



Sample Interview with Sean Covey
***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* – 30th Anniversary Edition**
Update With Fresh Insights By Sean Covey

1) What was it like growing up in a home with Stephen Covey and his 7 Habits?

As a teen, strangers approached me, hugged me, started crying, and then confided, “Your dad’s book changed my life.” I thought, “Really? My dad wears velour sweatpants with a dress shirt and boat shoes. And he changed your life?” Later I realized the gift I had been given as a child. At age 19, I re-read *The 7 Habits* book and thought, “Wow, my dad is really smart and has matured a ton.” It brought back all the lessons I learned growing up, surrounded by the 7 Habits. Dad taught us the principles he wrote about and considered us his most valued students. He tried out his material on us. And, just as fish discover water last, we were so immersed in it, we were unaware of its presence.

2) What was the reason for adding content to a classic like *The 7 Habits* book and what is new?

When I was approached to add my insights to the book, I was extremely hesitant. But the more I thought about it, the more I knew that by doing so, I would not only honor my father and his legacy, but I could illustrate the impact the 7 Habits have had on individuals, organizations, and the world at large. Adding my personal insights at the end of each section and chapter, I share stories and behind-the-scenes accounts from my father’s life to help readers apply the content, and to illustrate the ongoing relevance of the 7 Habits in navigating a life that is tremendously unpredictable from day to day. They will teach you how to be an effective person at work and at home. They work. They truly work!

3) Since *The 7 Habits* book is 30 years old, why is its content still relevant today?

The deeper the problems and challenges become in society, the more relevant the 7 Habits become because they’re based on timeless principles of effectiveness that apply to everyone. My father didn’t claim to invent these concepts; but saw them as being universally accepted. He synthesized them into habits that people can live by. They’ve been integrated into everyday thinking by millions in the workplace, in schools, in families, and in communities, because they work. And, I think they’ll continue changing lives because they’re based on enduring principles. They will continue to light the way for generations to come, which was my father’s great hope.

4) At a time of uncertainty, where people are being presented with challenges like never before, which of the 7 Habits is the most important one?

All of the habits are equally important. But there is a reason that Habit 1 (“Be Proactive”) is the first habit. It is the foundation and underpinning of all of the other habits. It is needed today more than ever, because regardless of how difficult our personal or professional circumstances, we are responsible for our own choices. We have the freedom to choose our response based on principles and values rather than on our moods or on the conditions in which we find ourselves. We can develop and use our four unique human gifts—self-awareness, conscience, imagination and independent will—and take an inside-out approach to creating change. We can choose not to be victims, to be reactive or to blame others. No matter how difficult our current situation we can carry our own weather with us. It’s easy to say, but difficult to practice. And, that is why it’s a habit. It’s something we must practice every day. It is attainable.

5) Who is the audience for *The 7 Habits* book?

The book is for everyone – regardless of your title or the industry in which you work. It has sold more than 40 million copies in 50 plus languages, and has had a profound impact on the personal and organizational effectiveness of readers worldwide. It’s transformed the lives of heads of state, presidents, CEOs, educators, students, parents, and millions of people of all ages and occupations who have accessed its principles and practices in their effort to achieve extraordinary results. With timely and inspiring content, which is needed now more than ever, *The 7 Habits* continues to guide and propel generations of readers through change in these turbulent times.

6) Is *The 7 Habits* book a business book only?

Fortune listed it as “one of the bestselling books of all time.” It was named the “#1 most influential book of the 20th century” by *Chief Executive* magazine and *Forbes* named it “one of the top 10 most influential management books ever.” It’s commonly used as a reference guide in management and leadership development by people holding every title, in every industry and occupation. Millions of people have not only read the book but have been trained in [FranklinCovey’s 7 Habits work sessions](#). Its principles have become a hallmark of effective leaders, extraordinary results and winning cultures. But, the 7 Habits are also for parents, teens, families, and educators. Its principles have not only transformed *Fortune 100* and *Fortune 500* organizations, but literally thousands of schools and homes. The habits apply to anyone, anywhere, at any time and can be applied in everyone’s life because the principles in the book are universal and timeless. And, they work. So, no. The 7 Habits book is not just a business book, but a book that spans many genres.

7) What are some of the principles that *The 7 Habits* book recommends?

Principles are natural laws, or the way things really work. For example, responsibility, initiative, fairness, integrity, respect, honesty, hard work, teamwork, and renewal are principles. Principles are timeless and universal. They work in Japan and they work in New York. They work now and they worked two thousand years ago. People and organizations who follow principles will always excel, not always in the short run, but over the long haul. Always. For example, take the principle of respect when it comes to relationships. If you show respect for others, it will result in strong relationships of trust over the long run. You may be able to get away with being disrespectful for a period of time, maybe even for years, but eventually it will catch up to you when the chickens come home to roost, and you find yourself with broken relationships everywhere you look. The same goes for any other principle. During times of upheaval and stress, principles are more important than ever because they give you an unchanging foundation that provide security. Each of the 7 Habits are based on a few of these core principles, which my father identified over years of synthesis, research, and observation.

8) What are The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People?

Habit 1: *Be Proactive.* People are responsible for their own choices and have the freedom to choose based on principles and values rather than on moods or conditions. They are able to develop and use their four unique human gifts—self-awareness, conscience, imagination and independent will—and take an inside-out approach to creating change. They choose not to be victims, to be reactive or to blame others.

Habit 2: *Begin with the End in Mind.* Highly effective people shape their own future by creating a mental vision and purpose for their life, their day, and for any project, large or small. They don’t just live day to day but are driven by their mission and purpose.

Habit 3: *Put First Things First.* Highly effective people live and make decisions with a clear sense of what is most important. They organize and execute around their most important priorities. They are driven primarily by purpose, not by the agendas and forces surrounding them. They put people ahead of schedules.

Habit 4: *Think Win-Win.* Highly effective people think in terms of mutual benefit. It’s not about you, or me; it’s about both of us. They are able to balance “courage” for what they want, with “consideration” for what the other person wants. They think interdependently—“we,” not “me”—and develop win-win agreements. They don’t think selfishly (win-lose) or like a martyr (lose-win).

Habit 5: *Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood.* Highly effective people diagnose before they prescribe. They listen before they talk. They seek first to listen with the intent to understand the thoughts and feelings of others, then seek to effectively communicate their own thoughts and feelings. Through understanding, highly effective people build deep relationships of trust. They understand that the key to influence is to first be influenced.

Habit 6: *Synergize.* Highly effective people value differences instead of being threatened by them. They believe that their own strengths combined with the gifts and talents of others can lead to the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. They seek for 3rd alternatives—solutions that are better than what they or the other party had in mind to begin with. They don’t go for compromise ($1 + 1 = 1\frac{1}{2}$) or merely cooperation ($1 + 1 = 2$) but seek out creative cooperation ($1 + 1 = 3$ or more).

Habit 7: *Sharpen the Saw*. Highly effective people increase their effectiveness by renewing themselves regularly in the four areas of life: body (physical), mind (mental), heart (social/emotional), and spirit (spiritual—service, meaning and contribution). They are never too busy sawing to take time to sharpen their saw.

9) What other books have you written?

As I began [my career](#) and became increasingly aware of the profound nature of the 7 Habits, I decided to write a teenage version of *The 7 Habits* book called [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens](#) which I've been lucky to see reach millions of teens around the globe. Seeing the influence of *The 7 Habits* on teens, I was inspired to continue sharing its message to other audiences, publishing an illustrated children's book called [The 7 Habits of Happy Kids](#), and a college textbook titled [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective College Students](#). When I led Product Development for FranklinCovey, I also produced work sessions, webinars, videos, and workbooks on the 7 Habits over a couple of decades. In addition to being raised in the 7 Habits home, I think that perhaps I have worked with, written about, and thought about the 7 Habits more than anyone else in the world, except my dad. Now, as President of FranklinCovey Education, I'm devoted to transforming education throughout the world through a principle-centered leadership process called [The Leader in Me](#), which is now in more than 5,000 schools and 50 countries throughout the world. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People are a part of that process and are having a profound influence on millions of educators, students, and families.

10) What is *The Leader in Me*?

[Leader in Me](#) is a whole-school improvement model—developed in partnership with educators—that empowers students with the leadership and life skills they need to thrive in the 21st century. The process helps students learn how to become self-reliant, take initiative, plan ahead, set and track goals, do their homework, prioritize their time, manage their emotions, be considerate of others, express their viewpoint persuasively, resolve conflicts, find creative solutions, value differences, and live a balanced life. It utilizes several leadership, social-emotional learning, quality, and educational models and processes from past and current thought leaders. It includes *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, a key component of the overall process, and is a synthesis of universal, timeless principles of personal, interpersonal, and organizational effectiveness, such as responsibility, vision, integrity, teamwork, collaboration, and renewal. *Leader in Me* is having a significant, measurable impact on schools all over the world and in the lives of millions of students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Learn more about the [Leader in Me](#) book or the *Leader in Me* process, please visit <http://www.theleaderinme.org/>.

11) What is FranklinCovey?

[Franklin Covey Co.](#) (NYSE: FC) is a global, public company, specializing in organizational performance improvement. It helps organizations achieve results that require lasting changes in human behavior. Its world-class solutions, which include [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#), enable greatness in individuals, teams and organizations and are accessible through the [FranklinCovey All Access Pass®](#). They are available across multiple modalities and in 21 languages. Clients have included the *Fortune 100*, *Fortune 500*, thousands of small- and mid-sized businesses, numerous government entities, and educational institutions. FranklinCovey has more than 100 direct and partner offices providing professional services in more than 160 countries and territories. To learn more, visit www.FranklinCovey.com.

12) What advice do you think your father would give to readers today?

My father gave advice to readers that I think it is so applicable for today: "The world has changed dramatically since *The 7 Habits* book was first published...Life is more complex, more stressful, and even more demanding. Our problems and pain are universal and increasing and we face challenges and problems in our lives, our families and our organizations unimagined even one and two decades ago...The greater the change and more difficult our challenges, the more relevant the 7 Habits become. The solutions to our problems are and always will be based upon universal, timeless, self-evident principles common to every enduring, prospering society throughout history."

I also think his advice to readers about incorporating the 7 Habits in their lives is something we should all try to do: "...Start applying what you are learning. Remember, to learn and not to do is really not to learn. To know and not to do is really not to know...."

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