

Notes from “Principle Centered Leadership” by Stephen Covey

When trust is high, we communicate easily, effortlessly, instantaneously. We can make mistakes and others will still capture the meaning. But when trust is low, communication is exhausting, time-consuming, ineffective, and inordinately difficult.

To value oneself and, at the same time, subordinate oneself to higher purpose and principles is the paradoxical essence of highest humanity and the foundation of effective leadership.

Reactive people often find themselves trying to meet conflicting expectations and living by different values according to the role or the environment they are in at that particular time.

Once you get principles at the center, you realize that the only way to treat people is how you want them to treat you.

The challenge is to be a light, not a judge; to be model, not a critic.

In effect, once we become relatively independent, our challenge is to become effectively interdependent with others.

Trustworthiness is based on character, what you are as a person, and competence, what you can do.

Without character and competence, we won’t be considered trustworthy, nor will we show such wisdom in our choices and decisions. Without meaningful ongoing professional development, there is little trustworthiness or trust.

Principle centered people are constantly educated by their experiences. They read, they seek training, they take classes, they listen to others, they learn through both their ears and their eyes.

They discover the more they know, the more they realize they don’t know.

Most of the learning and growth energy is self-initiated and feeds upon itself.

Those striving to be principle centered see life as a mission, not as a career.

Principle centered leaders see the oak tree in the acorn and understand the process of helping the acorn become a great oak.

Truly, believing is seeing. We must therefore, seek to believe in the unseen potential. This creates a climate for growth and opportunity.

Principle centered leaders read, watch, observe and learn.

They can feel their own worth, which is manifest by their courage and integrity and by the absence of a need to brag, to drop names, to borrow strength from possessions or credentials or titles or past achievements.

Principle centered leaders live sensibly in the present, carefully plan the future and flexibly adapt to changing circumstances.

Principle centered leaders savor life. Because their security comes from within instead of from without, they have no need to categorize and stereotype everything and everybody in life to give them a sense of certainty and predictability.

Principle centered leaders are always completely present when they are listening.

Synergy is the state in which the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Principle centered leaders are synergistic.

In team endeavors they build on their strengths and strive to complement their weaknesses with the strength of others.

Principle centered leaders exercise the four dimensions of the human personality; physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

We must never get too busy sawing to take time to sharpen the saw, never too busy driving to take time to get gas.

You are aware that you are the creative force of your life. You are not the victim of conditions. You can choose your response to any situation to any person.

In your freedom to choose your response lies the power to achieve growth and happiness.

Begin with the end in mind.

“I have created the future in my mind. I can see it, and I can imagine what it will be like.”

Only humans examine such questions. Only people have the capability to imagine a new course of action and pursue it conscientiously.

You just need two unique human capacities: imagination and conscience.

Memory ties you to your past, imagination points you to your future.

If you have a why, you can live with any what.

You too, can progress along the continuum from futility and old habits to faith, hope, and inner security through the exercise of conscience and imagination.

Your security does not come from other people or other things. It comes from within yourself. You’re Principle-Centered.

The root cause of almost all people problems is the basic communication problem – people do not listen with empathy.

The ability to listen first requires restraint, respect, and reverence. And the ability to make yourself understood requires courage and consideration.

One of the most important commitments in a family or in a business is never to bad-mouth. Always be loyal to those who are absent, if you want to retain those who are present.

People and relationships are more important than things. People on their death bed do not talk about spending more time at the office, they talk about relationships.

We can make or break our habits. We need not be a victim of conditions or conditioning. We can write our own script, chose our course, and control our won destiny.

We will soon break our resolutions if we don't regularly report our progress to somebody and get objective feedback on our performance. **Accountability breeds responsibility.**

Often our own resolve is not enough. We need reinforcing relationships – people and programs that hold us accountable and responsible.

Responsibility is the ability to choose our response to any circumstance or condition.

What a difference if you organize and arrange your affairs the night before to get to bed at a reasonable time. I find that the last hour before retiring is the best time to plan and prepare for the next day.

Success begets success. Starting a day with an early victory over self leads to more victories.

When you are living in harmony with your core values and principles, you can be straight forward, honest and up-front.

Effective people lead their lives and manage their relationships around principles. Ineffective people attempt to manage their time around priorities and their tasks around goals. Think effectiveness with people and efficiency with things.

Until people have the spirit of service, they might say they love a companion , company, or cause, but they often despise the demands these make on their lives.

If we conquer some basic appetites first, we will have the power to make good on higher level resolutions later.

The key to growth is to learn to make promises and to keep them.

To focus on personality before character is to try and grow the leaves without the roots.

Private victories precede public victories. Self-mastery and self-discipline are the roots of good relationships with others.

We may have the “right” rhetoric style and even intention, but without trust we won’t achieve primary greatness or lasting success.

If there isn't deep integrity and fundamental character strength, true motives will eventually surface and human relations will fail.

"What you are shouts so loud in my ears, I can not hear what you say.

To affirm a person's worth or potential, you may have to look at him with the eye of faith and treat him in terms of his potential, not his behavior.

The place to begin building any relationship is inside ourselves, inside our circle of influence, our own character.

Integrity – is the value we place on ourselves.

If we can't make and keep commitments with ourselves as well as with others, our commitments become meaningless.

Maturity – the balance between courage and consideration.

Inside/Out – means to start first with self, to start with the most inside part of yourself, with your paradigms, your character and your motives.

The key to working the inside/out approach is to educate and obey the conscience.

Training the conscience requires even more discipline. It requires honest living, reading inspiring literature and thinking noble thoughts.

As we give grace to others, we receive more grace in return.

You can't have empowerment without first having trust.

Remember: First work on the programmer, if you want to change the program.

Highly effective people carry their agenda with them. Their schedule is their servant, not their master..

Discipline – the ability to honor commitments and to make and keep promises.

It often helps to write commitments down and keep them in front of us.

Starting the day with a private victory over self is a good way to break old habits and make new ones.

Things that matter most should never be at the mercy of things that matter least. Careful planning helps us maintain a sense of perspective, purpose and ordered priorities.

To relate effectively with our colleagues, spouse and our children requires emotional strength, because we must learn to listen.

An emotionally immature person will borrow strength from position, size, strength, experience, intellect, or emotions to make up for a character imbalance.

Trying to be all things to all people results in the loss of everybody's respect including one's own.

It takes sacrifice to serve the needs of other people – the sacrifice of our own pride and prejudice, among other things.

Pride and selfishness will destroy the union between man and God, between man and man, between man and woman, between self and self.

You can't have trust without being trustworthy, and you can't talk yourself out of a problem you behaved yourself into.

The more a leader is honored, respected and genuinely regarded by others, the more legitimate power he will have over others.

Listen to understand, speak to be understood

Three categories of influence

1. Model by example (others see)
2. To build caring relationships (others feel)
3. To mentor by instruction (others hear)

Selfless service has always been one of the most powerful methods of influence.

We are teaching one thing or another all of the time, because we are constantly radiating what we are.

Teach and talk about vision, mission, roles, goals, guidelines and standards.

People identify with what they see and what they feel far more than with what they hear. Scripting is about 90% example and relationship and 10% telling.

Over time coaches tend to focus on efficiency, not effectiveness – on doing things right instead of doing the right things.

When trust is high, communication is easy, effortless, instantaneous and accurate.

Cultivate the habit of private meditation, contemplation, prayer and study of the scriptures.

People live up to the expectations of them.

Negative synergy is an enormous waste of human talent.

Real progress starts with self and works from the inside/out.

If there is no accountability, people gradually lose their sense of responsibility and start blaming circumstances or other people for their poor performance.

Page 204