

The 7 Habits of a Highly Effective Advertising Sales Rep

This is the 3rd 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 article on Habits 1 & 2 you can go to www.PaperChainNetwork.net, click on "PaperChain Material Download" then scroll to "Link & Learn Tip Sheets" and you will find them. 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 3 – First Things First

Stephen Covey's "7 Habits" is an integrated system for improving personal effectiveness. While adopting any one of the habits will make you more productive, adopting the entire program will bring about a quantum leap in your personal effectiveness. Just like an athlete who exercises to build muscle mass but neglects aerobic conditioning, neglecting any part of the program will limit your ability to put the others to full use. The third of the 7 Habits, "First Things First", is closely related to Habits 1 and 2. Habit 1 involves taking personal responsibility for one's own life, Habit 2 is about deciding what one wants to accomplish with their life, Habit 3 is about making the day-to-day decisions that lead to the practical fulfillment of Habits 1 & 2.

The power of human will

Dr. Covey reminds us that what distinguishes humans from every other creature on the planet, is our ability to exercise our will. Instead of simply reacting to our environment, we can think about what we want to do. He quotes E. M. Gray, saying "The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don't like to do. They don't like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose." Habit 3 is about realizing the goals and basing your day-to-day decisions on whether or not an action will bring you closer to achieving them. Habit 3 uses life goals as a beacon, keeping your life on course. It is an advanced time management tool. Rather than spending your life trying to fit everything you want and need to do into your schedule, Habit 3 is about deciding what is important in your life. This habit can be expressed in one simple phrase "Organize and execute around priorities."

The 4 quadrants

It has been said that efficient people do things right, effective people do the right things. Habit 3 is about effectiveness, concentrating on the activities that have the

biggest payoff. We talk to our customers about “ROI” the best possible return on their investment in advertising. I like to think that habit 3 is about achieving “ROE”, getting the best possible return on your efforts. Dr. Covey has developed a simple model that breaks down daily activities into 4 quadrants. This model (shown below) is a tool to help us determine what activities bring us the best “ROE”.

Quadrant 1 Urgent & Important	Quadrant 2 Important not Urgent
Quadrant 3 Urgent not Important	Quadrant 4 Not Urgent or Important

Quadrant 1

We work in a deadline driven industry so we spend a lot of time in Quadrant 1. Quadrant 1 activities are both important (defined here as activities that are critical to reaching our goals) and urgent (defined as an activity that must be completed as soon as possible). Quadrant 1 is the crisis quadrant, it is where the exciting problems live. It is in Quadrant 1 that we get the rush of “putting out fires.” A good example of a Quadrant 1 activity is a last minute ad just before deadline, it is important because it is how we get paid and it is urgent because of deadline pressures. It is also in this quadrant where many mistakes are made because of time pressure.

Quadrant 3

Quadrant 2 is more easily understood in terms of the other 3 quadrants so I will come back to it in a few moments and move on to Quadrant 3. Quadrant 3 is where you find interruptions, unproductive meetings, unnecessary reports etc. These are time critical activities but they do not advance you toward your goals. They are tasks that need to be done, and done immediately, but have a limited payoff. Taking time to drive a second proof to a customer because the first was not done correctly is a Quadrant 3 activity. It needs done quickly because of deadline pressure but it does not affect the commission paid on the ad so it does not move you toward your revenue goals. It is important to the customer so it has to be done.

Quadrant 4

Quadrant 4 activities are neither important nor urgent, Quadrant 4 activities are easy and painless. They are the busywork, reorganizing files and pleasant diversions like gossiping about our co-workers. Since, by definition they are aimless activities, there is no possibility of failure. If you have no goal you will never fail to achieve your objective. Commiserating with another sales person about the terrible economy

for half an hour in the morning is a classic example of a Quadrant 4 activity. It feels good because it takes away personal responsibility for sales results, but it will not change anything and it is certainly not urgent. Complaining can be done at any time.

Quadrant 2

The more time you can spend in Quadrant 2 the more effective you will become and the less time you will have to spend in the other 3 quadrants. Quadrant 2 activities include planning, problem prevention, relationship building, self-development and recreational activities. Quadrant 2 is the most proactive of the 4 quadrants and people who focus on these activities will be rewarded with a higher level of control over the direction of their lives.

Let's look at the examples above and see how a Quadrant 2 focus would affect the outcome. In the Quadrant 1 example a Quadrant 2 focused person would be better planned and in many cases would start the sales cycle earlier to avoid the stress of a last minute ad. Starting earlier would allow time to plan the account and get spec art which would make the account easier to close. While deadlines can be an emotional rush they can also be stressful and lead to burn-out. The Quadrant 2 person would also have the time to act on last minute opportunities that others miss because they are rushing to get finished.

In the Quadrant 3 example, the Quadrant 2 person would be focused on preventing the problem of late proofs. As in the previous example, starting the sales cycle earlier would reduce the pressure of deadlines and would allow more time to get the ad right. If the difficulty stemmed from a communication problem with the customer or the art department, the Quadrant 2 person would work to remove the problems and prevent their reoccurrence. The end result of a Quadrant 2 focus is freedom from living in a constant crisis mode. Adopting a long-term focus reduces missed opportunities and results in a greater sense of control over one's destiny.

The example cited to illustrate Quadrant 4 activities would not only lead to being less effective but may lead to being unemployed. The Quadrant 2 person would be polite but not engage in a cooperative whining session. "Yep, it's tough out there alright that's why I have to get on the phone and set up some more appointments... have a great day." The Quadrant 2 person lives their life intentionally, instead of taking the easy mindless path, they determine what they want and move confidently in that direction.

Say the magic word-NO!

The key to adopting a Quadrant 2 focus is to exercise choice over our actions. The German poet Goethe said "Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least." Time is the most precious of commodities because it is strictly limited, we can never buy or manufacture so much as an additional nanosecond. The only thing we can do is to decide to use our time to our best

advantage. To live with a Quadrant 2 mindset means we have to say no to activities that do not advance us toward our goals. Often we have to say no to activities that waste our time before we can say yes to the things we want for ourselves.

Does this mean we must work 24/7 and live a completely selfish life...absolutely not! The Quadrant 2 person recognizes the importance of recreation. Dr. Covey discusses maintaining P/PC (Production/Production Capability) balance. Like a machine that must be shut down to be maintained we must refresh our bodies and minds. If we are constantly producing, eventually we will lose our ability to be productive due to a mental or physical breakdown.

Likewise the Quadrant 2 person is focused on relationships. When devising their personal mission statement they will make developing healthy relationships with others a priority. They will manage their life to allow for quality time with the people who matter to them most. Taking the time to write and mail a card congratulating a co-worker for an achievement is a perfect example of a Quadrant 2 activity.

Conclusion

What sets a Quadrant 2 person apart is their commitment to take an active role in running their own life. Rather than drifting along through life, they make conscious decisions about how they spend their days. The chapter on “First Things First” includes many valuable and practical ideas on putting this powerful tool into practice. Reading Dr. Covey’s “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” and adopting his principles may be the ultimate Quadrant 2 activity.

Next Month Habit #4 “Think Win/Win”