CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on the "effective habits" emphasised by Dr. Covey. It begins by giving an overview of the concept of habits in general and then describes each of the seven habits outlined in his book.

2.1   THE CONCEPT OF HABITS

Some management theorists have discussed "habits". For example, Bremmier (1966) describes a habit as a 'mental path' over which our actions track for some time; which path is created through repetition. He adds that success in life is dependent upon one's habits. Drucker (1967) describes effectiveness as a habit, that is, a complex of practices. He observes that habits not only can be learned, but must always be learned. He adds that "to be effective is the job of the executive. Wherever he may be, he is expected to 'get the right things done'." Covey (1989) defines a habit as the intersection of knowledge skill and desire. Knowledge is the 'what to do' and 'why', skill is the 'how to do' and desire is the motivation or the 'want to do'. He observes that habits are based on the internalized principles and patterns of behaviour

of an individual . They are learnt rather than inherited. Therefore, they can be learned and unlearned.

And some management theorists have pointed out the importance of practising good habits. McGregor (1960) points out that factors like integrity, confidence, social justice, personal ambition and drive, and not just high academic achievement alone, contribute to the success of a business leader. He adds that these factors are to be found not merely in the leader but in any successful member of an organisation. The staff specialist will succeed if he is perceived as a source of help, if he is able to understand the 'private world' of the executive being helped, and if he can help the executive gain self-confidence in his own leadership behaviour (McGregor 1948). According to Argyris (1957), anybody who aspires to a position of power over people in organizations, is responsible for becoming more aware of his self and the systematic knowledge that exists about human behaviour and being more proficient in human skills (e.g.. the ability to listen, to diagnose the human situation, and to help himself and others become more aware of their involvement in human situations). McGregor (1967) further stresses that one cannot leave these important characteristics of his personality behind when one goes to work, as these characteristics are part of his identity. Otherwise, he will be in conflict, and this will interfere with his performance whether as an executive or as a human being.

2.2   COVEY'S SEVEN HABITS

The Seven Habits advocated by Covey are the focus of this study. These habits, listed in Chapter 1, are interrelated, interdependent and sequential. According to Covey, the first three are habits of character, and will help one progress from dependence to independence and achieve a "personal" victory; the next three are the outward expressions of character, and lead one to interdependence, mutual benefit and a "public" victory; and the last habit renews one and sustains the process of growth. Covey believes that one needs to be truly independent first before one can become interdependent. He elaborates that the habit of interdependency is very important in the working environment. Mc Gregor (1960) also stresses its importance by claiming that modern industrial organisations involve a high degree of interdependence. He says that managers and subordinates depend upon each other for achieving their needs, their own goals and organisational goals.

2.2.1   HABIT 1: BE PROACTIVE

This habit is based on the principle of personal vision. Being proactive means that we take responsibility for our own lives. According to Covey (1989), our behaviour is a function of our decisions and not the circumstances that we have gone through or the condition we are in now. He claims that we have the responsibility to make things happen. The word 'responsibility' - (response-ability) - implies that we have the ability to choose our response. He claims that proactive people recognize this

responsibility and do not blame circumstances etc. for their behaviour. Their behaviour is a product of their own conscious choice. According to him, between stimulus and response, man has the freedom to choose. We are responsible for our own effectiveness, for our own happiness, and ultimately for most of our circumstances. On the other hand, reactive people are often affected by their circumstances i.e.. their physical environment, social environment etc. They blame nature and nurture for their misfortunes. Covey also believes that proactive people also use "proactive language" besides acting proactively. Figure 2.1 compares the language of reactive and proactive persons.

Figure 2.1 :   Proactive Versus Reactive Language

Reactive Languages	Proactive Language
There's nothing I can do.	Let's look at our alternatives.
That's just the way I am.	I can choose a different approach.
He makes me so mad.	I control my own feelings.
They won't allow that.	I can create an effective presentation.
I have to do that.	I will choose an appropriate response.
I can't......	I choose......
I must......	I prefer.......
If only......	I will........

Some psychologists have the same view on proactivity. According to Frankl (1965), the freedom of decision i.e. freedom of will, is for the unbiased person a matter of course for he has an immediate experience of himself as free. He adds that only those suffering from paranoid schizophrenia or neurotic fatalism lose this freedom and

thus deform their lives. Yarbrough (1975) observes that with every determined condition, there is within it the seed of choice.

2.2.2   HABIT 2 : BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

According to Covey, it is incredibly easy to get caught up in an activity trap, in the 'busyness' of life, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success - only to discover that it is leaning against the wrong wall! People often find themselves achieving victories that are empty, successes that have come at the expense of things that they suddenly realize were far more valuable to them and now are lost.

Therefore, according to him, we need to begin with the end in mind i.e. to start with a clear understanding of our desired destination. It means that we must know where we are going to, so that we can understand where we are now, and that the steps that we take are always in the right direction. Covey further claims that the most effective way to begin so as to have the end in mind is to develop a personal mission statement that focuses on what one wants to be, to do, and on the values or principles upon which being and doing are based.

Habit 2 is therefore based on the principle of personal leadership. As Peter Drucker puts it, "management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right

things".   Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall (Covey 1989).

Knowing where the ladder is leaning, i.e.what the end result would be, is very important. Engstrom and Mackenzie (1967) observe that in considering what could be accomplished in a person's job, he should think in terms of results instead of activities. They further point out that until one knows where one wants to be at the journey's end, it is difficult for him to plot the course on a daily or weekly basis.

2.2.3   HABIT 3 : PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

According to Covey, "putting first things first' is effective personal management. It involves organizing and managing time and activities according to the personal priorities identified through Habit 2. The essential elements involved in effective personal management are shown in the Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: The Time Management Matrix

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	I. <u>Activities</u> * Crisis * Pressing Problems * Deadline Driven Projects	II. <u>Activities</u> * Preparation * Prevention * Planning * Relationship Building * Reaction * Recognizing New Opportunities
NOT IMPORTANT	III. <u>Activities</u> * Interuptions, Some Calls * Some Mail, Some Reports * Some Meetings * Proximate, Pressing Matters * Popular Activites	IV. <u>Activities</u> * Trivia, Busy Work * Some Mail * Some Phone Calls * Time Wasters * Pleasant Activities

Covey claims that we should be participating in the activities involved in Quadrant II which is the heart of effective personal management. It deals with things that are not urgent, but are important. It involves building relationships, writing a personal mission statement, long range planning, exercising, preventive maintenance and preparation - all those things one needs to do, but somehow seldom gets around to doing, because they are not urgent. Covey concedes that we cannot ignore the urgent and important activities of Quadrant I, but as we spend more time on prevention and preparation in Quadrant II, Quadrant I will shrink in size (Covey 1989).

Drucker (1967) has similar views on this habit. According to him, if there is any one 'secret' of effectiveness, it is concentration. He further claims that effective executives do first things first and they do one thing at a time. He argues that if nothing would happen if some things are not done, then, we should stop doing them.

2.2.4 HABIT 4: THINK WIN/WIN

According to Covey, *win/win is the habit of interpersonal leadership*. He claims that it is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions. It sees life as a cooperative, and not a competitive arena. He elaborates that win/win thinking begins with a commitment to explore all options until a mutually satisfactory solution is reached. According to him, if there is no solution that would be beneficial to both parties, one should agree to disagree and strike a 'no deal'.

Covey claims that the principle of win/win is fundamental to success in all our interactions. It embraces five interdependent dimensions of life. It begins with character and moves toward relationship, out of which flow agreements. It is nurtured in an environment where the structural system and process must support the win/win means.

Covey adds that character is the foundation of this habit. The three character traits which are essential to this habit are integrity, maturity and a mentality that there will be enough for everyone (Covey 1989).

2.2.5. HABIT 5: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD

According to Covey, this habit is based on the principle of empathic communications. He observes that when another person speaks, we usually listen at one of four levels, i.e. ignoring, pretending, selective listening or attentive listening. Covey claims that there is a fifth level which is the highest form of listening, i.e. empathic listening. It involves listening for meaning and feeling. Once we understand, only then do we need to be understood. Covey claims that seeking to understand requires consideration, whereas seeking to be understood requires courage.

Drucker (1967) also stresses the importance for the effective executive to first understand before making any decision. Cribbin (1972) adds that the art of listening involves paying complete attention, listening for the real message and what is not said, listening encouragingly, prudently and listening to learn. Livingston (1971) elaborates on the importance of this habit. According to him, some managers who have the intelligence required to learn what they need to know fail because they lack affective empathy. There are not able to sense or identify the unverbalized emotional feelings

which strongly influence human behaviour. McGregor (1960) found that, in a team, one of the factors that distinguishes good top management teams from less effective ones is that members listen and understand each other. As Gandhi said, "Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstanding in the world will disappear if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their viewpoints" (Covey, Merill and Merill, 1994).

2.2.6   HABIT 6: SYNERGY

Synergy is defined as 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. Covey claims that we should adopt the principle of creative co-operation or teamwork in our social interactions. According to him, its essence is to value differences among individuals, respect them, and then build on strenghts to compensate for weaknesses in each individual. He also encourages synergistic communication so that one can open up one's mind and heart to new possibilities and alternatives. By so doing, there will be a high level of trust and co-operation between people of differing opinions.

Other management theorists are supportive of this idea. According to Drucker (1967), disagreement is needed to stimulate the imagination. He claims that if disagreement is forced to be reasoned through and documented, it is the most effective stimulus we know. McGregor (1967) maintains that differences, not only in training, experience and capability, but in all emotional aspects of man, are the stuff of progress

and improvement in social life. He adds that all innovations, all creative problem solutions, all successful new social or political or economic developments rest ultimately on the fact of human differences.

2.2.7   HABIT 7: SHARPEN THE SAW (OR RENEWAL)

Covey names the last habit 'sharpen the saw' or 'self-renewal.' He states that, instead of being too busy sawing, we need to take time to sharpen the saw. According to him, this involves four dimensions; physical, spiritual, mental and social/emotional. The physical dimension involves caring effectively for our physical body - eating the right kinds of food, sufficient rest and exercising on a regular basis. The spiritual dimension draws upon the sources that inspire and uplift a person. The mental dimension is enhanced through expansion of the mind. And the social/emotional dimension focuses on interpersonal leadership, empathic communication and creative co-operation. Covey claims that the self-renewal process must include balanced renewal in all the four dimensions. To neglect any one area has an adverse impact on the rest.