

**PME Resources: Theme 1: 2021 –
Understanding yourself and others as a leader**

**The Cove
Unit PME
Reading for War**

**BOOK REVIEW | THE 8TH HABIT: FROM EFFECTIVENESS
TO GREATNESS, BY STEPHEN R. COVEY**

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The 8th Habit to build around the 7 Habits

Stephen Covey is internationally respected as a teacher of leadership and organisational principles. His most popular book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, has sold 15 million copies over the last 20 years and establishes a character-based approach to effectiveness and leadership as influence.

The 8th Habit is about finding your voice and inspiring others to find theirs. Voice is about vocation or calling; where our talents, passion and conscience intersect with the world's needs. Covey says discovering your voice is the path to unleash your greatest potential.

A whole-person paradigm for the new Information Age

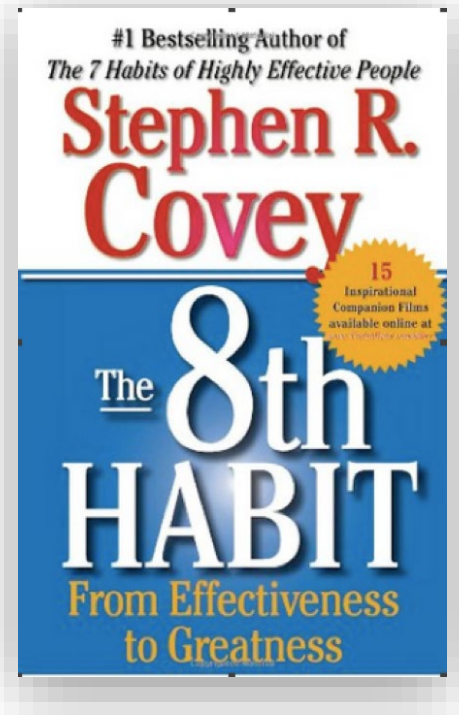
We are in a new 'information age' or 'knowledge worker age' and challenges are of a new order of magnitude. Instead of focusing on 'command and control' type management, Covey argues it is time to celebrate and release human potential. Any organisation can be over-managed and under-led; Covey appeals for leading people as people rather than managing them as things. He advocates a whole-person paradigm that recognises people's body, heart, mind and soul; and their need to live, to love, to learn and to leave a legacy. For example, he counsels making four assumptions to help live a holistic and balanced life that demonstrates physical intelligence as well as mental, emotional and spiritual intelligence (p.58):

1. For the body – assume you've had a heart attack; now live accordingly.
2. For the mind – assume the half-life of your profession is two years; now prepare accordingly.
3. For the heart – assume everything you say about another, they can overhear; now speak accordingly.
4. For the spirit – assume you have a one-on-one visit with your Creator every quarter; now live accordingly.

Covey suggests we can find our voice through discipline, vision, passion and conscience – the highest manifestations of the four intelligences.

And to inspire others to find their voice, we need to exercise:

1. Modelling of trustworthiness
2. Pathfinding to build common vision and values
3. Aligning goals and structures



4. Empowering people and team

These 4 roles of leadership describe *what you do* in leadership, to be combined with the 7 Habits that shape *who and what you are*.

The leadership challenge is captured in Covey's definition: "Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves" (p.98). This sort of leadership is not about position but influencing people from wherever you are in or outside any formal organisation. Covey urges to consider how can I more effectively clearly communicate the worth and potential of people I am closest to – my family, friends and colleagues?

Modelling

The first role of leadership is modelling. Leadership is not just about competence but also about character – both are necessary and form the basis for trustworthiness and wisdom. That's where the 7 habits are so essential – be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first, think win-win, seek first to understand then to be understood, synergise and sharpen the saw. Covey uses the image of being a trim-tab, the small rudder that turns the large rudder that turns the ship, to encourage workers to take appropriate initiative to expand influence and make the personal changes that can help steer the organisation.

The importance of trust

Trust is critical in any relationships. With it, you can overcome challenges and even misunderstandings; without it even the smallest obstacles can derail our efforts. This is so important to cultivate, and so hard to rebuild, which is why those first weeks/ year in a pastoral appointment are so key. Trust builds in people's emotional bank accounts when we make and keep promises, demonstrate honesty and integrity, show kindnesses and courtesies, think win-win or no deal, clarify expectations, be loyal to those not present, apologise, give and receive feedback, and demonstrate forgiveness. It's not just about technical skills and having an awesome vision, but having the people skills and emotional intelligence to work with people and help them find their voice, to know we believe in them and cheer them on.

The third alternative

When negotiating and arguing for your way, it is great to strive for a third alternative or win-win solution, seeking for both parties to win as much as possible. Covey discusses using active listening, and the Indian Talking Stick, to enhance communication. To achieve synergy and search for the third alternative, Covey suggests asking two questions:

1. Would you be willing to search for a solution that is better than what either one of you (us) have proposed?
2. Would you agree to a simple ground rule: No one can make his or her point until they have restated the other person's point to his or her satisfaction (p.201).

Vocational voice or Hedgehog Concept

Part of finding and communicating vision is the leadership role of "pathfinding" towards shared vision, values and strategy. The key in the new paradigm of leadership is not to go away with a small upper-management team and come up with a mission statement, but to utilise everyone's valuable contribution and invite their ownership; to cultivate vision from grassroots involvement and not top-down.

To focus vision, Covey encourages us to think about our voice. It is similar to Jim Collins in *Good to Great* who he quotes as talking about the Hedgehog Concept. Key questions are:

- What are you really good at perhaps even potentially the best in the world?
- What are you deeply passionate about?
- And what will people pay for (showing that their needs and wants are being met)?
- Covey adds, to bring spirit into the balance, what does your conscience counsel?

These are powerful questions for any individual or organisation.

Alignment

A third key leadership task is alignment. It takes discipline and the challenge of going beyond ideas to execution. Covey discusses aligning goals and systems for results. An educational or workplace system that rewards independence, for example, cannot expect people to strive for cooperative and interdependent action. This is why collaborative assignments are important in education, not just individual essays all the time.

A crucial activity, furthermore, is getting the *right* people into the *right* positions. Covey counsels strategic hiring: “Pay the price to really build a relationship with possible candidates to the point that they are authentic and transparent and have the time to decide whether their own vision, value and voice are in alignment with the strategic criteria of their future work” (p.247). Then he counsels asking people to reflect on their life experiences and what they most liked doing and did well, to help discern where their voice is. This is great advice.

Empowering and releasing passion and talent

Empowering people is a final key leadership task. Giving up control can be challenging for some personality-types, but is essential for cultivating quality. Workers should be permitted and encouraged, as in the military, to practice ‘the doctrine of stubborn refusal’ and if someone knows something is wrong and detrimental to the overall mission, respectfully push back. Harold Geneen, former Chairman of ITT, addresses the importance of empowerment: “The best way to inspire people to a superior performance is to convince them by everything you do and by your everyday attitude that you are wholeheartedly supporting them.”

Sweet spot

Practising the 8th Habit will lead us to our ‘sweet spot’. The sweet spot, as with a sports racquet or bat or golf club, will release a burst of energy and power that will send the ball soaring towards our goals. This takes discipline, and in particular:

1. Focus on the wildly important (with a narrow focus and don’t divide your attention)
2. Create a compelling scoreboard (measuring how we are going according to what is important)
3. Translate lofty goals into specific actions (need to know what specifically to do to work towards the goals set)
4. Hold each other accountable – all the time (meeting and opening up to one another as regularly as possible).

We need focus (discerning what matters most) and execution (making it happen). As with the London Underground, we need to beware the gap between our rhetoric and our reality.

Covey says often, "To know and not to do, is really not to know." Execution gaps can appear over lack of clarity, commitment, translation, enabling, synergy and/or accountability.

The age of wisdom

The age of wisdom is where we choose our purpose and obey natural principles, where information and knowledge are impregnated with principle and purpose. Covey suggests the buzz word is moving on from innovation to wisdom, in this 'wisdom age' where the essence of leadership will be to be a servant leader.

Should we pursue these principles and ways of operating, Covey says be careful what you ask and to differentiate what you are asking:

- Should I do it? (Value question)
- Do I want to do it? (Motivation question)
- Can I do it? (Competency question)

Inspiring stories and quotes

The 8th Habit is full of inspiring stories of character-based and effective leadership, and of quotes from significant leaders. For example:

"It is a greater compliment to be trusted than to be loved."
(George MacDonald)

"The best way to inspire people to a superior performance is to convince them by everything you do and by your everyday attitude that you are wholeheartedly supporting them."
(Harold S Geneen, Former Chairman of ITT)

"The difference between what we are doing and what we're capable of doing would solve most of the world's problems." (Mahatma Gandhi)

"In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit."
(Albert Schweitzer)

"When the morning's freshness has been replaced by the weariness of midday, when the leg muscles quiver under the strain, the climb seems endless, and, suddenly, nothing will go quite as you wish – it is then that you must not hesitate."
(Dag Hammarskjöld)

"Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I – I took the one less travelled by.
And that has made all the difference."
(Robert Frost)

"Give the world the best you have and you may get hurt.
Give the world your best anyway."
(Mother Theresa)

"Self-knowledge is best learned, not by contemplation, but by action.
Strive to do your duty and you will soon discover of what stuff you are made."
(Johann Goethe)

“At first, as a student, I wanted freedom only for myself, the transitory freedoms of being able to stay out at night, read what I pleased, and go where I chose. Later as a young man in Johannesburg, I yearned for the basic and honourable freedoms of achieving my potential, of earning my keep, of marrying and having a family – the freedom not to be obstructed in a lawful life. But I then slowly saw that not only was I not free, but my brothers and sisters were not free ... that is when the hunger for my own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom of my people. It was this desire for the freedom of my people to live their lives with dignity and self-respect that animated my life, that transformed a frightened young man into a bold one, that drove a law-abiding attorney to become a criminal, that turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home. ... I am no more virtuous or self-sacrificing than the next man, but I found that I could not even enjoy the poor and limited freedoms I was allowed when I knew my people were not free.”

(Nelson Mandela)

“I slept and dreamed that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted, and behold, service was joy.”

(Rabindranath Tagore)

“Leaders do not avoid, repress, or deny conflict, but rather see it as an opportunity.”

(Warren Bennis)

“Creative thinking involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in different ways.”

(Edward De Bono)

“The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.”

(Dwight David Eisenhower)

“To every man there comes in his life-time that special moment when he is figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered a chance to do a very special thing, unique to him and fitted to his talents. What a tragedy if that moment finds him unprepared or unqualified for the work which would be his finest hour.”

(Winston Churchill)

One criticism

Covey applauds America in several places as an empowering nation, evidenced he says by the fact that 4.5% of the world’s population produces almost a third of the world’s goods (p.222). But it is also appropriate to question America (and the rest of the West) for consuming such a high proportion of the world’s goods and resources.

Value

I appreciate Covey’s affirmation of the importance of leadership. The book is valuable for personal leadership and vision, and also for leadership of any sized organisations. It’s about both personal and organisational leadership. There are accompanying personal workbook and audio versions available, and it comes with associated films available on a DVD or online at www.The8thHabit.com/offers.

The 8th Habit is an excellent book for personal growth and organisational leadership.

Notes:

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<http://www.jmm.org.au/articles/22369.htm>

The book's publisher details are Simon & Schuster, 2004.