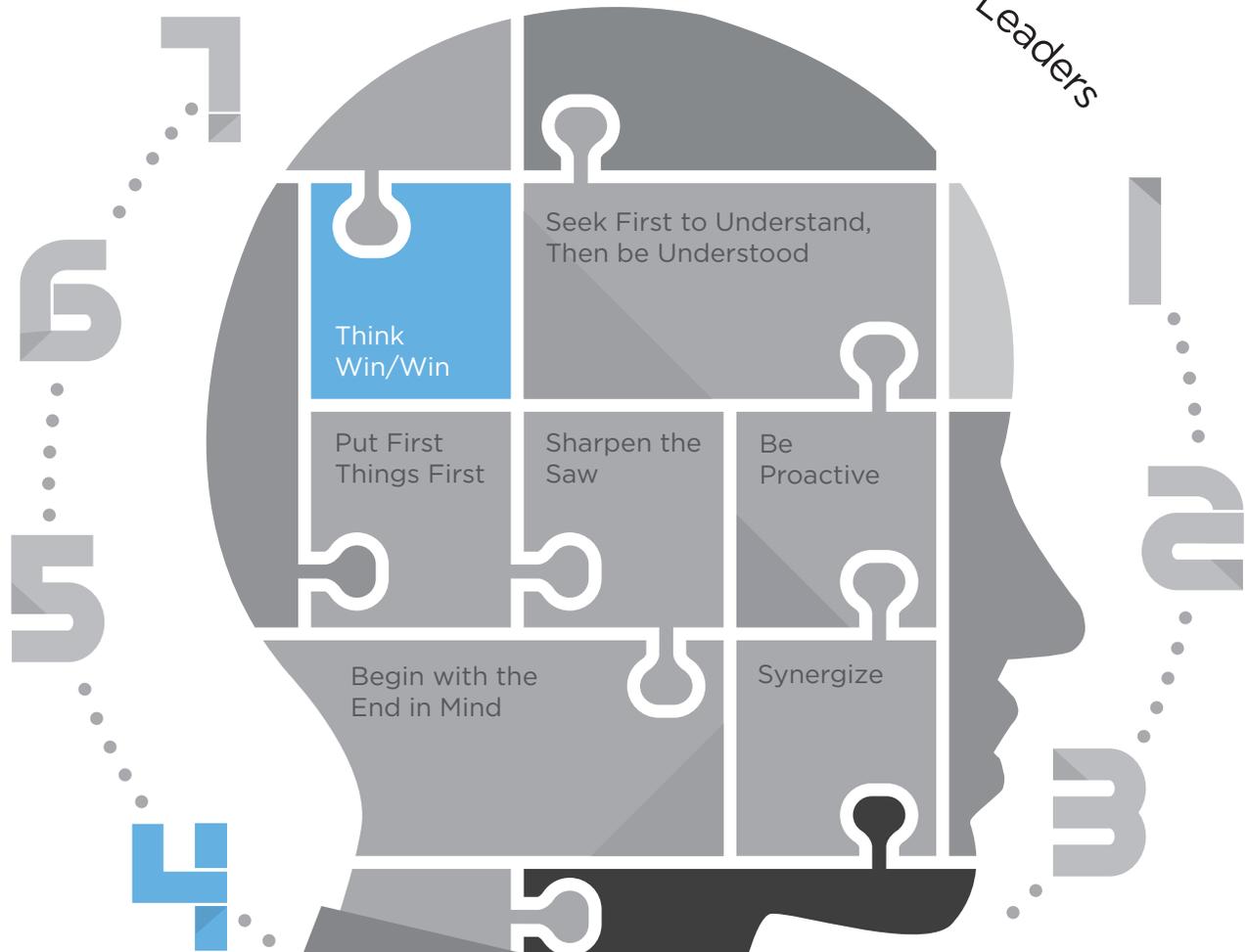
When you stop being reactive to these requests, as we discussed in Habit 2, it sometimes causes withdrawal—both of you may feel the withdrawal pangs. For example, if you've been in a sales leadership role for some time and you're used to having control and being involved in most things, now the goal is to empower and share responsibility with others, rather than taking it on yourself.



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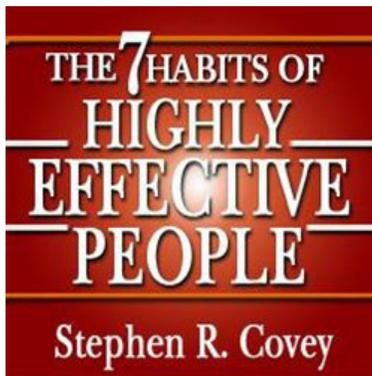
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Sales Leaders



Habit 4 — Think Win-Win

- Success with Self Precedes Success with Others
 - Win-Win within Your Sales Organization
 - Win-Win with Clients

By David Marcum
FranklinCovey Sales Performance Practice



The fourth point-of-view article in a series on the current issues facing sales leaders, based on the principles of Dr. Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*—the groundbreaking bestseller on personal and organizational change.

The Habits I've discussed previously in this series have been focused on developing mastery—mastery of self. The result is true “independence” and deep character, leading to an increasingly more effective and truly powerful individual. Self-mastery is the hardest-earned and most valuable of all victories!

Since the first three Habits are deeply personal and private in their effect, you might not appreciate how vital they are as the foundation to success in the public arena. They are the power source that makes our interactions with others effective. For both sales leaders and individual contributors, success with self (Private Victory) is the only way to realize sustainable success with others (Public Victory).

Habits 4, 5, and 6 are Habits of interdependence. While independence is an achievement, interdependence is a choice. And it's a choice only independent people can make and live to. In the long run, you can't be successful with other people if you haven't paid the price to master yourself. Many try, but it's impossible to sever public life from private life. Indeed, the most important offering you give to others is not what you say, what you think, or even what you do; it's who you are down deep.

“Win-Win is not a technique, it's a total philosophy of human interaction,” Stephen Covey writes. “Win-Win means that agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial, mutually satisfying. With a Win-Win solution, all parties feel good about the decision and feel committed to the action plan.” Sales people need an approach that allows them to leapfrog beyond a traditional, resistant, or guarded interaction—or one that's often only utilitarian at best—and truly connect as business partners. The primary mindset is based on Win-Win.

In this article, I'll share some points related to “Think Win-Win” that are highly applicable to sales leaders. Some are focused within the sales organization and some apply externally with clients.

An important note: If, as a sales leader, you look across your team and see individuals who aren't truly independent—who are frequently over-reactive to outside stimuli (what others do or say, or don't do or say) rather than proactive, who don't have their own deep purpose they're committed to, and who aren't executing around their life's priorities—how will they have the maturity to buy into someone else's mission, execute around those priorities, and proactively respond to all the disappointments and challenges that inevitably come? It seems unlikely.

I suggest you focus on helping them see the importance of building deep sources of personal security before asking or expecting them to change in their public life. You can encourage them to Think Win-Win, you can train them in Habit 4, and you could even model it in your own behavior, but without a strong character ethic and the foundation of Habits 1, 2, and 3, they won't be able to think and apply “Win-Win.” It will be practiced as a manipulative human-relations technique instead of the profoundly powerful principle it is. At best you will only get compliance, which won't likely unlock Win-Win.

Think Win-Win

If you believe Think Win-Win is an effective philosophy of human interaction, then let it start at the top—and I mean the very top—of the organization. Think Win-Win is a powerful platform for guiding your thinking and then governing your interactions. Unfortunately, as sales leaders we're often under so much pressure from the executive team to hit numbers that it becomes easier to adopt a mindset of "Win." By definition that means we're going for our win; we don't care if someone else wins or loses in the process, we just want our win. It's easy to lose sight of what a client needs—we just want them to buy. Many companies talk the talk of serving client needs, but are too addicted to their own revenue (i.e., hitting their quarterly or annual numbers) and that interferes with serving their clients' needs.

That trickles into our interactions with our teams and often leads to a management style driven by controlling, checking, telling, demanding, threatening, stifling, and holding people accountable instead of allowing people to hold themselves accountable. Then, by natural extension, they in turn give the same treatment to clients.

Win-Win requires vision, abundance of the heart, and a willingness to invest first. Many abandon this approach because sometimes the short-term results don't get them what they want when they want it. You may not reap what you have sown, but you can't reap what has not been sown. Because thinking win-win is counter to popular social culture, it takes a little more time to overcome old scripts, entrenched behavior, and cultural habits.

Win-Win also has an important sequence. It begins with the other person: First, what is their win; then, what is our win. Not our win and then their win. That also doesn't mean "find out what their win is and give it to them even if that's a lose for us." That's Lose-Win and never turns into Win-Win. Further, having failed at Win-Win is also not a reason to not go for Win-Win again. Importantly, anything other than Win-Win degenerates into Lose-Lose over time. If you fully commit to Win-Win, those who work for you—and buy from you—will commit to you in return and your relationships will flourish.

Deposits Foster Win-Win

Stephen Covey uses the metaphor of an emotional bank account to describe how "making deposits" with another person builds trust. The concept of an emotional bank account is significant as an indicator of the strength of the relationship. The more frequent the interaction with that person, the more attention you should pay to whether you're making deposits or taking withdrawals. Here are six respectful behaviors that make deposits with your team and your clients.

1 Understanding the Individual

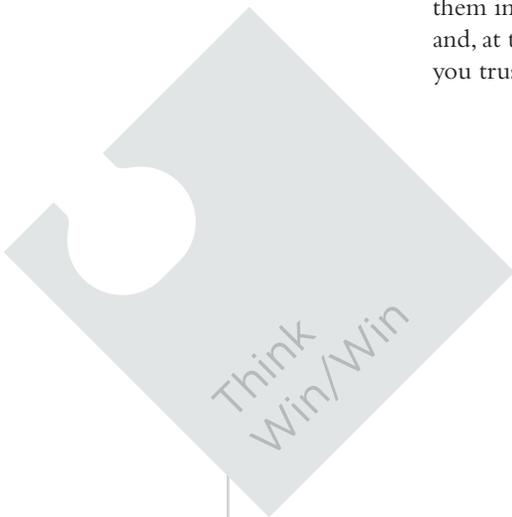
Team: Sincere, persistent effort to understand another person is one of the most important, worthy deposits you can make. And it is the key to every other deposit. Otherwise, if you try to make a deposit that shows you don't understand what's important to them, it can turn into a withdrawal.

As a sales leader, do you truly understand the priorities of the people on your team and why those are important? Do you have a relationship that invites team members to share their mission and personal goals or ambitions with you? Do you know what they really care about, or are you guessing? If you do, what opportunity could you extend that would challenge them in an area they're passionate about and, at the same time, indicate how much you trust and need their contribution?

Client: Understanding a client's needs is the first priority. Salespeople and teams often get it exactly backwards—they passionately promote their company's offerings, intending to help, but they often do so with little more than a shallow understanding of what's important to a client. When you first meet someone, if all they talk about is themselves for most of the time you're with them, what do you think after that interaction?

For nearly 20 years, no matter what country I'm in, I've heard clients complain that salespeople don't listen. What are they busy doing? They're too busy talking, too busy "establishing their credibility" by pushing a point of view, too busy "educating," and too focused on their own need to "sell" something. Ironically, they hurt their credibility and lose trust in the process. Stop talking and start listening to understand.

Adding to that problem, on internal deal-advancement templates I've seen within sales organizations worldwide, about 90 percent of the questions used to qualify opportunities are focused on internal concerns, such as: "How much revenue is this deal worth? Did you consider throwing this asset into the mix? What's our margin? When is this going to close? Who do we have staffed on the project?" Very little of it, and certainly not the upfront part, asks the salesperson to lay out what's going on for the client—what's the client's situation and how well do you know their story? Perhaps you should create a policy that the first 20 minutes of a deal review is on making sure everyone is clear on the client's situation.





2 Attending to the Little Things

Team: Little kindnesses and courtesies are so important. Expressing gratitude for specific contributions they've made, even small ones, can brighten their day. Conversely, small discourtesies, little unkindnesses, and subtle forms of disrespect make large withdrawals—often more than we realize. Sarcasm, joking at another's expense, and ingratitude are a few of the more common withdrawals we make.

An important deposit that's especially needed in today's hectic world is to remove interference in conversations. In other words, stop multitasking. If you were talking with me about something important to you—whether you were on the phone or you walked into my office—and I kept getting distracted by emails, texts, phone calls, and other people interrupting, in spite of my good intentions to listen to you the interaction turns into a withdrawal.

Instead of doing a juggling act to help everyone with some need, the more effective path would be to completely hear and understand one person deeply. That means put everything down and rivet your eyes on the person in front of you, even if you're on the phone and you can only do it figuratively. This is an important habit in internal face-to-face meetings, too! Too many people wander in and out of a conversation as they multitask.

Clients: If you were in a one-on-one meeting with a client, you would never think of reading emails or replying to texts on your phone while they were talking. You wouldn't allow any distraction to get in the way. So why do that when we're on the phone with them? We read emails while they talk, we glance over reports as they share, and we text our boss or another client while they complain about something that's not right in how we're serving them. The more familiar we are, the sloppier we tend to be. Give them your undivided attention. It conveys how important the relationship is to you.

Be prompt. That means be early. Yes, it is a small thing and yes, it gets noticed. If you're late and then make excuses, it's easy to assume you'll make excuses for why you didn't do what you said you would do later on the project.

3 Keeping Commitments

Team: Keeping a commitment or a promise is a major deposit; breaking one is a major withdrawal. In fact, there's probably not a more massive withdrawal than to make a promise that's important to someone and then not to come through. You should be careful about what commitments you make. If you've made one and broken it, see #6 below.

Clients: The same is true for clients. Make commitments and keep them—all of them. Get clients used to the fact that they can count on you; that if you say you will do something you do it rather than frequently give excuses for why you didn't do it when you said you would. Even if you get it done, being late with a commitment tarnishes the relationship. If you knew clients could see the "GoPro" footage of your day, how many of your excuses would suddenly be useless? Small things done repeatedly and well can form habits and lead to patterns of your life. Patterns build chains of strong character.

4 Clarifying Expectations

Team: As Stephen Covey points out, every production problem or performance problem is an opportunity to enhance production capability. Unclear expectations lead to misunderstanding, disappointment, and withdrawals of trust. The deposit is to make expectations clear and explicit in the beginning. This takes a real investment of time and effort up front, but saves time and effort down the road. Then, when you have an accountability session, a balance of courage and consideration in your conversations is often required, because you may not agree with the other person's self-accountability.

Clients: A simple and very helpful tool to strengthen client relationships is to have a meeting whose sole purpose is to clarify expectations before you embark on a project. Talk about what's important to the client in a relationship. From their perspective, what would qualify someone as a strategic partner rather than a vendor (even a preferred vendor)? And in the spirit of Win-Win, what would you ask for? The second half of Win-Win is being clear about what you need and asking for it. What would make this client an enviable client to have and one you would never want to lose?

Use Win-Win Performance Agreements: The underlying objective, discussed at length in previous articles in this series, is not to take responsibility away from people, but to keep them engaged and responsible. So much of the scripting in a sales organization is Win-Lose—from President's Club to compensation to competition. Win-Win agreements keep responsibility squarely on the individual contributor instead of on you.

Think
Win/Win



5 Showing Personal Integrity

Team: Lack of integrity will undermine any other effort to create high-trust relationships. Integrity includes honesty, being loyal to those who are not present, treating everyone by the same set of principles, and confronting (when necessary) rather than taking the course of least resistance to “be nice” or because you’re avoiding an uncomfortable situation. Never sacrifice integrity.

Clients: Sometimes “standing up” to a client with courage and consideration is the most powerful way to strengthen your relationship with them. It also makes a huge deposit with your own team.

6 Apologizing Sincerely When You Make a Withdrawal

Team: Sincere apologies make deposits; repeated apologies perceived as insincere make withdrawals. And the quality of the relationship reflects it. While an apology doesn’t have to be public, don’t avoid making one in public to protect your image.

Clients: Clients deserve our best efforts, including sincere apologies when warranted. We often hold back for fear we will be taken advantage of or blamed for more than is fair (or possibly sued). This is a scarcity-mentality problem at its root, and it keeps us from rich relationships that are productive. Take responsibility for what you are responsible for and ask others, including clients, to do the same.

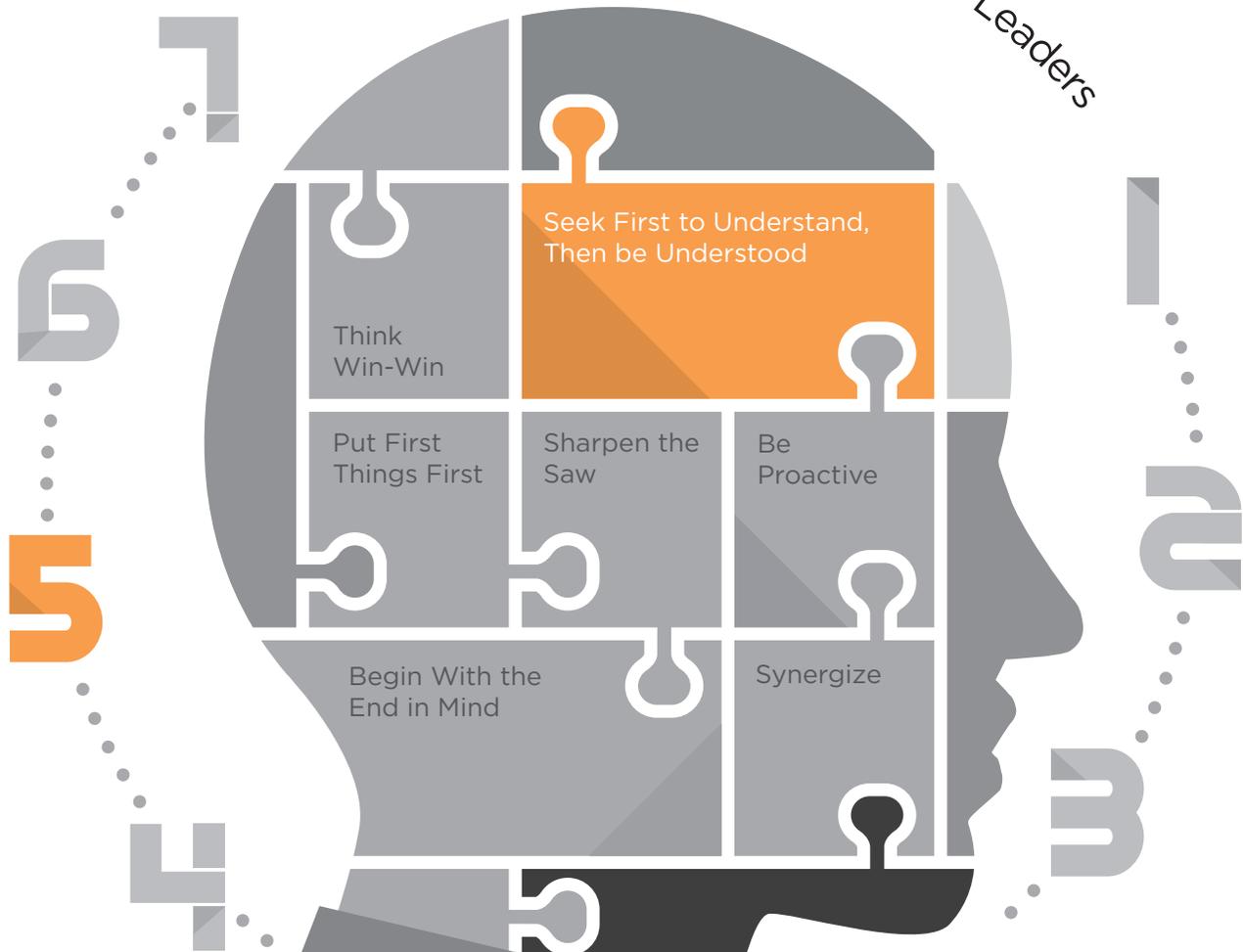
Think Win-Win is a powerful way to shift your thinking before any interaction happens. But taking a Win-Win approach will be hard to achieve if you haven’t built trust with others first. The willingness of others to engage with you in a Win-Win way is directly affected by the balance in the emotional bank account you have with them. Simple, consistent steps increase trust and make Win-Win easier and more likely.



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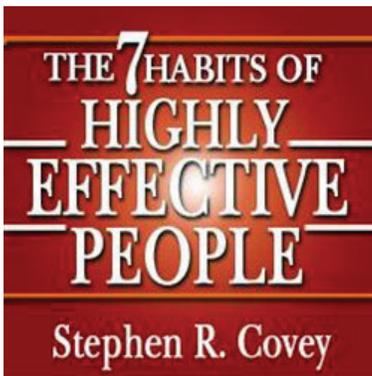


Habit 5 —

Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

- Stop “Getting It Backwards”
- Be Influential, Not Impressive
- Listen and Respond Empathically

By David Marcum
FranklinCovey Sales Performance Practice



The fifth point-of-view article in a series on the current issues facing sales leaders, based on the principles of Dr. Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*—the groundbreaking bestseller on personal and organizational change.

The previous article in this series focused on Habit 4, “Think Win-Win,” a powerful platform for guiding your thinking and governing your interactions with clients and others. Habit 4 consists of two parts: Think their win first, then your win (and the sequence matters).

If Habit 4 is about getting your head and heart right, then **Habit 5 is about putting this mindset into action.** There are also two distinct parts to Habit 5: Seek First to Understand—Then to Be Understood. The first half involves *inquiry*—deeply listening to the person you’re interacting with (seek first to understand). The second half involves *advocacy*—sharing your point of view (then to be understood), which sometimes requires doing so courageously. Both halves are required and both are equally important. Again, sequence matters—a lot.

Habit 5 focuses on inquiry first for a very compelling reason—it makes our advocacy much more influential! But when it comes to sales, all too often we get it backwards—we start our interactions by “credentializing,” sharing our point of view, telling someone about our company’s products/services and our track record of stunning successes with other clients. We focus on the second half of the habit first. Why? We’re deeply scripted that way and incented to do it. The companies we work for and even our clients expect us to do it. Adding to the problem is the fact that we’re trained more in speaking than in listening, more in advocacy than inquiry.

This point-of-view article explains how the first half of the habit builds trust in a relationship and powers credibility. You’ll also find some ways to self-assess, along with tips on how to do a better job of inquiry—and then how to advocate more strongly.

Of all the Habits, Habit 5 is the most immediately applicable, and it’s the one that fits squarely within your circle of influence. No one controls it but you. As a habit, it’s the most important one of Habits 4, 5, and 6 and the most effective when it comes to interacting with other people. Let’s take a closer look.

Why Do Sales People Usually Get This Habit Backwards?

It starts even before you're hired. Chances are, in your job interview someone said, "Tell me about a time when you..." It sets you up for a brag session. Nail it and you get the job.

Then your initial training is almost always focused on the company's products, services, and its successful track record. Somewhere along the way, when executives aren't seeing the sales numbers they want, they believe it's because salespeople don't know enough about their products or services. So they roll out more product training or revamp the marketing collateral, all designed to help you tell more (and do a better job telling it).

Of course, clients rightly expect salespeople to have a point of view. They might say, "We need to build a social media strategy. We'd like you to tell us about your experience. Which companies have you worked with? How would you approach social media for a company like ours? What are the pitfalls we need to be aware of?" They've set you up for a brag session about your company and you think, "Aha, this is an opportunity! I'm sure I can get through 54 slides in 60 minutes. I've got this down cold."

There's no doubt that for a client to pay attention and ultimately buy from us, we must be credible. And it seems we believe credibility comes from what we say, not by what we ask and how well we listen. So repeatedly, we pull out the pitch deck and drone on. It seems like everyone does it.

For all of these reasons—social, cultural, personal—we're wired to focus more on advocacy. This behavior isn't entirely wrong. Normally, you do need to advocate before you've earned the right to do deep inquiry—but it doesn't take much more than three to five minutes, especially in early meetings. The problem is we tend to go on and on, rather than sharing the smallest amount of information needed to get someone to be open—not to be impressed, but to be open. The impressive part can come later.

Listening? Oh Yeah, I Do That.

Last week my wife was talking about something happening with one of our children. While she was mid-sentence, my phone beeped and I quickly glanced at a text. I started to read it and said, "I'm still listening." Funny—she didn't think so.

Repeating what someone says isn't enough to prove we listen. People have to recognize your sincere effort to hear what they say and understand why it's important to them. They have to feel that you "get" them—that you've listened without judgment or bias with your full, undivided attention. This is such an important deposit in their "emotional bank account."

To listen better, get rid of internal and external distractions. For example, if a member of your team is talking, the voice in your head might say, "I wonder if she'd be open to this idea... I'll tell her about my experience last week... Plus I want to ask about... And then I'll tell her..." As soon as you get caught up in that internal dialogue, you're no longer listening. An email, a text, a pile of unopened mail on your desk, or somebody walking by your office—if those external distractions pop up while someone's trying to share something important, dismiss those distractions. Otherwise what you're saying is, "You aren't really that important to me." *You* might feel you're listening, but *the other person* won't.

Five Reasons Why We Don't Listen

What gets in the way of listening to others:

1. Fear

We're afraid to let go of our own knowledge and experience, often because too much of our identity is tied to what we know and what we've done. We fear if we "lose ourselves" in somebody else's world we might forfeit having our needs met or our points considered—or our identity or position will be diminished or weakened. This is especially true when someone is arguing a point that's different from ours. None of those fears is actually true, but it feels like they are.

2. We don't agree

We often believe that listening is interpreted as agreement. *Understanding* another person's point and *agreeing with* that point are completely different. Listening doesn't invalidate anything you think or feel, or any experience you've had. You can hold an opposite point of view—and it doesn't have to get in the way of understanding another's point of view.

3. We don't want to listen

Why wouldn't we want to listen? It could be as simple as we're too busy to give someone our undivided attention. Or, if we're honest, we don't listen because we don't want to listen. It's an ego problem. Maybe we don't like the person or what's being said. Maybe we take it personally, which shuts down our willingness and ability to listen. Don't take it to heart, even if something was intended to be a personal attack. And don't make it personal—keep the lines of communication open.

4. We want to "fix" things

There's so much *telling* in sales because salespeople often come from a "solving" or delivery background, especially in professional-services and high-tech firms. Let's say you start as an analyst, then get promoted to project leader, then to a senior manager, and so on. With each promotion, you're increasingly expected to sell, and you think: "The value in my career to this point has always been a function of explaining *how* we solve problems. Therefore, to prove capability and value I have to get finished with this 'listening' thing quickly so I can tell how we will solve a client's problems." Telling isn't selling. Selling requires deep understanding before any attempt to solve.

5. We want to prove we can relate

Even though we think we're listening, we're not. We project our own reaction into the other person's experience *as that person is speaking*. "I had that happen to me. It made me feel horrible." We hope this strengthens our rapport because we've had similar experiences. What we don't realize is in doing so we dismiss *the other person's* unique feelings and experience. Learn to listen outside your autobiographical reaction or filters.

Seek First to Understand,
Then be Understood

Seek to Understand Your Team

From a sales leader's perspective, "seeking first to understand" is an important skill to practice when working with your team. If you don't truly listen to them and know their concerns, you won't understand the real issues they face—whether it's a professional challenge, feeling underused or undervalued, or something else. This was addressed in Habit 4 ("Think Win-Win") by asking: "Do you know what's really most important to the people on your sales team? And could you extend to them an opportunity to make a contribution that's aligned with something they're passionate about?"

A sales leader's listening can be easily overtaken by four tendencies: probing, evaluating, judging, and advising. Consider the following dialogue between a sales leader (SL) and a sales person (SP):

SP: Do you have time to talk?

SL: Sure. What about? (probing)

SP: ABC Company.

SL: What's the problem? (probing)

SP: I can't seem to get them moving. It's like there's one delay after another.

SL: Have you tried showing them our software? (evaluating, advising)

SP: Yes, they liked it.

SL: It's easy to talk too much about our fidgety-widget. You didn't do that, did you?
(probing, judging)

SP: No. They weren't particularly interested in that part of the demo. But they did really like the rest of our new features. They're just having a hard time closing their books at the end of the month.

SL: You should have Jim talk with them. He has lots of experience with clients like that.
(advising)

SP: I offered, but they were reluctant to spend more time in another meeting. I did tell them about Dynamo and their experience with us.

SL: That's probably not the best case study to share. You should make sure they get a copy of the press release from Lickety Split. (judging, advising)

SP: I did.

SL: Why aren't they able to close their month end? (probing, evaluating)

SP: They're a mess. Their processes are broken—many of them are manual. They really need to automate and get current. That's why I thought the demo would knock their socks off.

SL: See if you can set up another meeting and I'll go with you. Let's also make sure we get Jim's calendar cleared so he can go as well. We'll get it moving. (evaluating, advising)

Even though this sales leader's willingness to help is strong, they aren't listening and it's not helpful. Worse, it takes responsibility away from the sales person and teaches them to be reactive. This "kind-of" listening is often driven by a sales leader who wants to fix things that don't go the way they "should."

If you have a mindset that you have capable people who can solve their own problems, the art is to *help them* solve their own problems by being a good sounding board. Your job is not to guide them by giving them a list of things to do. Listen deeply first. Empathize. Ask what they think should be done. Then, when they are out of ideas, ask if they want your ideas. If they say "Yes," *then* you can guide them. The key to having influence is to first be influenced.



How Well Do You Know Your Clients' Needs?

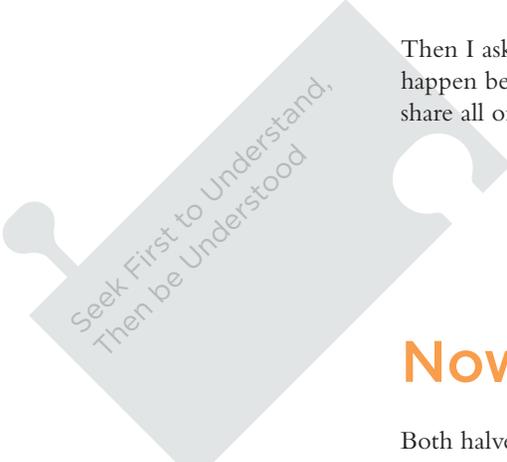
In workshops, I often ask participants, “If you could get a client to share any and as much information as you want, what would you ask them?” People answer, “What’s your strategic plan? What are your problems? Your priorities? What does success look like? What’s your budget? Who makes the decision? How do you feel about us? How do you feel about our competition?” These are great questions and if clients answered them it would make a sales job much easier.

Then I ask, “How would knowing all that information affect what you do?” Invariably, participants say: “We wouldn’t have to guess about so much. We could be more specific as we build and hone our solution.”

Then I ask, “So what would have to happen before a client would willingly share all of that information?” Hopefully,

at least one participant will say, “They’d have to trust you, and they’d have to see benefit in sharing that information.”

The benefit to the client in sharing information is that for every solution, there’s a way to make it unique. Think about when doctors are diagnosing patients: They have a host of solutions to choose from—wait it out and take it easy, physical therapy, medications, and surgery. If they’re good, they listen to their patients’ needs, because it may make a difference in what they prescribe. And even if it doesn’t change the prescribed solution, importantly, listening to a patient increases the patient’s belief that the recommended solution will work. In the same way, we want to understand our clients’ uniqueness so we can bring them solutions that exactly meet their needs.



Seek First to Understand,
Then be Understood

Now Seek to Be Understood

Both halves—*inquiry and advocacy*—create the whole. The second half of Habit 5, “*Then to Be Understood*,” is no less important than the first half.

Clients do expect to hear about your company and how you can help—and they do want to know why they should pay attention to you and not someone else. So after you’ve really sought to understand and it’s time to be understood, don’t be bashful. Be strong, bold, and passionate—because now you understand the need.

When relevance and “*fit*” are clear, then passion is more helpful. It boosts believability and confidence. But if you passionately try to get clients to do something they don’t perceive is relevant and that doesn’t directly fit their need, they question what you say, resist your recommendations, and even question your motives.



Reflect Uniqueness to Increase Credibility

Clients assign you more credibility when they believe you understand their uniqueness and then demonstrate that understanding by how you tailor your advocacy. In meetings with clients, in job interviews, even in internal meetings where you think you're supposed to tell, it actually increases your relevance and influence by finding out more about the other person's unique situation, experience, needs, or wants.

The natural sequence for successful meetings/presentations is:

- Understand uniqueness
- Demonstrate your understanding by showing how your solution fits their uniqueness
- Advocate passionately

Dr. Stephen R. Covey conveys the power of this sequence by putting it in the context of three early Greek terms: ethos, pathos, and logos. "Ethos is your personal credibility, the faith people have in your integrity and

competency...Pathos is the empathic side... It means that you are in alignment with the emotional thrust of another person's communication...Logos is the logic, the reasoning part of the presentation." In presentations and meetings, most people go straight to the left-brain logic and try to convince others of the value or validity of their logic. World-class advocacy must be preceded by world-class inquiry.

The Habit "Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood" is where it becomes evident you can't sever your private life from your public life—who you are, how confident and comfortable you are with yourself, and the character ethic you've developed. This core gives life to the technique of listening. It is the strength of your character that allows you to comfortably, temporarily set aside your own beliefs and demands for attention in order to deeply listen to another. Listening is a choice, plain and simple.

Be Influential, Not Impressive

Why do we associate credibility with "impressing" people? It happens all the time, and not only in the sales world. The brand of car you drive, the label on the suit you're wearing, the title you hold in a company, where you live, the trip you just took, or the names you can drop: It's common to focus on these in an effort to

impress others. But the truth is, what you actually need is to have influence with others, especially when it comes to sharing your ideas and having others embrace them.

One of the powerful principles Stephen R. Covey taught me is that to have influence with others, you must first be influenced

How to Do Better With Inquiry

- 1. Lose yourself.** Remember what it's like when you meet with someone who just wants to impress you and brags. Commit to not doing that.
- 2. Strip it down.** Look for the least amount of information you need to share in order to earn the right to ask questions. This can be as easy as saying, "I'd be happy to share the experiences we've had helping quite a few companies like yours build a social media strategy. Would it be ok if I asked a few questions to make my comments more relevant?"
- 3. Give value.** Learn to ask questions that make others think or make a contribution to them, rather than just interrogating to extract value that gives you insight.
- 4. Easy does it.** Ask one question at a time and wait for the answer. Reward the response and then build your next question from the answer.
- 5. Don't listen to solve.** Most people think they listen, but they listen and then ask questions with the intent to solve, which is very different from asking questions to deepen your understanding.

by others. The power in this is based on what scientists call reciprocity and it's a strong motivator in our interactions. If someone is nice to you, you feel you should be nice to them. On the other hand, if someone is mean to you it's easy to justify being mean right back.

When it comes to clients, if you invest your time and attention to listening first, it encourages reciprocity because it gives them what Stephen calls "psychological air."

And it's a huge deposit in their emotional bank account. Once they've aired their concerns and priorities, then they, in turn, are freed up to fully and completely listen to you. Because you've invested first, they are more willing to be open to what you have to say. While it may seem counterintuitive—and in many cases it can be hard to do—it's not counterproductive. Influence is the key to more powerful advocacy!

Meet the Author

A managing partner at FranklinCovey's Sales Performance Practice, David Marcum is a world-renowned expert in consultative selling and a respected authority on large, complex sales. He is sought after by some of the largest and most successful sales organizations in the world to help them inspire people, grow talent, and drive better sales results. He has co-authored three books on communication and leadership, and has given keynotes and trained tens of thousands of salespeople at organizations including Accenture, Hewlett-Packard, Lockheed Martin, Microsoft, GE Real Estate, Oracle, Ford, Nike, Deloitte, KPMG, PwC, Koch, American Express, AkzoNobel, CPA Global, and Booz Allen Hamilton.

For more information about FranklinCovey's sales training solutions, call us at 1-800-707-5191. You can also visit www.franklincovey.com/salesperformance.

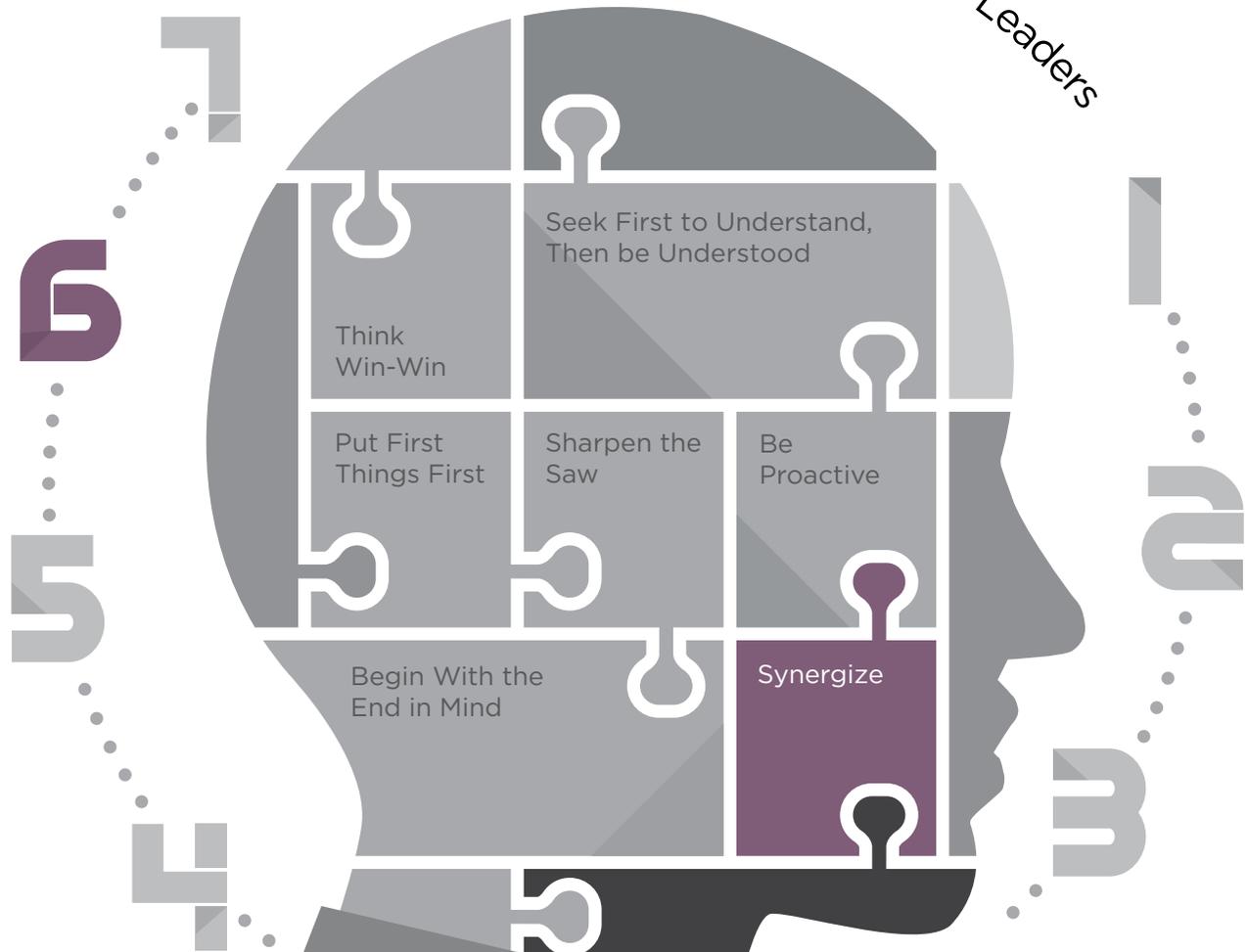




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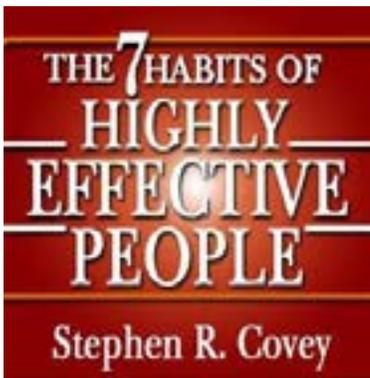
THE ULTIMATE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Sales Leaders



Habit 6 — Synergize

By David Marcum
FranklinCovey Sales Performance Practice



The sixth point-of-view article in a series on the current issues facing sales leaders, based on the principles of Dr. Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*—the groundbreaking bestseller on personal and organizational change.

The 7 Habits build upon one another. Habits 1, 2, and 3 are geared to achieving personal independence. Habits 4, 5, and 6 lead to interdependence and create a stable, reliable foundation for public victory. Habit 6—Synergize—is where all previous work comes to fruition.

Synergy means the whole is *greater* than the sum of its parts. Synergy is more than cooperation (which is good—and it's a lower-level principle). An example of cooperation is where we take a little bit of your point of view and a little bit of my point of view and come up with an acceptable way to go down the path together. Many mistake cooperative compromise for synergy, but if you've

experienced the latter, the difference is night and day. Synergy is the catalyst for creating new and better alternatives and solutions. Truly, one plus one can equal 5, 10, or even 20.

“Synergy,” as Dr. Covey explains, “unifies and unleashes the greatest powers within people.” Synergy is the co-creation of new possibilities. It's the crowning achievement of all the previous habits and the fertile ground from which *new and shared goals are created allowing individuals, teams, and clients to achieve much more than they otherwise would.*

Let's look at mindsets and tips that give synergy a chance to win inside a sales organization.

What Have You Done For Me Lately?

“Ava, last year your team did an amazing job!” your boss gushes. “It didn't look like you were going to hit your number and yet your team pulled it off. To say we are proud of you would be an understatement. Now, before you get too comfortable, let's talk about next year's number. The number I need you to hit is what I call a stretch goal. But even though it's big, after last year I trust you can hit it.”

The number—a near impossibility—is not-so-cleverly cloaked with the word “stretch.” You think, “Stretch? What about stupid?!” And regardless of the rational discussion about the specific, real situation

in your territory (e.g., an important shift in circumstances with some key accounts or the challenges in the team), seldom does the number go down.

But not to worry, sales leaders are “can do” people. You bury your feelings about the number and set your sights on getting the team's buy-in to what will now be their numbers. You rally the team in a meeting and pump them up with an inspiring speech. Maybe there is even a catchy slogan. But, in spite of your effort to get the team to buy in, they respond the same way you responded to the number you were given.

The Crux Of The Matter

I've been asking sales people for years, "If you could set your own target for next year, would your number decrease?" At first I get a puzzled look that suggests, "Are you taking stupid pills?" followed by a quick "No. Of course not." Sales people want to make more money this year than last year. Seriously, who wants to go backwards?

Yet when executives respond to the same question, the answer is very revealing if it's true. "Given the chance," they tell me, "Sales people and sales leaders game the system to their own advantage. They want a number low enough so it's easy to hit bonus multipliers and maximize their compensation." I have observed that to be true. But, the irony is, the number the executives come up with and then pass down through each layer of sales management, the number always gets increased by a small margin so that even if you miss your number it's enough to ensure they get their bonus.

But if the executives are the ones who create the system that incents that very behavior, is anyone surprised? And if what executives and sales people both say is true, building the number from the bottom up may be an increase but it's still likely to be too small compared to the leader's vision (need) for growth.

Go Big Or Go Home

So executives take control. "Shoot for the moon," the axiom says, "and even if you miss, you will land in the stars." Inspiring, isn't it? Thus, BIG is the chief strategy most sales organizations live by. And that's precisely why they come up with the annual target and not you.

But, in my experience, people don't buy into goals others set for them. To prove my point, go tell your spouse or partner that you set a stretch goal for them to lose 25 pounds next year. No matter how carefully you choose your words when you say it, the only result you're likely to get is a glare that would peel paint.

As a sales leader, are you gripped by the same fear as executives? Do you think, if left to their own devices, sales people won't work hard? Would they selfishly

"sandbag" and turn a blind eye to the team's or company's needs? Would that make it impossible for you to hit your number?

If you want buy-in—and the committed effort that comes with it—you must align to the truth that people sell out to goals they set on their own. That begs the question, how could you engage with them to co-create a synergistic goal? I'm not suggesting you simply turn over annual target setting to them and then cross your fingers and hope. But is it possible that through synergy, individuals would willingly create goals that are collectively bigger than the number you got handed?

The Unintended Cost Of Competition

Given the challenge sales leaders have every year of hitting bigger numbers than the prior year, I can't think of a responsibility more important—and yet more difficult to do—than to elicit synergy from the teams they lead. Why is it so difficult when it is so badly needed?

Without intending to, we drive scarcity by competitive pressure that's often at play within sales organizations around incentives, awards, and the rest; they foster a "Me" mentality even though leaders espouse "We" thinking. The vast majority of sales plans and efforts to "hold sales people accountable" are in direct contrast to the study of what drives human behavior and what science tells us works (and doesn't). For a provocative look at how far off we are in our motivation and incentive systems, read Daniel Pink's book, [*Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*](#).

On the other hand, synergy requires a mindset of abundance. When people are responsible and proactive (Habit 1)—when they're clear on their mission and purpose (Habit 2) and have the autonomy to execute their priorities based on that mission (Habit 3)—they operate from a place of abundance. They build confidence that grows from keeping the commitments they make, both to themselves and to others. They are also more likely to achieve mastery of their craft. When sales people and sales leaders both interact from a place of personal security and abundance, synergy can make a big difference, even and maybe especially when it comes to setting annual goals. Here are a few ideas how you can reap the fruit of synergy.



Use Both Sides Of Your Brain

Synergy is ultimately about using both sides of your brain, because reality isn't just logical, it's also emotional. Yes! You absolutely should look at your clients, analyze the numbers, and be realistic about the situation. But don't stop there, paralyzed by the obstacles and improbability. Engage the other side of your brain. Get creative. What possibilities can you imagine that would significantly change the game?

But in this case, synergy may require you to draw more broadly on other sources. Research by Polman and Emich shows that when you help another person solve a problem, you see more

clearly than they do; you tend to be more creative and more successful at solving the problem. How much more effective? It turns out the answer is 18%.

So to apply synergy, engage a 3rd party to help with the creative, intuitive side of the solution to your problem. For example, what would happen if you engaged marketing and asked them to help you solve the problem? Or if you asked a support team for their ideas about how to hit your crazy number?



Synergy With Clients

Another step you can take is to focus your sales team on building deeper trust with clients. Trust is a necessity if you want to create synergy. Imagine what would happen if clients had high trust with sales people. The more a client trusts your motive to help them—as opposed to feeling you are focused on your own selfish interests (which includes what your company needs)—the more open they are. That leads to them sharing more information than they otherwise would and a feeling that you understand them. Armed with more and much better information, you can be more targeted and prescriptive in your proposed solution.

When a client sees that a proposed solution reflects deep understanding of their needs, synergy has a chance to come into play.

How? As they listen, it's now more likely to trigger in their mind other ideas that perhaps you had not considered as you built the solution—a “third creation,” if you will—that could make the ultimate solution even better. It's not a compromise, it's not de-scoping. Rather, it's catalyzing the interaction to empower both sides. This builds even stronger, more durable trust.

Imagine if all your sellers could get synergy with each of their clients—experience shows that opportunities would increase, making revenue targets easier to hit.

Give It Another Try

Sometimes you lose hope for synergy because you went for synergy once, you almost got there, and then somehow trust short-circuited and it degenerated into a compromise, or worse, a lose/lose outcome. Even with only one failure, you might approach opportunities for synergy cautiously. And if the need for security is strong, it often smothers synergy before it even has a chance to start.

What can you do to get back to synergy? The first step is to rebuild trust. Stephen M. R. Covey talks about smart trust—being willing to invest trust first, even when

history would suggest otherwise—as being a socially intelligent thing to do. Extending *smart trust* means *not more than you should, and not less than is necessary to invite the other party to a better place.*

Be proactive. Rebuild willingness to synergize by consistently making even small deposits in the emotional bank account with that person. The next time you have an opportunity for synergy, with a stronger emotional bank account balance both parties are more likely to extend trust again. Here's an example of how you might do that.

Courage And Consideration

Let's say you had a client with a history of asking, "Can you tell us how you'd approach this problem we're facing?" They pump you for loads of information and tactical details, and you respond openly. Then, later, you find out the client executed the project on their own. As a result, you feel like they took advantage of you. In order to rebuild trust, and ensure the same thing doesn't happen again, you can rebuild trust by applying the second half of Habit 5. "Seek to be Understood" and courageously put a yellow light on the table.

Investing respect first, you would say, "Thank you for another chance to help you get your head around some problems you face. We appreciate the confidence you extend to us by inviting us in. (pause) Before we continue, I'd like to bring up a mild concern. The last time we met, you asked us a lot of questions and we shared quite a bit of information. In retrospect, I feel like we shared proprietary knowledge about how to solve the problem. That's on us. So as we engage in our conversation today, if I feel our conversation is drifting from understanding the problem into *how* you could solve this problem, I'll point it out so I don't feel obligated to share proprietary information. Does that seem reasonable?"

A violation of trust in a relationship almost always stems from missed expectations; expectations that weren't clear or weren't communicated at all. It's unlikely you can get to synergy until that's been repaired. When you share your motive and invite the other person to agree to a common intent, you strengthen the trust between you. And you strengthen the commitment to clarify and keep expectations.

Approaching an interaction from a protective stance is not synergistic and it's not abundant. It's a defensive and scarcity approach that says, "They took advantage of us once, I'm not going to let that happen again." If that's your mindset, you will watch the other party's interactions for evidence that they plan to rip you off. And you can find it, just as you can find evidence that they have no intention of doing that. Maybe the other party genuinely didn't think their actions were inappropriate.

An underestimated and very real benefit of the security that comes from having a personal mission statement (Habit 2) and trust in yourself is you get good at investing trust first—not foolishly, but building trust carefully over time and not overextending it. You can use the other habits to build trust and demonstrate your openness, and then you can risk trying again because you trust the principle of synergy.



Synergize

Valuing—Not Simply Acknowledging—Differences

If you and I approach an interaction from a scarcity mindset—if we are both reactive emotionally or intellectually, or if we feel threatened—it produces negative synergy. Because neither of us has a deep core of integrity and security to listen from, we think, “I’m not going to get what I want, so I’m going to get as much as I can.” That’s when one plus one equals *less* than two.

Conversely, respecting and truly *valuing* differences rather than being threatened by them is a powerful strategy to get synergy. If even only one party is secure and abundant it changes the interaction in a big way. If I’m anchored to abundance, only then I can genuinely esteem your worth and your uniqueness. Difference doesn’t threaten me. If I hold you in high esteem, when you see differently I truly want to know what you see, how you feel, and why your experience is different from mine. Curious as to why you see things differently, I’m much more likely to listen empathically and to be influenced by you.

Again, if you and I were talking, the action step I take is to listen to you first. That gives you psychological and emotional air, so to speak. This is a concept psychologists call reciprocity: if you feel you have been truly heard and understood, then and only then are you willing to listen as deeply to my views or concerns; you’re more open to be influenced by my views. An exchange like this sparks synergy.

The world needs synergy! Imagine how far synergy would take us in our diversity and inclusion efforts if we truly *valued* difference instead of sameness; if our mindset is one of abundance and respect, not scarcity and threat. Imagine how we could solve the social problems we face if people on either side of an issue weren’t threatened by the differences of the other side. Understanding does not equal agreement. But lack of understanding stops us dead in our tracks and keeps us from synergy.

I invite you to increase your awareness of your own and humanity’s need for synergy as a means for solving the vexing problems we face. But more than just saying, “Here, here,” take action. Put synergy to work where you can. In my view, it’s the most effective path that leads to enduring success.



“Do I have all the ingredients in place for synergy?”

There are prerequisites before synergy is possible within your organization. Low trust leads to low cooperation. When you have high trust in a relationship, then and only then is synergy possible. Use this checklist of questions as a springboard to put the relationships, systems, and rewards in place for creating synergy:

- Do I have independent people who cultivate their own sources of personal security and confidence (Habits 1, 2, and 3)? If not, how will I encourage them to cultivate independence?
- While I may have power because of my position, does each person on my team respect me and extend me their trust because of my character and who I am? If not, what specific steps will I take to repair overdrawn emotional bank accounts?
- Do I regularly listen deeply to understand unique needs and to value differences? Or do I listen to respond autobiographically?
- Do I build trust by courageously talking about difficult issues, as often as needed?
- Do the organization's systems for recognition and reward create competition and scarcity? If so, what would have to happen to create abundance and trust?
- What is the most significant barrier to trust and abundance in my organization? What options can I proactively pursue to overcome this barrier?

Meet The Author

A managing partner at FranklinCovey's Sales Performance Practice, David Marcum is a world-renowned expert in consultative selling and a respected authority on large, complex sales. He is sought after by some of the largest and most successful sales organizations in the world to help them inspire people, grow talent, and drive better sales results. He has co-authored three books on communication and leadership, and has given keynotes and trained tens of thousands of salespeople at organizations including Accenture, Hewlett-Packard, Lockheed Martin, Microsoft, GE Real Estate, Oracle, Ford, Nike, Deloitte, KPMG, PwC, Koch, American Express, CSC, AkzoNobel, CPA Global, and Booz Allen Hamilton.

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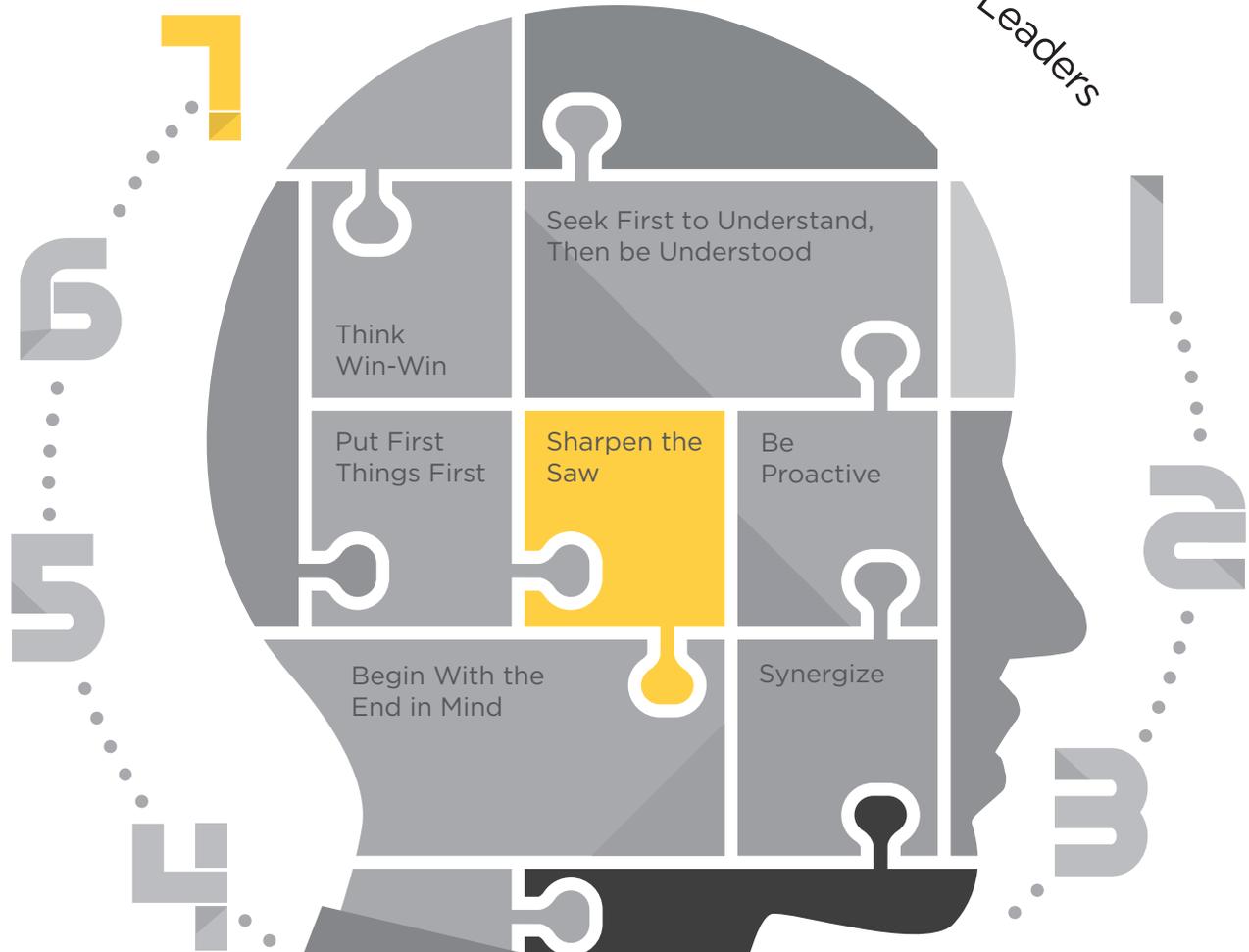




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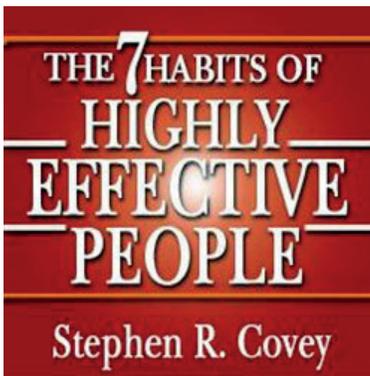
THE ULTIMATE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Sales Leaders



Habit 7 — Sharpen the Saw®

By David Marcum
FranklinCovey Sales Performance Practice



The final point-of-view article in a series on the current issues facing sales leaders, based on the principles of Dr. Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*[®]—the groundbreaking bestseller on personal and organizational change.

Make a quick mental list of assets you control or own. Perhaps you started with a house, cars, boat, or stocks. As far as assets go, it's easy to list possessions you *bought*. But, as you look it over, did YOU make it onto the list? Clearly, your most important asset is *you* since you produce the other assets on your list. It follows that the best (and most vital) investment you can ever make is in yourself.

To continue to produce, you need to feed your *ability* to produce, just as you need to change the oil in a car and put gas in it. But often, in your pursuit to earn a living you forego investing consistently in ways that increase your capability.

Are you in?

Make no mistake—fitness is *in*! Gym membership sales are at an all-time high. Over 58 million people pay for a gym membership each year. We buy the right gear and get ready to work out. We go to yoga, Zumba, or Pilates. We do spin classes on stationary bikes, step up to CrossFit training, or train for a half marathon.

But even though gyms are happy about membership sales, there are other trends that factor heavily into the fitness story. To say it more accurately, the *idea* of fitness is in, not actual fitness.

Habit 7 tackles the need to “sharpen the saw” in four key areas:

- 1) physical,
- 2) mental,
- 3) social/emotional, and
- 4) spiritual.

Each of these is closely tied and together make up our very beings. Habit 7 is vital because it enables all the other habits.

What can you do as a sales leader to encourage focus on Habit 7? Here are a few ideas that will help.

Only 18 percent of the population pays for a gym membership. Despite good intentions, 67 percent of people with a gym membership don't use it. Sixty percent of Americans don't get the recommended amount of physical activity in a week. That leads to increased obesity rates¹, which have doubled in the US from the 15 percent they were thirty years ago. During that same time, obesity rates for children have more than tripled. One study projects that over half of the US population will be considered obese by 2030.

¹Obesity is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) above 30. Overweight means a BMI of 25 to 29.9. BMI is calculated by taking your weight in pounds and dividing it by the square of your height in inches, and multiplying the result by 703. For instance, if you are 5 feet, 5 inches tall (65 inches x 65 inches equals 4,225) and you weigh 185 pounds (84 kg) you have a BMI of 30.8.

Addicted to Urgent?

I love that the first aspect of Habit 7 is physical well-being. Sometimes you're dedicated and disciplined. At other times, you give in to the easy path and opt out, usually because you don't *feel* like it. What is the main reason people don't feel like exercising? People say they're too busy, but a closer look tells a different story. With countless priorities vying for attention, you tend to deal with those that are urgent—including *those that aren't important*. Without realizing it, you develop an addiction to urgency, which sidelines exercise because renewal is anything but urgent.

When you get in a rut, exercise is a game changer. It's easy to do and fully within your control. Exercise has other benefits as well. Scientific research shows that exercise strengthens the brain and is essential to mental capacity. Plus, a consistent exercise routine affects other areas of your life—for example, when you work out you tend to eat better. Surprisingly, it can even lead to better financial discipline by giving you the stamina to curb spending.

As a sales leader, do you encourage exercise or physical activity? Lead by example as a more powerful way to show fitness matters. Ask your company to pay for gym memberships as part of the wellness program. Allow scheduling flexibility so your team uses that membership, even during the day. Research shows people are more disciplined for longer periods and work out more intensely if they have a workout partner. Perhaps you could encourage workout partnerships. This could also build harmony in the team.

What can you do on the healthy-eating side that would make a difference? Choose different snacks for meetings. Suggest different foods be included in the cafeteria or vending machines. Get a nutritionist to coach members of your team who want help building a nutrition plan. Pay attention to energy management. Schedule heavier meetings in the mornings when energy is high rather than later in the day.

The Invisible Muscle

A decision to start eating better and get in shape is easy. It's also easier than we like to admit to see our resolve fade. The problem isn't the gyms, equipment, trainers, or goals we set. It's that plus factor that Habit 7 helps you build.

To take control of your life requires willpower. According to science, willpower is like a muscle—it gets stronger with exercise. Even though it's not one of the four dimensions Dr. Covey mentions, taking weekly small steps in each area builds this invisible muscle!

Here's how you can build resolve: make a small, weekly commitment to yourself in each of the four areas of personal renewal. I suggest you start small rather than swing the pendulum too far. It doesn't require a lot of time to see changes—for example, 15 minutes of aerobic exercise three or four times per week is enough. Get started! Then slowly increase your time. Keeping these small commitments builds self-control and boosts your sense of self-worth. Over time, your willpower is steeled and gives you the power to resist even persistent temptation.

But the opposite is also true. Your willpower can lessen just as easily. The more you give in to the impulse that whispers in your ear, "I don't feel like exercising today," the more your willpower muscle withers. That habit spreads to other areas of your life, and you say, "I don't feel like doing that either..." Again, over time you slowly lose self-control and give up the very part of you that makes you unique, powerful, and able to accomplish your goals. Once lost, you have to fight hard to get that power back.



Sharpen the
Saw

How's Your Balance Sheet?

Living Habit 7 reminds you to build balance in your life. It's easy, sometimes for long periods of time, to lose sight of the need for renewal. Some choose to over-focus on one area of life. For example, think of people who read a lot, but don't exercise. While they might be in good mental shape, they atrophy physically or spiritually. Focusing on one area to the exclusion of any other dimension in your life often leads to a sense of regret or emptiness.

Starting in one area influences other areas of your life. For example, if you exercise, you trigger endorphins in your brain that

give you more enthusiasm and energy to accomplish what you want to do. Then you might turn your attention to the spiritual area of your life. As you review your mission statement as part of your regular weekly planning, your purpose influences your choices more frequently, increasing the likelihood the contribution you want to make in life will actually come about.



A Positive Addiction

If you want to improve your life, practice Habit 7. It's not an overstatement—Habit 7 is that powerful! Sharpening the saw can become a truly positive addiction—when you practice renewal, especially in the area of exercise, you feel better.

I can't think of anything that would keep you more centered than if you made small commitments to yourself every day and kept those commitments. Over time, renewal becomes such a priority that you won't violate it or let anyone or anything else interfere. Importantly, beyond being revitalized and energized, you'll find you are more settled, centered, and confident. As your self-control goes up you are more secure because you make commitments to yourself and keep them. And, when you make commitments to others, you're better able to keep those too.

“Character cannot be made,” writes author Philip Brooks “except by a steady, long-continued process.” The indisputable fact is every person on the planet has the same amount of time. And your choices reflect what you value. Have you allowed the social weather around you to blow you off course? Get back on course. Do what you know you should. You'll be better for it and so will those around you.

What Can You Do as an Organization?

The four areas of renewal are as applicable to organizations as they are to individuals. Dr. Covey relates the physical to the financial elements of an organization; the social to how employees are treated; the mental to how talent is developed; and the spiritual to a company's purpose and contribution.

Here are a few more ideas that might help you encourage the habit of balanced renewal:

1. Offer dinner for four (helps with the social relationships dimension) at a nice restaurant to each person on your team who builds a plan to renew in one neglected dimension. For example, if you regularly exercise but don't read much, you could commit to read a book in the next month. On the other hand, if you regularly read, but don't exercise, you could commit to walk four times per week for 30 minutes.
2. Some organizations invite employees to participate in a book-of-the-month club. People get together once a month to discuss a book they've all read. I wouldn't go to the lengths of requiring it (though lots of companies do) because that turns it into a carrot and stick activity, which is de-motivating. When participation is voluntary it tells you who wants to learn, grow, and push themselves. Perhaps those are your future leaders.
3. Give special recognition for completing any important milestone like running a 5K or finishing a historical biography. By *special*, I mean make it memorable. Contact the team beforehand and let them know you're going to recognize a team member for an accomplishment. Have the other team members applaud, whistle, scream, and cheer as loudly as they can for one *full* minute. The length and volume of the applause is important. They will expect it to last for 10 seconds or so and when it goes on longer they will probably blush. Try it!
4. If someone on your team has a passion in a specific area, give that person an assignment related to that area and ask him/her to teach back to the rest of the team. By urging this study and research, you encourage further development. And when it's time to report to the team, it encourages wider social interaction and connectedness.
5. Find a charitable cause and enlist the support of the team, not by donating money, but by donating time together. Plan regular outings together and serve others in need. This is yet another way to create balance and tune into purpose beyond self.

Plenty can be done if we apply our imagination and creativity. The truth is, most leaders focus exclusively on the business and expect employees to take care of themselves. It's also true that individually we neglect renewal not due to a lack of institutional support or encouragement, but because, if left on our own, we just don't feel like it—and "not doing" becomes habitual.



Meet The Author

From opening his own direct mail advertising company early in his career to serving as managing partner of global accounts at FranklinCovey's Sales Performance Practice, David Marcum brings a start-up enthusiasm to everything he does. Dave is known for his passion for sales, energetic workshop delivery, consultative insights, and quick intellect—blended with a gift for language and a sense of humor. Dave has co-authored three books on communication and leadership, and has lectured and trained thousands of salespeople at organizations including Accenture, Hewlett-Packard, EDS, Microsoft, GE Real Estate, Oracle, Ford, Nike, Deloitte, KPMG, PwC, Koch, Hitachi Consulting, American Express, State Farm, AkzoNobel, CPA Global, and Booz Allen Hamilton. A world-renowned expert in consultative selling and a respected authority on large, complex sales, he is sought after by some of the largest and most successful sales organizations in the world to help inspire people, grow talent, and drive better sales results.

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