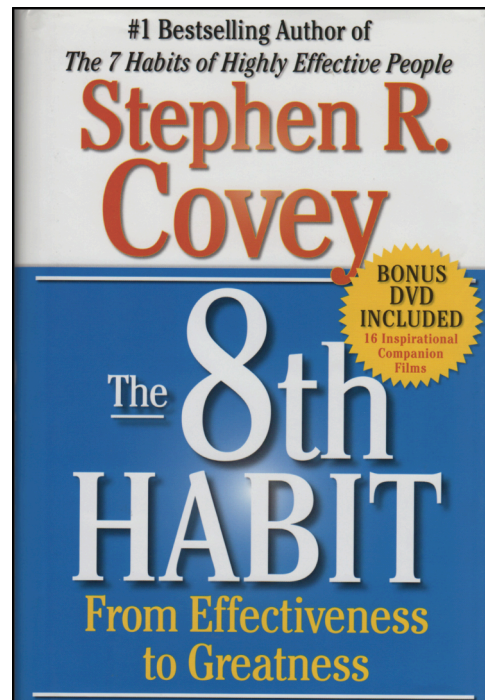

BOOK REVIEW

"The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness" by Stephen R. Covey

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Even if you haven't read Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, you've surely heard of it. It is one of the most influential leadership/business books of all time. It was written in 1989, over 15 million copies have been sold, it has been translated into thirty-eight languages, and it is still a best-seller.

The seven habits are to 1) be proactive, 2) begin with the end in mind, 3) put first things first, 4) think win/win, 5) seek first to understand, then to be understood, 6) synergize (regarding teamwork, and 7) sharpen the saw (upgrade your lifestyle).

If you'll remember, 1989 – the year *The 7 Habits* was published – was the same year the Berlin Wall came down. Many consider it to be the birth year of the Information Age

– a new era in which information has replaced industry as the driver of global society. After fifteen years, the author felt that our society had shifted significantly enough to introduce *The 8th Habit* in 2004. He translated the shift to global networking, interchange, and spirituality into a leadership habit to take us from *effective* to *great*.

The eighth habit is that of "finding your voice and inspiring others to find theirs." Covey's new outlook on leadership is as "a choice to deal with people in a way that will communicate to them their worth and potential so clearly they will come to see it in themselves." The goal is to inspire deep commitment and bring about even greater levels of service and personal satisfaction.

Covey cites the inspiration of Gandhi: "The difference between what we are doing and what we are capable of doing would solve most of the world's problems." Your *voice* is what makes you unique. Finding your purpose brings you to your individual voice, and can be found by determining four things and discovering where they overlap: 1) your key strength or talent, 2) what you are passionate about, 3) a need in your organization or in the world that you can fulfill (what you can make a living doing), and 4) what aligns with your values, heart, and conscience. He's basically saying that through making a living doing what it is your heart is called to do while you're here on earth, you can achieve your voice, your success, and your greatness.

Covey calls this new era of personal and organisational excellence the Knowledge Worker Age. Developing your voice – your "unique personal significance" – is just the first step in his holistic approach to greatness. The second step, which coordinates with his leadership principles, is to encourage others to do the same, thus enhancing everyone's experience within an organisation. He spends about two-thirds of the book on this topic and even talks about discovering the voice of your organisation as a whole.

For this reason, *The 8th Habit* appeals more specifically to leaders looking for a new level of distinction and excellence in their organisations than it does to the population at large as *The 7 Habits* did. Some people who loved *The 7 Habits* as applicable to their personal lives found *The 8th Habit* a bit ponderous and abstract. Covey taps his previous work, respected leaders in the field, historic leaders and thinkers, previously established leadership principles, and lots of anecdotes and examples to explain how to inspire people to create a workplace where people feel truly engaged. A high-quality DVD comes with the book and is referred to throughout. It sports sixteen clips of inspiring examples of how to attain greatness through the eighth habit.

A result of Covey's writings is his professional services firm, FranklinCovey, and he doesn't hesitate to reference its services in the book. With the DVD, the internet references, and the graphs and anecdotes, it seems he was trying to make his book as helpful as possible even though it focuses less on the practical than his previous work and more on intangible concepts.

Chapters 1 through 5 are about finding your voice. Chapter 1, "The Pain," described how it hurts to be constrained by our machine-like work environments, and that this pain translates to the larger organisation. Chapter 2, "The Problem," explains how the Industrial Age paradigm doesn't work for Knowledge Age workers. Chapters 3, 4, and 5, "The Solution," "Discover Your Voice," and "Express Your Voice" tell us how to discover and use our natural voice to combat these constrictions.

Part 2 is called "Inspire Others to Find Their Voice" and breaks down into five chapters on "Focus – Modeling and Pathfinding," two chapters on "Execution – Aligning and Empowering," two chapters on "The Age of Wisdom," and a chapter of FAQs.

I found the lengthy appendices to be a very interesting collection of reference material, especially Appendix 2 – Literature Review of Leadership Theories, which is a chart organized chronologically by theoretical categories such as "Great-Man Theories," "Trait Theories," "Humanistic Theories," and "Results-Based Leadership." For each theory, representative authors, year, and a summary are provided. Appendix 3 – Representative Statements on Leadership and Management – couples Appendix 2 with a collection of "Management versus Leadership" statements listed by their various authors and/or references. Fascinating if you're a leadership theory nerd or studying it at university.

The 8th Habit is a worthwhile read for those seeking in-depth concepts about achieving greatness and spirituality, if you will, in their organisations. Covey is such a highly-respected authority that you can hardly go wrong. Among his many awards including, for *The 7 Habits*, #1 Most Influential Business Book of the Twentieth Century, it's interesting that the one he prizes most is his 2003 Fatherhood Award from the National Fatherhood Initiative. *Time* magazine included him on its list of the twenty-five most influential Americans.

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