

# The ripple effect in stephen r. covey's principle-centered leadership essay



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Stephen R. Covey's work, " Principle-Centered Leadership provides its readers with an in-depth and comprehensive outline of how to manage one's work. Several writers have already attempted to answer the challenge of planning efficient ways to achieve success and Covey is one of the people who may have effectively given very concrete ideas to answer to this ordeal.

In the book's front cover are Lao Tzu's, a Chinese philosopher's words " give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. Covey wishes to present to us not instant solutions but a methodological approach that roots from an individual rippling to a wider organization such as the family and the workplace. This will be elaborated in the latter part of this paper. Covey differentiates principles and values and how they can affect how an individual may think or act. Values are said to be subjective, they may vary given a different time or situation. On the other hand principles are absolute and permanent ideas that lead us to the right path.

Acquiring a principle-centered life will enable the individual to develop the four dimensions that will become pillars in everyday undertakings. Covey discusses the four principles as: Security, how you see yourself and your strength as an individual; Guidance, the path you wish to undertake in your life; Wisdom, how you perceive your life; how you make decisions in your life; Power, the ability to do things and to act upon your decisions. As discussed earlier, Covey used a four-step process that begins with the self and moves on to a wider scale such that of a ripple in water.

These steps or levels progress in order for the individual to possess a principle-centered lifestyle. The four levels are personal, interpersonal, managerial and organizational. As the titles suggest, the four levels move on to take on a greater rank of responsibility. At each level, the author suggests vital principles that need to focus on. These are trustworthiness at the first level; Trust at the second level; and Empowerment and Alignment at the third and fourth levels, respectively.

Covey tells us that the first step to principle-centered leadership is becoming a trustworthy individual. Trust is the basis of all personal relationships, and in order to gain other people's trust and thus become more effective both as a person and as a leader, you should first earn that trust, by showing that you are trustworthy. Covey enumerates traits possessed by individuals who are trustworthy and equate them with the effectiveness of an individual.

Trustworthy individuals are continuously learning, are service-oriented, radiate positive energy, believe in other people, lead balanced lives, see life as an adventure, are synergistic-creative and exercise for self-renewal whether in the physical or spiritual aspect. Most people center themselves on building a great personality; Covey tells us that great personality comes only second to noble character. He stresses that primary greatness could only be achieved if we possess good character, and that secondary greatness or personality can be easily attained through position or social status.

In order to possess primary greatness one must acquire the following traits: integrity, emotional maturity and abundance mentality. Covey also talks of following the law of the farm. Just as farmers who wait patiently for their

crops to grow before harvest, knowing the possibility of a storm or such calamity, individuals who wish to become principle-centered must realize that there is a natural process and there are no short-cuts. Along with this is recognition of the different temptations that are present all around.

These temptations namely, appetites, pride and pretension, and aspiration and ambition keep individuals from staying true to their principles. Covey proposes ways to overcome each of these temptations: To overcome appetites and passions, learn self control; to overcome pride and pretension, build character and gain experience; to overcome aspiration and ambition, put your abilities and talents to good use for the betterment of others. The second step is building trust in the interpersonal level. Principle-centered power should be based on trust, respect and honor, and not fear or intimidation.

The author communicates the 10 tools to increase such power. These tools are: Persuasion, Patience, Gentleness, Teachableness, Acceptance, Kindness, Openness, Compassionate Confrontation, Consistency, and Integrity.

Balancing personal life and work life is a vital part of living a principle-centered life. With the aim of enriching an individual's family life one must:

- 1) Retain a long-term perspective,
- 2) Re-script your marriage and family life,
- 3) Reconsider your roles,
- 4) Reset your goals,
- 5) Realign family systems .

There are four necessary systems that you should establish in your family: Goals and plans, Stewardships and a discipline program, Teaching and training, Communicating and problem-solving, 6) Refine three vital skills: time management, communication and problem-solving, 7) Regain internal

security and 8) Develop a family mission statement.. Empowerment is the key to the third step in Covey's Four-Step plan. Management should not be about imposing but rather the people that are under him or her.

The third step is about changing one's own perspective of how he or she may see the other people around him. The author discusses the four paradigms namely: The Scientific Management Paradigm, The Human Relations Paradigm, The Human Resource Paradigm, and The Principle-Centered Leadership (PCL) Paradigm. Covey says that the first three paradigms are flawed and that the PCL paradigm can lead to effectiveness. The PCL paradigm has nine components: people, self, style, skills, shared vision and principle, structure, systems, strategy and streams.

The final part of the four step paradigm consists of alignment at the organizational level. At this level there is a need to create a mission-vision statement which would speak of the organization's unified goals. All of the actions done within the organization must be aligned with the created mission-vision that was built by the members of the organization. Some people may see Covey's ideas as very idealistic and unattainable; however these things seem possible to achieve if the individual is prepared to face a complete turn-around in his or her life.

Books such as these are there to become guides to people who wish to become more successful. But on the other hand, there is no absolute way in order to achieve success and happiness, this method may be effective for an individual but be inefficient for another. Covey's method is balanced in a way that he does not lean to only business and personal life, but instead,

presents a balanced outlook on how one should prioritize one's family as well as the businesses that he or she manages.