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

An Executive Book Summary
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Introduction
This book can be considered a sequel to Stephen Covey’s hugely successful book, The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People, published in 1989. Covey insists that the 8th Habit isn’t simply adding one more habit to the 7, but it is a response to how the world has changed so much since the first book was written. The challenges we face now in our personal and professional lives are very diverse and demanding. Covey reports that the 7 Habits are even more relevant today, however this new reality requires that we are not only called to be highly effective, but great. This greatness can be achieved by internalizing the 8th Habit, to Find Your Voice and Inspire Others to Find Theirs. This book focusing on the importance of sharing the knowledge on attaining effectiveness and greatness with others. It is about discovering your own voice and the tremendous potential that we all have within us, and encouraging others to do the same. Covey believes that those who inspire others to find their voice are the leaders needed now and for the future.

About the Author
Dr. Stephen R. Covey is a well respected American author, educator, consultant, and speaker. He is one of the world’s foremost authorities on leadership. Covey is the highly acclaimed author of several books, including the international bestseller The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. He was also the cofounder and vice chairman of the FranklinCovey Company.
Chapter 1: The Pain

This pain that Covey speaks of is the frustration, disappointment, and pressure that many people experience in the workplace. These days a great deal of people lack the motivation, guidance, and purpose to make their lives and work meaningful and fulfilling.

Covey suggests that the best way to combat the difficult realities of today is with the voice of the human spirit. He refers to this voice as unique personal significance. Covey explains that this voice can be found at the very heart of one’s talents, passions, needs and conscience. Voice is full of hope, intelligence, and the enormous potential to serve others.

Chapter 2: The Problem

The problem Covey refers to is the mentality that began in the Industrial Age where organizations managed people as they do things. He explains that this model is ineffective in the current Knowledge Worker Age. Human knowledge and talent should be the company’s most valuable asset, not simply the worker’s body. For a person to be most productive, they must work in an environment that satisfies every human component, the body, mind, heart and spirit.

5 Ages of Civilization’s Voice
1. Hunter/Gatherer
2. Agricultural
3. Industrial
4. Information/Knowledge Worker
5. Wisdom

The fundamental reality is, human beings are not things needing to be motivated and controlled; they are four dimensional—body, mind, heart and spirit. (p. 21)
Chapter 3: The Solution

Covey presents a two-part solution: Find Your Voice and Inspire Others to Find Theirs. He explains that any successful organization that has been able to remain prosperous and sustain long term growth did so because of the choice of one person. After this person changed themselves from the inside out, they were able to inspire others to do the same.

Covey suggests that everyone chooses one of two possible roads in life. Most of us will end up on the road to mediocrity, while a determined few will experience greatness.

Part 1: FIND YOUR VOICE

Chapter 4: Discover Your Voice—Unopened Birth-

Covey defines “birth-gifts” as someone’s talents, capacities, privileges, intelligences, and opportunities that would typically remain unopened. Only through our own efforts and choices are these gifts unleashed. Covey determines that our three most important gifts are:

1. Our Freedom and Power to Choose
2. Natural Laws or Principles (universal and timeless)
3. Our 4 Intelligences/Capacities
   - EQ—Emotional/Social
   - IQ—Mental
   - PQ—Physical/Economic
   - SQ—Spiritual

Because of these gifts, the potential within an individual is tremendous, even infinite. We really have no idea what a person is capable. (p. 40)
In this chapter Covey explores in detail the four human intelligences and aligns them each with its highest manifestation.

- **Mental** ➔ **Vision**— seeing what is possible in people and projects
- **Physical** ➔ **Discipline**— doing what is necessary to bring that vision to a reality
- **Emotional** ➔ **Passion**— the desire that sustains the discipline to achieve the vision
- **Spirit** ➔ **Conscience**— the guiding force to vision, discipline, and passion

Covey uses this table to summarize Part 1: Find Your Voice.

### Part 2: INSPIRE OTHERS to FIND THEIR VOICE

**Chapter 6: Inspiring Others to Find Their Voice—The Leadership Challenge**

Covey begins this chapter by defining leadership as “communicating to people their worth and potentials so clearly that they come to see it in themselves.” (p.98)

He also introduces his **4 Roles of Leadership**: Modeling, Pathfinding, Aligning, and Empowering.
Focus—Modeling and Pathfinding

Chapter 7: The Voice of Influence—Be a Trim-Tab

Covey explains that modeling is the spirit and center of any leadership effort. It is not only done during the other three roles, but also before. This is necessary because modeling brings a sense of confidence and trust in the leader.

Covey uses the term “trim-tab” to describe those people who can lead and spread their influence no matter what position they hold. They are able to move themselves and their team in such a way that it positively affects the entire organization.

Chapter 8: The Voice of Trustworthiness—Modeling Character and Competence

According to Covey, “trust is the glue of organizations”, and it can be found from three possible sources; “the personal, the institutional, and one person consciously choosing to give it to another”. He explains that trust can be a noun and verb. When it is used as a verb it becomes something shared and reciprocated between people.

Covey uses the survey below to identify that integrity was determined to be the top essential quality of an effective leader.

In this chapter the 7 Habits are revisited and identified as ways to model integrity and build trust.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People®

HABIT 1: Be Proactive®
HABIT 2: Begin with the End in Mind™
HABIT 3: Put First Things First®
HABIT 4: Think Win-Win®
HABIT 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood®
HABIT 6: Synergize®
HABIT 7: Sharpen the Saw®

90 percent of all leadership failures are character failures.
Chapter 9: The Voice and Speed of Trust

Covey continues to discuss trust as being the most important component of any relationship. It is necessary for any meaningful communication to occur.

Covey introduces a metaphor for trust called the Emotional Bank Account. He explains that it’s similar to a financial bank where you’d make deposits and take out withdrawals. The difference is that you now make emotional deposits and withdrawals in your relationships that would either build or destroy them. Covey suggest that the common characteristics for these deposits are initiative, humility, and sacrifice.

Chapter 10: Blending Voices — Searching for the Third Alternative

This chapter focuses on conflict resolution. Covey explains that the foundation of moral authority at the personal level and trust in relationships is necessary to achieve cooperation and find meaningful solutions. He refers to this method of creating synergy as the Third Alternative, and it is based on the principle of mutual respect and mutual benefit, or win-win. This form of problem solving requires excellent communication skills, particularly empathetic listening.

It is a greater compliment to be trusted than to be loved.

George MacDonald
Covey refers to pathfinding, the second leadership goal, as a way for organizations to create order, without demanding it. Often this is achieved by involving everyone in the decision making. This way everybody in the organization will better understand its goals, and they’ll have ownership in the path that achieves those goals.

Covey insists that in order to fully comprehend and be prepared to execute the pathfinding goal, you must be able to contend with four specific realities:

1. Market Realities
2. Core Competencies
3. Stakeholder Wants and Needs
4. Values

“Those people that are able to tap into the needs and motivations of all four parts of their nature will find their voice and volunteer their highest contributions.” (p. 224)

Covey suggest that organizations have the same four needs that people do.

1. **Survival**— financial health (BODY)
2. **Growth and development**— economic growth, innovation, services (MIND)
3. **Relationships**— strong synergy and trust (HEART)
4. **Meaning, integrity, and contribution**— serving the community

“To create an environment of focus and teamwork top to bottom, employees must know what the highest priorities are, buy into them, translate them into specific actions, have the discipline to stay the course, and trust one another and collaborate collectively.” (p.228)
Focus—Aligning and Empowering

Chapter 12: The Voice and Discipline of Execution -
Aligning Goals and Systems for Results

This chapter addresses the complex question of “how do we execute both values and strategy consistently without relying on the formal leader’s continuing presence to keep everyone going in the right direction?” Covey explains that alignment, the third leadership goal is the answer. He defines alignment as “designing and executing systems and structures that reinforce the core values and highest strategic priorities of the organization.” (p.234)

Chapter 13: The Empowering Voice—Releasing Passion and Talent

In this chapter Covey discusses the final leadership role, empowerment. He suggests that the best way to empower others is by using directed autonomy through win-win agreements. This occurs when the manager’s role shifts from controller to enabler. When implementing this style of leadership the manager would involve staff more in goal setting and decision making, remove barriers, provide performance appraisals, and become a source of help and support.

Covey conducted a survey to determine why empowerment is not as common as it could be.
Chapter 14: The 8th Habit and the Sweet Spot

In this chapter Covey explains that the 8th Habit is necessary and very important because it encompasses an understanding of the whole person. He writes that it’s “an understanding that gives its possessors the key to crack open the limitless potential of the knowledge worker economy.” (p. 271)

The 8th Habit gives you a mind-set and skill-set to constantly look for the potential in people. It’s the kind of leadership that communicates to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves.

Covey’s 8th Habit presents a pathway to greatness, and that this greatness lies in Finding Your Voice and Inspiring Others to Find Theirs. He suggests that the greatness he speaks of can be separated into three kinds of greatness: personal, leadership, and organizational.

1. **Personal Greatness**– is found when we discover our three birth-rights: choice, principles and the four human intelligences. When we develop these gifts and intelligences we become a person of character, full of vision, discipline and passion, guided by conscience.

2. **Leadership Greatness**– is found by people who choose to inspire others regardless of their position. This is achieved by living the 4 Roles of Leadership.

3. **Organizational Greatness**– is achieved as the organization is able to effectively execute their leadership roles, as well as their mission, vision and values.

 Wohnen die 4 Rollen der Führung:

- **Modeling**
  - Inspiriert ohne zu erzwingen (Moralische Autorität)
- **Pathfinding**
  - Schafft Ordnung ohne zu fordern (Visionäre Moralische Autorität)
- **Aligning**
  - Bereichert Vision & Empowerment ohne zu zentralisieren (Institutionelle Moralische Autorität)
- **Empowering**
  - Entfaltet menschliche Potentialität ohne äußere Motivation (Kulturelle Moralische Autorität)

Covey refers to the **sweet spot** as a place where personal greatness, leadership greatness, and organizational greatness overlap. Organizations that are able to govern and discipline themselves by all three forms of greatness have achieved the coveted sweet spot.

“From now on the key is knowledge. The world is not becoming labor intensive, not materials intensive, not energy intensive, but knowledge intensive.”

Peter Drucker
Covey has determined that there are four disciplines that if practiced consistently, would vastly improve an organization’s ability to focus and execute their top priorities.

**Discipline 1: Focus on the Wildly Important**

- Realizing that people are naturally wired to focus on only one thing at a time with excellence.
- To determine what is “wildly important” the organization’s goals must be prioritized.

**Discipline 2: Create a Compelling Scorecard**

- This is based on the principle that people play differently when they’re keeping score.
- This would be very motivating, and strategies and plans would become less abstract.

**Discipline 3: Translate Lofty Goals into Specific Actions**

- Goals will never be achieved until everyone on the team knows exactly what they’re supposed to do.

**Discipline 4: Hold Each Other Accountable All the time**

- This will allow the key goals to move forward.

Chapter 15: Using Our Voices Wisely to Serve Others

In this final chapter Covey concludes that someone’s drive to acquire that 8th habit of finding their voice and inspiring others to find theirs, is fueled by the desire to serve human needs. This is why organizations exist, to serve human needs.

“Service is the rent we pay for living in this world of ours.”

Nathan Eldon Tanner

Covey insists that the Age of Wisdom is approaching. He further defines this wisdom concept as being “the fusion between knowledge and information, and purpose and principles.” In distinguishing between wisdom and knowledge, Covey suggests that wisdom is more than simply knowing information. He writes that “wisdom teaches us to respect all people, to celebrate their differences, and to be guided by a single ethic—service above self.” (p. 297)
Personal Analysis/ Practical Application

Having already been familiar with Stephen Covey’s 7 Habits, I was anxious to read his follow up book, The 8 Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness. Just like the first seven habits, Covey’s 8th habit, Find Your Voice and Inspire Others to Find Theirs offers a positive and proactive way of providing leadership. The concept of combining your passion, talents, needs, and conscience to discover your voice is very intriguing to me. As for inspiring others to find their voice, as a classroom teacher I have the enormous opportunity to do that for my students. I also appreciate how Covey continues to look at the big picture with this book. His philosophy about addressing the whole person is becoming increasingly prevalent in education. As a teacher we are often encouraged to teach to the whole student. It is my understanding that this holistic approach is the most effective way to meet all of the needs of the students.

Covey’s theory that leadership is a choice, not a position resonated with me as well. I like to think that even though I don’t have a formal leadership position at my school, I can still influence those around me and bring about positive change. Distributed leadership seems to be on the rise in education, particularly as we see the role of the teacher-leader increasing. Covey suggests that much of what he covers in this book can be summarized into two words: focus and execution. He refers to the focus as whatever matters most, and execution as making that priority happen. This seems like a very logical approach to me. Too often lofty goals are never achieved because the process lacks clarity, commitment, synergy, accountability, or specific actions to execute the vision and accomplish what was originally intended. As a teacher-leader I can make contributions in all of those areas. Thankfully, the 8th Habit provided me with practical strategies, memorable stories, profound quotes, and a thorough question and answer section to draw on.

Possible Discussion Questions

1. Are these teachings based on religion in any way?
2. What is the best way to initiate the changes that are suggested?
3. How do you enforce accountability with a win-win agreement?

Reference