

THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

BOOK DIGEST

Habit 2 : BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND – Principles of Personal Leadership

PART 2

Writing and Using a Personal Statement

It allows us to create a **clear lens** through which we can see the world, and an effective and empowering center.

In Stephen Covey's words:

“Frankl says we detect rather than invent our missions in life. (...) I think each of us has an internal monitor or sense, a conscience, that gives us an awareness of our own uniqueness and the singular contributions that we can make.”

And now in **Viktor Frankl's words**:

“Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life... Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it.”

“Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life: to life he can only respond by being responsible.”

It is paramount to realize that **we cannot seek the meaning of our lives in our circle of concern**, and that we can **only** find it in our circle of **influence**, if we're not to surrender our first creation in the hands of other people or circumstances.

If we think of our minds as computers, **Habit 1** allows us to see that we are the **programmer** and **Habit 2** is about writing the **program**.

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Writing this personal statement is a **deeply introspective** process that will require time, attention and intention--and not only several mindful rewrites, but also regular minor updates. It is meant to be a concise but comprehensive expression of our values and directions or vision.

“I find the process is as important as the product. Writing or reviewing a mission statement changes you because it forces you to think through your priorities deeply, carefully, and to align your behavior with your beliefs. As you do, other people begin to sense that you’re not being driven by everything that happens to you. You have a sense of mission about what you’re trying to do and you are excited about it.”

Using your whole brain

The author reminds us that the **two hemispheres of our brains** hold different functions and work in different ways.

The **left** hemisphere is the logical and verbal center of our brain, dealing with words, parts, specifics, analysis (putting apart), sequential thinking and with a time-bound appreciation of life. The **right** hemisphere is the intuitive and creative center of our brain, dealing with pictures, wholes, relationships between parts, synthesis (putting together), holistic thinking and with a time-free appreciation of life.

We live in a **left hemisphere dominant world and culture** where logic, measurements and words are revered and our intuitive, sensing, artistic and creative nature underestimated. This is why we must train ourselves to relearn how to tap into our full potential and use not only so-called left hemisphere thought processes but also right-hemisphere like ones. S.C. reminds us that it must be a conscious choice by quoting Abraham Maslow:

“He that is good with a hammer tends to think everything is a nail - Abraham Maslow”.

If we don’t train ourselves to think differently, we’ll keep on thinking in only one way, by default.

Two ways to Tap the Right Brain

EXPAND PERSPECTIVE

In this exercise, S.C. offers the option to **time travel in the future**, and start by writing our own eulogy, in order to really zoom in on what we wish others to feel and think of when they remember us.

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He urges us to visualize our twenty-fifth anniversary with our partner and see what we want them to be sharing about their experience with you. He invites us to imagine our retirement and reflect on which achievements and contributions we want to have offered by then. It is very important to visualize all those events in much details, including our foreseen emotions, feelings and sensitive experience. At the end of it, our values and principles become more and more evident, and the futility of blame, gossiping and put downs even more obvious.

“When people seriously undertake to identify what really matters most to them in their lives, what they really want to be and to do, they become very reverent. They start to think in larger terms than today and tomorrow.”

VISUALIZATION and AFFIRMATION

Personal leadership doesn't end with the writing of the personal statement, we must keep our visions and values **front and center** and **align** our **daily** lives with them.

And we can use our personal statement to write ourselves directions in the form of **affirmations**. Of note, a good affirmation must have **five features**: it must be **personal**, in the **present tense**, **positive**, **emotional** and **visual**. Then, taking situations that feel challenging in our lives, we can **lead ourselves in advance** in the way we wish to react when the situation presents itself again. S.C. takes the example of responding differently to his children's missteps:

“It is deeply satisfying (emotional) that I (personal) respond (present tense) with wisdom, love, firmness, and self-control (positive) when my children misbehave.”

After writing it, we can **visualize** it. We can **practice** it even! Putting ourselves through our minds into this situation a few minutes each day, we can rehearse how to **reshape our behaviors** in advance. We write a new program, a new script. One **based on our own self-selected value system**.

The author then shares with us the main results of Dr Charles Garfield's findings after studying peak performers:

“Almost all of the world-class athletes and other peak performers are visualizers. They see it; they feel it; they experience it before they actually do it. They begin with the end in mind.”

We can use this in every area of our lives and progressively create a **new internal comfort zone**, by seeing vividly, clearly, relentlessly over and over the end before it ever begins.

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Affirmation and visualization are indeed a **powerful form of programming**, using our imagination and our conscience in harmony to, in Stephen Covey's words:

“transcend ourselves and create a life of contribution based on our unique purpose and on the principles that govern interdependent reality.”

Identifying roles and goals

The author reminds us that **writing** is a kind of **psycho-neural muscular activity**, helping us bridge the conscious and the subconscious. It **distills** our thoughts and then allows us to **clarify** them, notably by breaking the whole into parts.

It's normal at first when trying to rewrite our paradigms to not think broadly enough, and this is why a helpful first step to writing our personal statements can be to **break it down** and to focus on **each main roles** of our lives, one at a time.

Stephen Covey shares his process to guide us. He chose the following mission statement:

“My mission is to live with integrity and to make a difference in the lives of others.”

He then chose action verbs to describe his mission (having charity, sacrificing, inspiring, being impactful) and highlighted what those words mean to him.

Finally, he highlighted how his mission will translate throughout the different roles he takes in his life: husband, father, son/brother, christian, neighbor, change agent and scholar.

S.C. believes that writing our mission through the lens of roles that we frequently review brings balance and harmony.

The next step is to focus on our long-term goals, the ones that are based on our values, talents and sense of mission, not on our conditioning and other people's expectations of us.

“An effective goal focuses primarily on results rather than activity. It identifies where you want to be, and, in the process, helps you determine where you are. It gives you important information on how to get there, and it tells you when you have arrived. It unifies your efforts and energy. It gives meaning and purpose to all you do. And it can finally translate itself into daily activities so that you are proactive, you are in charge of your life, you are making each day the things that will enable you to fulfill your personal mission statement.”

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Roles and goals create structure and organized direction for us. Clarifying them right now will effectively prepare us for habit 3.

Family mission statements

We can apply all the concepts we've already acquired to our families and create a document summarizing the shared vision and values of the family members, which can become the standard for evaluation and decision making in every situation. It helps avoiding the following trap, described by S.C.:

"Many families are managed on the basis of crises, moods, quick fixes and instant gratification—not on sound principles."

And it helps creating unity, harmony and continuity. Here again, the process is as important as the result as it leads the family members to talk and communicate deeply with each others, allowing for even more mutual respect and for a common ground to come back to, in order to evaluate how things are going in regards to what matters most to the family members.

The author explains that his family goes through this process twice a year, reworking the common goals and each person's "jobs":

"It renews us; it reconnects us to what we believe in, what we stand for".

Organizational mission statements

As Stephen Covey explains, the main problem in organizations is that people don't buy into what the managers and leaders have determined as goals, because they were not involved in setting them. On top of that, reward systems are very often not aligned with the stated values systems.

"Without involvement, there is no commitment."

As people grow more and more mature, they want significant involvement in how they are to live their own lives and do their work. The author therefore gives examples of IBM and of a hotel chain he worked with, where it was clear that the employee were all very aware of their company's values and mission statement and also that they all personally shared those goals and values--because they had been involved in the process of choosing them.

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Writing an organizational mission statement takes time, skills, patience, empathy and sincerity. It requires the courage and integrity to align systems, structure and management style to the organization's values and vision. It's a lot of work AND it works. It fosters unity and commitment.

In the author's words:

"It creates in people's hearts and minds a frame of reference, a set of criteria or guidelines, by which they will govern themselves. They don't need someone else directing, controlling, criticizing, or taking cheap shots. They have bought into the changeless core of what the organization is about."

Here is our homework:

- To go through the funeral visualization and reflect on what we want our family, friends, work colleagues, [add any relevant category] to say about us in terms of character, contributions and achievements.
- Identifying our roles. Assessing our satisfaction with our mirror image of our life.
- Starting to write our personal mission statement.
- Applying the principle of mental creation to prepare for an upcoming challenge.
- Share those principles with someone else!

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Habit 3 : PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST – Principles of Personal Management

"Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least—Goethe"

Let's start by answering two of Stephen Covey's questions for ourselves:

- "What one thing could you do (something you aren't doing now) that, if you did on a regular basis, would make a tremendous positive difference in your personal life?"
- "What one thing in your business or professional life would bring similar results?"

The author reminds us that **habit 1 (proactivity)** puts us back in the shoes of **the creator**, using our unique human endowments (self-awareness, imagination, conscience, independent will), and in particular **self-awareness**. It allows us to choose which unhealthy program and ineffective scripts we want to rewrite and edit out. **Habit 2 (beginning with the end in mind)** is the **first mental creation** and is mostly on our **imagination** and **conscience**, leading us to contact deeply our basic paradigms and values and to get clear on our vision of whom we want to become. Now, **habit 3 (putting first things first)** is the practical application of the first two habits, it's **the second creation**, the exercise of our **independent will** toward becoming principle-centered:

"It's the day day out, moment-by-moment doing it."

We need first to develop proactively a clear vision and to understand ourselves and our chosen direction, to become principle-centered--which is why we need to master habit 1 and 2 first. **Once we have both a personal vision and personal leadership, we can develop self-management**, which is what habit 3 is all about. Indeed, we first learned how to develop our own philosophy and now we must manage ourselves effectively, to **build a life congruent with the answers we acquired** previously.

"Management is the breaking down, the analysis, the sequencing, the specific application, the time-bound left brain aspect of effective self-government."

The power of independent will

Independent will is the **foundation** of effective self-management.

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This is what allows us to make decisions and choices and then act accordingly. It allows us to **act instead of being acted upon**, and to proactively carry out the program we chose for ourselves.

The author reminds us that:

“It’s usually NOT the dramatic, the visible, the once in a lifetime, up-by-the-bootstraps effort that brings enduring success. Empowerment comes from learning how to use this great endowment in the decisions we make every day.”

“The degree to which we have developed our independent will in our everyday lives is measured by our personal integrity. Integrity is, fundamentally, the value we place on ourselves. It’s our ability to make and keep commitments to ourselves, to “walk our talk”. It’s honor with self, a fundamental part of the Character Ethic, the essence of our proactive growth.”

Effective **management** means having the **discipline** to put first things first, while **leadership** is **deciding** what those first things are. Our discipline is meant to come from within, fueled by our independent will to follow our own values and vision. It gives us the will to **let our values**—not our feelings, impulses or moods—**drive our life**. It takes doing not only what we like doing but what needs to be done for our purpose, our mission to come alive. This is why we need to develop Habit 2 fully before diving into the Habit 3 work, as **we need to own our burning YESes, to feel empowered to say NO to all that doesn’t serve**.

Stephen Covey explains:

“[habit 3] requires independent will, the power to do something when you don’t want to do it, to be a function of your values rather than a function of the impulse or desire of any given moment. It’s the power to act with integrity to your proactive first creation.”

Four generations of time management

For S. C., the essence of time management is to learn **how to organize and execute around priorities**.

He walks us through what four generations of time management thinkers have discovered for us to move toward greater control over our daily lives.

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First we needed to make notes and checklists to get a grasp of the “now”. Then we learned how to build calendars and appointments books to start planning our futures. The third generation introduced, in the author’s words:

“(…) the important idea of prioritization, of clarifying values, and of comparing the relative worth of activities based on their relationship to those values. In addition, it focuses on setting goals—specific long, intermediate and short-term targets toward which time and energy would be directed in harmony with values.”

However “efficient” scheduling and control of time can become counterproductive, as **they can rob us from meeting our relational and human needs**, and cut us from enjoying some spontaneity—which turned off many people who preferred to sacrifice time management for the sake of their relationships and quality of life.

This led a fourth generation of thinkers to realize that:

“THE CHALLENGE IS NOT TO MANAGE TIME, BUT TO MANAGE OURSELVES.”

Stepping out from a focusing on things and time, we are invited to focus on maintaining our P/PC balance, by **accomplishing** our results while **preserving** and **enhancing** our relationships.

Quadrant II

All that we have to do can be separated into four quadrants depending on whether they are important and/or urgent (or not).

Urgent things take control of us. They insist we take action, often make us feel popular, can be pleasant and fun and they’re very visible. However they’re often not unimportant.

Important means that the results will **serve our high-priority goals, missions and values.** We need to learn how to clearly define what is important to us and what isn’t.

We react to urgent matters but what truly moves the needle is to be proactive with our responses to what is important. Only by practicing Habit 2 can we have the clarity and drive to choose to focus on what is important, instead of reacting only to what is urgent.

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Quadrant 1 (see table on p.12) includes **the crisis and problems** we face. Things that will yield significant results and require our immediate attention. We must attend to Quadrant 1 issues obviously, but when they become the center of our lives, something has gone astray. We fell into the trap of being crisis managers, problem-minded people, deadline-driven producers. And the more we focus on quadrant 1, the more it grows and dominates us. The risk is to then only escape to visit Quadrant 4, trying to recharge by doing something unimportant and not urgent--and mostly sacrificing Quadrant II in the process.

Results of focusing on quadrant 1 include: “stress, burnout, crisis management, always putting out fires”.

Other people get trapped into **quadrant III**, because they haven't learned to differentiate what is important and what isn't. They **believe they're in quadrant 1**, not realizing that the sense of urgency is coming from the expectations and priorities of others, not them.

Results of focusing on quadrant 3 include: “short term focus, crisis management, reputation-chameleon character, seeing goals and plans as worthless, feeling victimized, out of control, shallow or broken relationships”.

Results of focusing on quadrant 4 include: “total irresponsibility, getting fired from jobs, staying dependent on others or institutions for basics”.

This is why **effective people stay out of quadrant 3 and 4**. They're just not important, no matter if they're urgent or not. And they learn to **shrink quadrant 1** and to **focus mostly and deeply on quadrant 2**.

Results of focusing on quadrant 2 include: vision, perspective, balance, discipline, control and few crises.

“Quadrant 2 is the heart of personal management. It deals with things that are not urgent, but are important. It deals with things like building relationships, writing a personal mission statement, long-range planning, exercising, preventive maintenance, preparation—all those things we know we need to do, but somehow seldom get around to doing, because they aren't urgent.”

S.C. paraphrases Peter Drucker to remind us that **effective people are not problems-minded but opportunity-minded**. Thinking preventively and, in doing so, starving problems, shrinking their first quadrant and feeding opportunity, while focusing on their second quadrant where activities have the power to transform their lives.

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This is when the author reminds us of the two questions that opened this chapter. Those are chapter activities that allow our effectiveness to take quantum leaps when we do them.

If we were to **fully focus on quadrant 2** and cultivating the **proactivity** to go after what lies in it:

“[our] crises and problems would shrink to manageable proportions because you would be thinking ahead, working on the roots, doing the preventive things that keep situations from developing into crises in the first place.”

What it takes to say NO

At first we can only get **time** back by **cutting it from quadrant 3 and 4**. What is urgent and important must be done, and quadrant 1 will only shrink once we’ve effectively been taking care of quadrant 2 for a while. So in order to give ourselves the bandwidth to say YES to important activities, **we must learn how to say NO--kindly, politely and non-apologetically!--to what is not.**

It takes **clarity** and **courage** to decide what are our **highest priorities** and only focus on them. We need to have bigger, burning YESes inside of us, in order to feel justified to say NO to other things, and it’s important to also realize that good is often the enemy of the best. It can keep us from our chance to make the unique contribution we were meant to make. Also, **we are in fact always saying NO to something...** we must make sure we’re not saying NO to what is fundamental and highly important for us.

“We say YES or NO to things daily, usually many times a day.

*A center of correct principles and a focus on our personal mission
empowers us with wisdom
to make those judgements effectively.”*

This drives us back to the importance of organizing and executing around balanced priorities.

We must ask ourselves if we’re lacking the ability to prioritize, organize, or the discipline to execute around our priorities. In most cases, it’s the latter. And it’s mostly because of a lack of embodiment and internalization of habit 2 and of what our priorities truly are.

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Self-discipline alone is not enough to sustain our drive to achieve what matters to us the most. We need to have built a principle center and to have created our own personal mission statement. Those are the foundation of sustained efforts. This is how we can fortify our roots instead of wasting time working on the leaves.

Working on recentring our center must come first, because our independent will cannot drive us away from the current center we operate from. **Management can only follow leadership.**

“The way you spend your time is a result of the way you see your time and the way you really see your priorities.”

Once our priorities are clear to us and rooted in our personal mission and principle center, **Quadrant 2** becomes an **exciting place**, where we naturally choose to invest our time.

Only then can we be fueled by our burning YESes, and stand clear from the popularity found in quadrant 3 and the pleasure found in quadrant 4.

“Only when you have the self-awareness to examine your program –and the imagination and conscience to create a new, unique, principle-centered program to which you can say YES– only then will you have sufficient independent willpower to say NO with a genuine smile, to the unimportant.”

		TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX	
		URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	I	ACTIVITIES: Crises Pressing problems Deadline-driven projects	ACTIVITIES: Prevention, PC activities Relationship building Recognizing new opportunities Planning, recreation
	III	ACTIVITIES: Interruptions, some calls Some mail, some reports Some meetings Proximate, pressing matters Popular activities	ACTIVITIES: Trivia, busywork Some mail Some phone calls Time wasters Pleasant activities
NOT IMPORTANT			

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BOOK CLUB DISCUSSIONS

SAVE THE DATE

You're invited

Tuesday, October 24th

from 7pm-8pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting

OR

Friday, October 27th

from 12pm-1pm

Virtual Zoom Meeting