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Alpha Business Coaching Newsletter

"How are your 7 Habits?"

Dear Small Business Owner:

I'm rereading the book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey. This is a timeless classic that teaches me something different each time I read it. Its habits are great points for organizations as well as people, since we want our organizations to be full of effective people! I've briefly listed the 7 habits below and how they can be applied to companies who are striving for more effectiveness.

- 1. Be Proactive.** Don't wait for somebody or something to do what you know needs to be done. Beat them to it. Taking responsibility for an issue is actually giving yourself "response-ability", the ability to choose your response. This provides more flexibility, not less. Do you more want control over your response options?
- 2. Begin with the End in Mind.** Think about how you want a project to finish while you're planning the start of it. Be conscious along the way that you're on the path to get to the goal. This takes developing self-awareness. To get this, you must be open to candid feedback! Are you?

- 3. Put First Things First.** This is applying discipline to our lives that helps us get done the things that are the most important. We get confused by what seems urgent but isn't necessarily important. It's critical to use your values to direct your daily decisions. Does that email really have to be opened?
- 4. Think Win/Win.** This seems obvious--to produce a solution that both parties feel is beneficial. But it's often not simple to accomplish as 2 parties can seem diametrically opposed. It requires digging below the surface to uncover what each party really wants and remembering that the relationship is more important than the "thing." Do you argue just to be right?

How are your 7 Habits?

5. **Seek First to Understand, then to be Understood.** This is one of the hardest habits to learn. We are generally focused on making sure we are heard first. And when we listen, we're often thinking about how to reply, not listening for deeper meaning in people's words. Are you the doctor who prescribes before he/she fully diagnoses?



6. **Synergize.** This is bringing parts together to create something more than what the individual pieces could be on their own. In companies, creating real teamwork is the result. The main stumbling block is that people must value their differences to really make it work. Until each person realizes they see the world, not as it is, but as they are, it won't work. Respect and trust must be built in order to have synergy. Do you respect the differences of people on your team?

7. **Sharpen the Saw.** The story that explains this habit is of a man sawing a tree for hours without cutting it down. A passerby tells him he looks exhausted, that he should take a break and sharpen the saw. The man's response is that he doesn't have time to sharpen the saw; he's too busy trying to cut down the tree." This is Covey's way of saying we have to invest in ourselves. We need to find a balance in the physical, mental, spiritual and social/emotional parts of our lives and businesses. Keeping all these parts fit is a foundation for working on the other 6 habits.



These habits are powerful. They are also difficult skills in which to achieve mastery. But, reading the book always encourages me to keep working on them, not giving up. I encourage you to keep working at effectiveness in your life and business.

Sincerely,
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