

## IX. Committees and Teamwork

A strong, functional committee structure is often the working base from which a society will be able to carry out its mission. The outcome of any committee effort provides opportunities for sharing the workload, networking with peers, and leadership development. If all individuals are not willing to be active, supportive members, it becomes increasingly difficult for the committee to accomplish its goals. Successful committees combine talents and abilities to accomplish something great together. Committees in which members are interdependent can accomplish more because the individual members recognize that while each have wonderful ideas, working together can accomplish far more. They can share the vast resources and potential of each other. This section of the Leadership Development Manual gives some tips to the members of the committee on how to be an effective committee member in any setting, and thus an effective committee.

### *Seven ways to be a highly effective person in any environment*

1. **The habit of Pro-activity:** A proactive person doesn't wait for things to happen to them; instead they take the initiative and make things happen for them. They take responsibility for what happens in their lives rather than blaming their current situation on their surroundings. Proactive individuals use their resourcefulness and initiative to do whatever is necessary to get the job done. A proactive individual can anticipate barriers to productivity and plan alternatives to keep the ball rolling. They do this by using four human gifts; self-awareness, conscience, imagination, and independent will. If you are proactive you don't have to wait for circumstance or other people to create perspective-expanding experiences, you can consciously create your own. Organizations of every kind can be proactive; they can combine creativity and resourcefulness of proactive individuals to create a proactive culture within the organization.
2. **Begin with the end in mind:** To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now and the necessary steps to keep you moving in the right direction. Effectiveness does not depend solely on how much effort we expend, but on whether or not the effort we expend is directed properly. 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; it unifies your efforts and energy. Individuals and organizations shape their own future by creating a mental vision and purpose for any project. They mentally identify and commit themselves to the principles, values, relationships, and purposes that matter most to them.

Lacking purpose hurts performance. If you have no purpose in mind, it is hard to know if you are doing a good job. Even if instructions are precise, not knowing why you are doing something will dampen your motivation. You are likely to make the effort necessary to do a good job if your purpose is sufficiently meaningful to enlist some emotional commitment. Just as you will accomplish more if you have a clear goal, you will be better off if your organization has a clear collective purpose. As the number of people who are working together rises, the importance of a clear, commonly understood purpose increases geometrically. The lack of a clear, commonly understood purpose may prevent the group from accomplishing anything.

3. **Put first things first:** In addition to self-awareness, imagination, and conscience, independent will is the human endowment that really makes effective self-management possible. It is the ability to make decisions and choices and to act in accordance with them. Success 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 impulses or desires of a given moment. You must decide what needs to be accomplished first in order to accomplish subsequent goals. You also need to decide which of the tasks are the most urgent and complete those tasks first. Once you've decided what needs to be done you must plan your time effectively to ensure that you can accomplish your goals. A good way to accomplish a multitude of tasks is to learn to delegate effectively. Effectively delegating to others is perhaps the single most powerful high-leverage activity there is. Transferring responsibilities to other skilled and trained people enables you to give your energies to other high-leverage activities. Not only does this free up some time for you to do other things, but it also lets other members of a group know that you believe they can do as good a job as you could and you trust them to do so. This helps to create an environment of teamwork where every member is important in achieving the groups' goals.
  
4. **Think Win/Win:** Win/Win is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions and is based on mutual respect in those interactions. Win/Win means that all agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial and mutually satisfying. All parties feel good about the decision and feel committed to the action plan. This way of thinking is especially beneficial to groups of people working together because it sets a cooperative arena. Win/Win is based on a paradigm that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others. Anything less than Win/Win in an interdependent reality is a poor alternative that will have an impact on the long-term relationship. Trust is high in Win/Win relationships, so they are more open. Even though we may see things differently we know that we will each treat one another with respect. We are both committed to trying to understand each other's point of view deeply and to work together for the synergistic solution that will be a better answer for both of us. When both parties are committed to Win/Win, they eliminate the negative energy normally focused on differences in personality and position and create positive, cooperative energy focused in thoroughly understanding the issues and resolving them in a mutually beneficial way.

*A four step process of becoming involved in Win/Win Relationships*

- I. See the problem from the other point of view. Really seek to understand and to give expression to the needs and concerns of the other party as well as or better than they can themselves.
- II. Identify the key issues and concerns (not positions) involved.
- III. Determine what results would constitute a fully acceptable solution.
- IV. Identify possible new options to achieve those results.

Win/Win is not a personality technique. It's a total paradigm of human interaction that comes from a character of integrity and maturity. It grows out of high trust relationships. It is embodied in agreements that effectively clarify and manage expectations as well as accomplishments. It thrives on a supportive system, it is not thinking selfishly (Win/Lose) or like a martyr (Lose/Win). Members think interdependently in terms of

“we” not “me”. Thinking Win/Win encourages conflict resolution and helps individuals seek mutually beneficial solutions. It’s sharing information, power, recognition, and rewards.

5. **Seek first to understand, then to be understood:** Communication is the most important skill in life; we spend most of our waking hours communicating. You’ve spent years learning to read and write and years learning how to speak. But what about listening? What training have you had that enables you to listen so that you really understand another human being from that individual’s own frame of reference? If you want to interact effectively with others, you first need to understand them. If you want to be really effective in interpersonal communication, you have to build the skills of empathetic listening on a base of character that inspires openness and trust.

We all know how easy it is to dismiss someone else’s suggestion. And that is one sure way of getting others to switch off and stop contributing or communicating. Instead, start from the assumption that they thought their idea was useful. If you don’t see how, ask them to explain. Most people don’t listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply. They are either speaking or preparing to speak. When we speak we have a tendency to focus on being understood, not on understanding the person we are speaking to. Empathetic listening gets inside another person’s frame of reference. You see the world the way they see the world, you understand how they feel. The essence of empathetic listening is not that you agree with someone; it’s that you fully understand that person, emotionally as well as intellectually. You don’t have to agree with someone to understand and respect his or her thoughts and feelings.

People want to be understood and whatever investment of time it takes to do that will bring much greater returns of time as you work from an accurate understanding of problems and issues. Once you show that you are willing to really listen and understand, chances are you will gain the respect of others and they will in turn seek to understand you also. First, seek to understand before you try to present your own ideas. It’s a powerful habit of effective interdependence. When we really, deeply understand each other, we open the door to creative solutions and alternatives. Our differences are no longer stumbling blocks to communication and progress. Instead, they become the stepping-stones to synergy. When others feel understood first, they feel affirmed and valued, defenses are lowered, and opportunities to speak openly and to be understood come much more naturally and easily.

6. **Synergize:** Synergy means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The essence of synergy is to value differences, to respect them, to build on strengths, to compensate for weaknesses. The synergistic position of high trust produces solutions better than any originally proposed. The very strength in this relationship is having other points of view. Sameness is uncreative and boring. The essence of synergy is to value the differences. The person who is truly effective has the humility and reverence to recognize their own perceptual limitations and to appreciate the rich resources available through interaction with the hearts and minds of other human beings. That person values the differences because those differences add to their knowledge and understanding. You can value the differences in other people if you work with a Win/Win philosophy and really seek to understand, you usually can find a solution that will be better for everyone concerned.

When we work with others we have a tremendous opportunity to help one another improve our skills and thus increase those resources. We can observe one another's performance far better than we can judge our own. Moreover, everyone brings different skills and experiences to our joint work. Increasing the effectiveness of the feedback you offer one another can make a tremendous impact on your productivity and efficacy. And, you can encourage others to give (and receive) feedback better by doing a good job yourself.

Having everyone take part in the thinking process improves the quality of the thinking. With a larger pool of ideas, there is a better chance that you will hit a good one. In addition, it treats everyone with respect and lets members of the group know that their thoughts are valued. Each member will be more committed to a plan that they have helped to think through. Synergistic teams thrive on individual strengths so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

7. **Sharpening the saw:** Sharpening the saw is about constantly renewing ourselves in the four basic areas of life; physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual. It's the habit that increases our capacity to live all other habits of effectiveness. For an organization, this habit promotes vision, renewal, continuous improvement, safeguards against burnout, and puts the organization on a new upward growth path.

There is an intrinsic security that comes as a result of effective interdependent living. There is a security in knowing that Win/Win solutions do exist, that life is not always "either/or" and that there are almost always mutually beneficial third alternatives. There is security in knowing that you can step out of your own frame of reference without giving it up, that you can really, deeply understand another human being. There is security that comes when you authentically, creatively, and cooperatively interact with other people and really experience these interdependent habits.

*Some things you might do to improve the way you and other committee members get things done together*

- Formulate your purpose in terms of results
- Think systematically from problem through diagnosis to strategy and tactics
- Learn quickly from experience by starting action soon and reviewing often
- Become fully engaged in a challenging task
- Help create a climate of mutual support and feedback
- Ask good questions
- Offer data, ideas, suggestions, and advise
- Model the behavior you would like to see

Treat those with whom you work as colleagues who may have better data and ideas. Remain open to different ideas. Showing appreciation is a great way to increase someone's productivity. When people know that others appreciate their efforts, they are more likely to take pride in what they are doing and to stay involved. As you can see, committee success depends on the effective interaction of the members and leaders in an organization. Committees are a "team work proposition", where the members must come together to achieve their mutual goals and objectives.

Adapted from Steven Covey 1989  
"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People"

