

The Page



Notes and comments for friends and clients of Lisk Associates

December 2011

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Holidays

As we come to the end of our 18th year in business I was thinking about one of the first workshops we offered. It was Dr. Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Bob Smith still provides that workshop to our clients today. I don't think it will grow out of style for a while. The 7 Habits principles have been true for thousands of years. I expect they will hold true for the next 18 years as well.

As we come flying into the holidays at full speed, trying to get all of our holiday stuff done, perhaps we can use the 7 Habits to connect us to the deeper meaning of the season.

With thanks to Dr. Covey, here are our 7 Habits suggestions for a highly effective holidays.

#1 - Be Proactive - the habit of personal choice. Being proactive means that, no matter what circumstance we face, (and many people are facing tough times this year) we can still choose our response to that circumstance. We can still be thankful for what we have, and not focus so much on what we have lost. We can always choose kindness to strangers as well as to loved ones.

"A penny can block out the world." If you hold a penny up close to your eye, that is all you can see. Sometimes small things keep us from seeing a bigger picture. Reactive people tend to focus on the pennies - the

limitations or disabilities. Proactive people focus on their options, freedoms and abilities. Is your focus where you want it to be?

#2 - Begin With The End In Mind - the habit of goal setting, planning and visualization. The best way to predict your future is to create it first in your mind.

It is a great time of year to choose (habit #1) to think about what your best self could be and do in the coming year. See yourself clearly in your mind, as if you were already there. Take time to write down your version of this mental picture so you can easily refer to it for guidance.

#3 - Put First Things First - the habit of time management and self-management. Consider your most important roles: the ones with those people most dear to you. What can you do over the holidays to "be the best you" with and for those people? Do not let the hurry of the season overshadow your care for others. Or, as Dr. Covey used to say, "Do not get caught in the thick of thin things." Make time to be fully present for the holidays.

#4 - Think Win-Win - the habit of cooperation. Helping others, giving to those less fortunate, volunteering a few hours of your time, even having a kind word and a nod for a stranger are

small investments that pay big dividends for others as well as for you. If the rush of the holidays is getting you down, go help someone who is not as well off as you are. It will do wonders for your stress level and they will thank you for it.

#5 - Seek First To Understand, Then Be Understood - the habit of communication. Take time to listen to someone you know well as if you were listening to a stranger. It sounds weird but try it and see what happens. Listen to find out what is important to them. Listen to understand, not to respond or "straighten them out." Don't worry, you will still have time to get your two cents worth in. And, hopefully, they will be listening to you.

#6 Synergize - the habit of creating. The synergy concept says the whole is more than the sum of its parts. If you doubt this go listen to a holiday choir or concert. Listen to the sound. Is it not something more than the sum of the musicians?

What about driving down a nicely decorated street at night? Isn't the overall effect something more than lights on individual houses? This is the season of awe and wonder. As we get older some of our youthful belief in miracles and magic fades. Just because we don't believe in it any more does not mean it is not still there. If you

don't have a small child in your life at the moment go borrow one for a while and let them lead you back to that place.

#7 Sharpen The Saw - the habit of renewal. We humans are living systems. We are subject to nature's laws of growth and renewal. In nature these cycles are marked by the seasons. In our modern world we are more isolated from nature's cycles and we sometimes forget this natural law of renewal. We can only go 24-7 for so long. Most of us can feel when we are "out of balance."

Dr. Covey recommended "one hour per day in the private victory." By private victory he meant taking care of all parts of ourselves: physical, mental, social and spiritual. You can use the other six habits to help you work on this habit.

Think about the four categories; physical, mental, social and spiritual. Put first things first over the holidays. Use this magic time of year for your own personal renewal. Let your own life shine on and enrich others.

We at Lisk Associates - Bob, Laurie, Ryan and I wish you all a magic holiday season filled with wonder, awe and good times with those close to you. And, we look forward with hope to a prosperous 2010 for all of us. -- Randy Lisk

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Dr. Stephen Covey

Lisk Associates, LLC P.O. Box 13547 Lexington, Ky. 40583 (859) 421-7966 www.liskassociates.com

© 2009 Lisk Associates

Turning intangible assets into tangible results.