



By Richard D. Czerniawski

## TAKE TIME TO SHARPEN YOUR SAW

*Sharpen your saw: Increasing your personal productivity, by having a balanced strategy to renew yourself in the four aspects of life: Physical, Social, Mental, and Spiritual.*

**Dr. Stephen R. Covey**

My wife and I have been sorting our personal and business effects as we prepare for movers to pack up our belongings and take them down to Pensacola, Florida. Well, actually, my wife is doing the lioness' share of the work. She tasked me only with clearing out my office and culling through my books. I promised her that I would only move 150 of my books to our new locale, quite a prodigious feat when I accomplish it. Well, I've currently culled to about 400 books, but that represents significant progress, and I still have another week to achieve my goal.

One of the books I'll be taking with me is Dr. Stephen R. Covey's THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE. I plan to reread it for the third time. The habits are as relevant today as they were when the book was published, and I first read it, in 1989. The seventh habit is to "sharpen your saw" to drive continued personal development and growth. He dramatizes this essential habit by relating a story of two loggers, both highly competitive and claiming to be the most effective in sawing (chopping) trees. His story goes something like this:

One day two loggers square off to determine who is tops in sawing trees. For the first full hour, they both saw diligently—sweat pouring from their brows—the forest abuzz with the sound of them cutting through one tree trunk after another. TIMBER! However, logger 1 stops for 15 minutes and after that for one-quarter of each hour in his quest for victory. His opponent, logger 2, is greeted by the periodic sound of silence from logger 1's space in another corner of the forest.

Thinking logger 1 has grown tired, logger 2 doubles his pace to press his perceived advantage and race to win. This routine continues for the entire day: logger 1 stopping for 15 minutes every hour with logger 2 redoubling his effort. At the end of the contest, logger 2 feels confident he has bested his opponent only to discover that he has been beaten soundly. Logger 1 fell significantly more trees than logger 2.

Logger 2 is astonished. He demands to know, "how can this be? You stopped working 15 minutes for every hour, while I kept sawing." Logger 1 responds that he did not stop working but was busy sharpening his saw.

The lesson is that we need to take time from our busy lives, chasing our to-do lists, to pursue self-development. We need to renew ourselves so that we might do what really matters in a way that will really matter. It's about working smarter, not harder or longer, to make a difference that matters.

If we want to achieve success, then we must invest in learning and growing. We can pursue professional development through attending seminars, reading, using a mentor, emulating successful marketing managers, and staying abreast of case histories in the making, among many others.

Invest in yourself. Take time to sharpen your saw. If I might suggest, start by reading THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE by Dr. Stephen R. Covey.

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