

## The 7 Habits of a Highly Effective Advertising Sales Rep

This is the 5th in a series of Link and Learns on applying the principles described in Stephen R. Covey's best selling book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" to our business. To read the Link and Learn articles on Habits 1, 2, 3 & 4 you can go to [www.PaperChainNetwork.net](http://www.PaperChainNetwork.net), click on "PaperChain Material Download" then scroll to "Link & Learn Tip Sheets".

Dr. Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" is one of the most successful and practical business books ever published. This article is intended to give an overview of the basic concepts of Dr. Covey's program as they apply to our business. My purpose is just to stimulate interest in the 7 Habits. To gain a better understanding of this powerful material, I strongly recommend that you read the book or attend one of the seminars presented by the Covey organization.

### Habit 5 – Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood

Habit 5 deals with the most important skill in life—Communication. We spend most of our waking hours communicating with others. We spend years learning how to read, write and how to speak properly. Few of us get any training or education at all in listening. If we are to work effectively with others, we must gain an understanding of their wants, needs and desires. For example: in Habit 4 we discussed "Think Win/Win", in order to apply this principle it is necessary to understand what the other person considers a "win". This understanding can only come from listening closely to others.

#### **"Treatment before diagnosis is malpractice"**

Imagine visiting a Doctor and telling him "Doc, I don't feel so good." Immediately the doctor says "I'll schedule you for surgery tomorrow!" No doubt you would find another doctor who would take the time to listen to you and learn about your condition. Any skilled doctor would schedule a battery of tests to find out what is going on inside your body before beginning treatment. None of us would have any confidence in a doctor who prescribes treatment before arriving at a diagnosis of our condition, yet we often do this in our own interactions. We are so anxious to express our own ideas and offer our own solutions that we often fail to take the time necessary to really understand the problem.

#### **Getting over yourself**

Many people have a strong need to be "right", to inject their own autobiography into what is being said, their main desire is to be understood.

Their conversations become collective monologues. Someone says: "I was in an auto accident this morning" and their response is "That's terrible, let me tell you

about the accident I had last year.” Some people may ignore what others are saying, they may pretend to be listening “Yeah—Uh-huh—right.” Some listen selectively picking up only on parts of the conversation that are of interest to them. Many people have been trained to practice attentive listening, focusing their energy on paying attention to each word said. Stephen Covey believes the highest and most effective form of listening is empathic listening.

Empathic (from empathy) listening is based not on learning a new technique, but rather on adopting a different mind-set. Empathic listening is listening with the intent to understand, to understand what the other person is saying and to understand how the other person feels. The goal of empathic listening is to understand the speaker’s frame of reference. Its intent is to allow the listener to see the world through the speaker’s eyes.

Empathy is not sympathy, it is not necessary to agree with the speaker, what is important is that you fully, deeply understand a person emotionally as well as intellectually. Empathic listening involves more than hearing, or even understanding the speaker’s words. Research indicates that we get just 10% of the meaning of a conversation from the words, another 30% from the sound of the voice and the remaining 60% from the speaker’s body language. Empathic listeners use not only their ears but also their eyes and their hearts. They seek to learn not only what the speaker thinks about a subject but also how they feel about the matter being discussed.

Empathic listening is powerful because it provides accurate information about the other person’s thoughts and feelings. Instead of projecting our own thoughts, experiences and emotions on to the speaker, you have an understanding of how the other person interprets the situation. When you listen to understand, you begin to communicate deeply with another human being.

Another advantage of empathic listening is its’ effect on the speaker. One of the deepest human needs is to be heard, to be understood. When you demonstrate your intention to deeply listen to someone and your desire to understand them, you forge a meaningful bond that can be the foundation of a fruitful relationship.

The risk of empathic listening is that it opens you up to change. When you set aside your own agenda to truly listen to another’s point of view, you make yourself vulnerable to change. This is why it is vital that you practice the first three of Dr. Covey’s habits to develop a strong inner core that will permit you to accept change when needed.

#### **Four listening traps**

Empathic listening is a conscious choice. If we do not focus on deeply listening to others we naturally fall into one of the four following traps:

1. Evaluation – we either agree or disagree with what is said rather than simply listening to the speaker. If a speaker feels that we are continually judging them they will never feel free to open up and share their true feelings.
2. Probing – we ask questions from our own frame of reference. We ask questions to control the conversation and set the agenda. Probing interrupts the speaker and prevents them from expressing their feelings. Questions should be used only to determine how the speaker feels about the subject being discussed.
3. Advising – we listen briefly and then offer up advice based on our limited understanding of the situation. Since we haven't taken time to understand what the speaker thinks and feels, the advice we offer must be based totally on our own ideas and experiences.
4. Interpretation – we try to figure people out and determine their motivations based on our own personality. By assigning our own feelings to the speaker we can never learn how they truly feel.

#### **Listening to emotions**

The key to deep communication is making an emotional connection. By connecting with a person emotionally, we turn a conversation from a transactional experience, a simple exchange of facts, into a transformational experience where each person is changed by their meeting.

For example: If you are having a conversation with someone in the ad services department who says "Salespeople always turn their ads in late!" The logical response might be "That's unfair; most of the ads are in on time"

While this statement may be accurate, it does nothing to advance the situation. The ad services manager will hear I don't care about a few late ads and I don't care about your feelings. A better response would be:

"Tell me more about the situation."

"Late ads force my people to work long after their shift is done."

"How does that make them feel?"

"It makes them think that no one appreciates the work they do."

This is the beginning of a deep conversation between two individuals who respect one another. The free flow of ideas between the two parties will make possible Win/Win solutions that satisfy everyone involved. Failing to pay attention to the emotional dynamic of the interaction will result in an ongoing tit-for-tat contest that will hinder and disrupt the operation of the entire organization.

Sales people especially have to pay attention to the emotional needs of their clients. The best salespeople understand the importance of learning the feelings of buyers

toward them and their product. They understand that people buy on emotion and justify the purchase with facts. Salespeople who gain a deep understanding of how their clients think and feel will close many more sales than their peers who do not.

**Then seek to be understood**

Dr. Covey has defined maturity as a balance between consideration for others and the courage to pursue what we want in life. “Seeking first to understand” requires consideration for the feelings of others. “Seeking to be understood” requires the courage to express our desires to others.

Dr. Covey teaches that the ancient Greeks believed that there are three components to effective communication. These are defined by ethos, pathos and logos, which are described below:

Ethos – is your personal credibility, how much people trust you. This is built by the deposits you make into the “Emotional Bank Accounts” of others and by staying true to your principles.

Pathos – is how people feel about you and even more important how you make people feel. It has been said, “People may forget what you say to them, they may forget what you do for them, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” Empathic listening is an important part of engaging others emotionally, people feel connected to those who truly listen to them.

Logos – is the logical part of your message. It is the content, the words that you use.

The sequence of these three elements is very important, first your character, then your relationships and then the logic of your presentation. Before someone allows themselves to be influenced by what you say, they must trust you at an emotional level and before they can trust you, they must believe you are trustworthy. If you fail to take the first two components into account, it is unlikely that the listener will be influenced by even the most elegant words.

**Conclusion**

Like the other 7 Habits “Seeking first to understand, then to be understood” is not based on a technique, it is founded on changing the way you look at the world. It is about showing respect for others and paying full attention to their needs. By opening ourselves up to being influenced by other people’s ideas, our ability to influence other people with our ideas grows as well. Practicing deep empathic listening not only will make us more effective on the job, but also will add to the satisfaction we find in every part of our lives.

**Next Month Habits #6 & #7 “Synergize” & “Sharpen the Saw”**