

Everyone Wins: The Foundation of Interpersonal Leadership

One quality many strong leaders share is the ability to create situations that are mutually beneficial to their team and their customers. Those are Win-Win situations, which are the focus of Stephen R. Covey's fourth habit.

The fourth habit in Stephen R. Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is "Think Win-Win." This is the first habit of what Covey describes as "public victory." According to Covey, "Public Victory does not mean victory over other people. It means success in effective interaction that brings mutually beneficial results to everyone involved."

To develop Win-Win situations, you must have a strong character. To build a strong character, you must have integrity, an abundance mentality, and maturity. An abundance mentality is a mind-set in which you believe life isn't just win or lose; rather, you believe there's plenty of power for everyone and that you should seek solutions that are mutually beneficial to everyone involved. Maturity, which Covey defines as balancing courage with consideration, is needed because it allows you to listen to ideas of others, share your ideas, and modify your ideas as you obtain feedback. These traits will allow you to become *interdependent* so that you can

choose to become *interdependent*.

The first three of Covey's habits ("Be Proactive," "Begin with the End in Mind," and "Put First Things First") help you become independent. Beginning with "Think Win-Win," the next three habits help you become interdependent.

Win-Win Agreements

The first requirement of a Win-Win agreement is having interdependent relationships. Built on trust, these relationships don't happen overnight. They must be earned. Building a high-trust relationship requires you to make deposits into others' emotional bank accounts—that is, fortify your relationships with others through good deeds and acts of respect while avoiding acts of harm and distrust. Trust is critical for a successful Win-Win agreement because individuals need to be very open, honest, sincere, and able to count on one another to follow through with their actions. Once again, the first three habits should help build these relationships, but it takes time and deposits into the emotional bank accounts of others to make them effective.

It can be difficult to have a Win-Win when others seek Win-Lose, Lose-Lose, or Lose-Win outcomes.

It's important to understand each of these attitudes, which Covey calls the "Paradigms of Human Interaction." Win-Lose is the idea that "I get what I want while you don't." It could be a situation where I use my authority to make you do something instead of investing the time to come to a Win-Win agreement. Lose-Lose is essentially "If I can't have my way, neither will you," but it also could be a situation involving a compromise. Lose-Win is when I may choose to give up something I value in order to build our relationship. An alternative is a case where someone has a "step-on-me" attitude that caves to others rather than acting with courage to seek what is best for both individuals.

Another attitude is simply Win, which is when I'm out to win for myself and don't care whether you win or lose. Many people have a Win attitude, but people with Win-Win attitudes have respect for themselves, others, and the idea of mutual benefit. If the other party isn't trying to achieve Win-Win, you'll need great courage and consideration to seek it.

Win-Win isn't just a negotiating stance. There's a reason Covey made it one of the seven habits. You should constantly seek to de-



velop Win-Win agreements to facilitate meeting your goals. A Win-Win agreement can be a great asset in improving your production capacity. One thing to keep in mind when you consider developing a Win-Win agreement is the fact that it allows you to seek a new level of empowerment. But you must develop a good Win-Win agreement that benefits the person you are working with as well, and that person must at least be independent (and preferably interdependent).

Creating a Win-Win Agreement

Win-Win agreements improve production capacity because they are empowering, but good Win-Win agreements take time. A Win-Win agreement doesn't dictate how to do the job. Instead, it states what the goal is, what the constraints are, what resources are available, what standard of work is expected, when the work should be accomplished, and what risks and rewards exist for the work.

A Win-Win is empowering because it clearly defines the results that are expected as well as any other expectations that may exist. When you understand the desired goal, available resources, and time-frame for the project, you are in a much better situation to raise concerns up front and to accomplish the desired results. As the agreement is developed, conflict may arise because everyone may not have the same view. The very nature of "Think Win-Win" allows for this. When there's a conflict, try to understand the problem from the other person's point of view. After you understand the problem, identify the key issues

and concerns. Then determine the results that would constitute a fully acceptable solution. With the problem identified and the desired criteria for an acceptable solution, begin to identify possible new options that could create a Win-Win agreement.

Win-Win isn't always easy to achieve, and you may not get it every time, but it's important to *think* Win-Win. It takes effort, courage, consideration, and a strong character. The caution when thinking Win-Win is that you might fall short and accept a Lose-Win agreement in the guise of Win-Win. But Win-Win is empathy, not sympathy—you want to understand the other person's perspective, but you don't want to simply subjugate your own needs in the situation. There also might be times when you intentionally won't seek Win-Win. For example, you might seek a Lose-Win or a Win-Lose situation if you want to make a deposit in another's emotional bank account or if your

child is in danger. Those situations, however, should be the exception and not the rule.

Harness Trust

Win-Win is a powerful mind-set that will build trust in your organization. The constant display of a Win-Win mentality will allow you to guide your team through tough times with their unwavering support because they know you want what's best for everyone involved. Having a Win-Win attitude will allow you to develop a trusting support staff that will get the job done right because they know you have trusted them with the results and empowered them with the appropriate tools and resources. Thinking Win-Win allows you to approach your customers and vendors to work toward mutually beneficial solutions.

When you build these types of relationships through your business or organization, both internally and externally, you develop a competitive advantage. It takes time to develop a Win-Win attitude in any organization because many people have been scripted to think Win-Lose, Lose-Lose, Lose-Win, or Win. Those attitudes are sometimes difficult to overcome because the immediate business results may outperform Win-Win. In the long run, however, the best overall business performance and outcome will result when both parties employ Win-Win.

"Think Win-Win" is the foundation of public victory. It helps you work through tough choices, develop new and creative solutions, and make deposits into the emotional bank accounts of others.

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“Think Win-Win” displays your courtesy, respect, and appreciation for others. While you may not always be able to achieve Win-Win, you can always think Win-Win. **SF**

Daniel E. Epler, CMA, CFM, CPIM, is the vice president of Finance at Solid Gold Pet, LLC. He is also a member of IMA's Charlotte Chapter. You can reach Daniel at cfo@cfo-itk.com.