

I don't just read books, I devour them, with a pen in my hand, highlighting and making notes. After reading, I copy down all the notes and type them up, considering each idea all over again. Yet, I have often found that key learnings are too quickly gone from memory. That's why I started compiling these two-page book reviews for personal use. With the encouragement of friends and colleagues, I offer my notes now through the Creative Option C website so that others may gain the insight of these authors and perhaps be inspired to read the entire work.

TITLE: What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful

AUTHOR: Marshall Goldsmith, Executive Coach and Consultant

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PRIMARY THEME: “Almost everyone I meet is successful because of doing a lot of things right, and almost everyone I meet is successful in spite of some behavior that defies common sense,” says Goldsmith. Very often people become successful despite behaving in ways that causes harm to their relationships and reputations. But higher levels of success will require fixing some interpersonal flaws.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION: Most of us have at least a few bad habits we engage in a dozen times a day at work and at home. Though we may be completely unaware of how we are impacting others, we are developing a reputation that is not of our choosing. Because such behaviors can be a limiter to reaching higher levels of success, it is important to learn to identify them, and prepare to make changes. The book provides a step-by-step guide to finding out how others perceive us, getting to the root of the problems, and correcting them.

CHAPTERS:

Section One: The Trouble with Success, In Which We Learn How Previous Success Often Prevents Us From Achieving More Success

- Chapter 1: You Are Here. Most of us have no idea how we are perceived by others. What we may think of as helping, others may see as arrogance. What we think of as delegating, others may see as shirking responsibility. Over time, these are the things that create our reputation and it can be very different from what we intend.
- Chapter 2: Enough About You. Executive coaches like the author struggle to convince people who have been successful that they need to change, even when they are confronted by someone who says “your boss has hired me to help you change.” This chapter provides an overview of the process of accepting that change is needed and outlines the steps.
- Chapter 3: The Success Delusion, or Why We Resist Change. After acknowledging that if we had a complete grip on reality, some of us would not get out of bed in the morning, Goldsmith argues that what is needed for change is being completely honest about the reasons for our successes, which always include the help and goodwill of others. People will only apply themselves to the process of change when they understand that it is in their best interest to do so.

Section Two: The Twenty Habits that Hold You Back From the Top, In Which We Identify the Most Annoying Interpersonal Issues in the Workplace and Help You Figure Out Which Ones Apply to You

- Chapter 4: The Twenty Habits. As important as a to-do list can be, a to-stop list can be equally so. Goldsmith's list of 20 bad habits – based on thousands of interviews with the colleagues of his clients - is eye-opening. The list is attached.

- Chapter 5: The Twenty-First Habit: Goal Obsession. While the 20 bad habits listed in the attachment are “transactional,” meaning they are sins we commit against other people, this 21st is not interpersonal. It can, however, be the root cause of some of the other bad behaviors hurting our relationships.

Section Three: How We Can Change For the Better: In Which We Learn a Seven-Step Method for Changing Our Interpersonal Relationships and Making Those Changes Permanent

- Chapter 6: Feedback. Without feedback, how would any of us know what to change? A number of feedback mechanisms exist, including learning how to solicit it properly. Feedback is best when it comes from others, who 1) can let go of the past, 2) will pledge to tell the truth, 3) are supportive and helpful, and 4) are focused more on improvement than judgment.
- Chapter 7: Apologizing. There is no substitute for a timely and sincere apology. To be effective, an apology has three elements: 1) “I’m sorry,” 2) “I’ll promise to do better in the future,” and 3) Silence. Explanations, justifications, and additional details only dilute the impact of “I’m sorry. I’ll try to do better in the future.”
- Chapter 8: Telling the World, or Advertising. Hard as it is to change interpersonal behavior, it is even harder to change people’s perceptions of you. In order to get others to accept that you have changed, you have to keep humbly reminding them. Such a routine also helps to enlist their support and assistance in holding you accountable for the change you desire.
- Chapter 9: Listening. Before we can grasp another person’s meaning or perspective, we have to have heard it. Active listening requires keeping the mouth shut and engaging the information another is imparting. Skill at listening is the difference between great leaders and near-great leaders.
- Chapter 10: Thanking. Thanking people for a service, favor, or helpful suggestion merely meets their expectations. Withholding it is damaging to relationships. “Thank you” can also diffuse a potentially volatile situation. Cultivating a grateful posture can help one BE the kind of person who relates well. Thankfulness can become its own habit, rather than just a technique.
- Chapter 11: Following Up. Becoming a better leader is a long process. To keep the program of change from ending before it has begun, invest others in the process by routinely going back to them for feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Chapter 12: Practicing Feedforward. “Feedforward” refers to feedback which is purposely focused on future progress, rather than on past grievances. When soliciting such information from colleagues or friends, listen carefully to their suggestions without judgment, defensiveness, or comment. If you want to know the truth about how you are perceived, you cannot shoot the messenger.

Section Four: Pulling Out the Stops, In Which We Learn How to Apply the Rules of Change and What to Stop Doing Now

- Chapter 13: Changing the Rules. Eight rules for positive change presented here include “Pick the right thing to change,” and “If you can measure it, you can achieve it.”
- Chapter 14: Special Challenges for People in Charge. Successful people often find themselves in positions of authority, though with less-than-optimal cooperation from subordinates. Here the author presents a series of items for the boss’s “to-stop” list, including “Stop trying to coach people who should not be coached,” and “Stop letting your staff overwhelm you.”

TOOLS: A 72-question executive feedback instrument in an appendix called the “Global Leadership Inventory.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS: *“If we can stop, listen, and think about what others are seeing in us, we have a great opportunity. We can compare the self that we want to be with the self that we are presenting to the rest of the world. We can then begin to make real changes that are needed to close the gap between our stated values and our actual behavior.” (p.125)*

“Statistically, if you get better at X, it helps everything else get better, too... If you’re a bad listener who learns to listen more, then you are perceived as treating people with more respect... This, in turn makes you appear as a more involved, concerned leader, which improves morale... Everything gets better with one change. That’s a statistical fact.” (p. 193)

Goldsmith's Twenty Habits

1. **Winning too much.** We argue with others because we want our view to prevail over everyone else. Relationships suffer when we place too much value “being right.”
2. **Adding too much value.** I may think that I am helping you shape your idea into a better one, but in the end I have merely robbed you of ownership and reduced your interest in implementing the idea.
3. **Passing judgment.** Critiquing people's effort makes them hesitant and defensive and less likely to offer their ideas again.
4. **Making destructive comments.** Rather than compulsively blurting out something just because it is true, stop to consider the question “Is it worth it?” Does the truth here matter enough to damage my relationship with this person?
5. **Starting with “No,” “But,” or “However.”** No matter how pleasantly couched, these three words signal “You are wrong.” They creep into our conversations, even over things of little consequence.
6. **Telling the world how smart we are.** Whenever we finish another person's sentence, impatiently look around the room, or comment “I already knew that” we are really turning people off.
7. **Speaking when angry.** Anger is never someone else's fault, and expressions of it are always inappropriate. Get a reputation for volatility, and it'll be nearly impossible to shake.
8. **Negativity, or “Let me explain why that won't work.”** If people don't call or drop by your desk as often as they do with others, check to see how often you respond negatively to their conversations.
9. **Withholding information.** This can be as proactive as declining to give someone something they need to do their job well, or as passive-aggressive as failing to return a phone call or continuously canceling staff meetings.
10. **Failing to give proper recognition.** Interpersonal transactions require closure, and when people are deprived of recognition for their contribution, they don't get that closure. It's a really fast way to tick people off.
11. **Claiming credit that we don't deserve.** Feedback interviews with thousands indicate more negative emotion around this flaw than the others. Stealing another person's thunder is hard to excuse.
12. **Making excuses.** Even self-deprecating comments like “I can never be on time” or “I am no good at XYZ” are seen by others as lame excuses.

13. **Clinging to the past.** Our own history can be a weapon against others if we use it to justify negativity or to block another's effort. "When I was your age..." is the prelude to a self-serving sermon that is rarely appreciated.
14. **Playing favorites.** Most bosses say they want everyone to participate and contribute to the team, but by regularly favoring the ideas of one over another, they are creating a condition in which it is hard for some to speak up.
15. **Refusing to express regret.** An apology is a powerful expression of interest in maintaining the goodwill of the other. Few can resist a sincere apology, followed by a pledge to do better, and a request for help.
16. **Not listening.** In the workplace of old, people had to tolerate extreme forms of disrespect. But in an age of free agency employment, the fastest way to lose good people is to show impatience when they speak.
17. **Failing to express gratitude.** It is so easy to say "Thank you" – and the power of a good bit of appreciation is increased when we use the name of the person we are thanking. Speak their name, and be specific about what you are grateful for.
18. **Punishing the messenger.** If you wonder why you seem to always be the last person to learn important information, check to see how you respond the next time someone does tell you something. If you are unpleasant in that moment, don't expect people to run to tell you the next important bit of news.
19. **Passing the buck.** If you make a mistake, take responsibility and move on. Blaming others for things in our control does not preserve our reputation for good judgment. In fact, it creates the exact opposite impression.
20. **An excessive need to be "me."** Being late to every meeting is not a virtue. Nor is being the one others regularly bail out because "I don't understand computers." Excusing our flaws as features of our unique personalities is a vanity – and an annoyance.