ESSENTIAL HABITS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP
by: Jennifer J. Comia, MT-1/OIC Parapal E/S

According to Author Stephen Covey, “habits” are defined as the intersection of knowledge, skills and desires. Habits are powerful factors on our lives which are consistent, often unconscious patterns expressed daily in our character and produced our effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Habits can be learned and unlearned. “Effectiveness” on the other hand, is a function of 2 things: Production and Production Capability. Production (P) is – what is produced or the desired results and the Production Capability (PC) is the ability or the asset that produced the result this is also the capacity to produce. Effectiveness happens when there is a balance between Production and Production Capacity or what Covey wrote as P/PC.

The enumerated 7 habits are recommended to become more effective as leaders. These habits must be produced from inside-out and should be based more on Character rather than Personality.

1. Be Proactive
This habit helps us to understand that we have the power to choose – to go right or left, to respond rather than to react and to work within the circle of influence and expand that circle. As a leader, we are in charge to initiate programs and activities for the betterment of our group and our organization. It is necessary to assess ourselves, our character and to become self-aware and reflect on how we respond to situations or stimulus in life. To be an effective leader, we need to be responsible in our thoughts, speech and deeds. It is also a must to focus on things we can control rather than on things we can’t.

2. Begin with the End in Mind
To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of our destination. It means to know where we’re going to. There is a need to understand where we are now in order to be sure that the steps we’re taking are always in the right direction By developing the habit of concentrating on relevant activities we will build a platform to avoid distractions and become more productive and successful.
To be effective, we should know that “leadership is influence” as quoted by John Maxwell. But how can we influence, when we don’t know where we are heading to?

3. Put First Thing First
This is all about the practice of time management. This is very important for a leader to do in order to be effective. The leader should know how to prioritize matters according to urgency and importance. A good leader should focus more on things that are more important and not urgent. Urgent things will just cause stress. In order to avoid stress, post deadlines and activities ahead of time so that all subordinates can prepare for it. Practicing time management will not only increase the productivity of the leader but it will also guide the subordinates on how to spend time effectively.

4. Think Win-Win
Win-win solution makes everybody happy. A good leader will always think of the benefit of the organization and the benefit of his subordinates. The leader should act as a mediator in order for both parties to talk in harmony and agreed on mutual benefits that are mutually satisfying. This is a challenging endeavor but rewarding if the goal of making everyone happy is being achieved. However there is such thing as “you cannot please everyone” so there is a need for both parties to talk and agree and learn from each other.

5. Seek First to Understand, Then to be understood
This habit is all about communication. Communication is very important for leaders. A good leader should know how to communicate effectively and the suggested emphatic listening is very much applicable at work or even at home. Author Covey emphasized that “we need to learn to listen with the intent to understand”. When we understand, we can come up with good solutions.

6. Synergize
It is all about valuing differences in a team, to learn to respect, to build on strengths and to compensate for weaknesses. A leader should see the good in others and enhance the potential of other people and recognize that each person has a capacity to contribute in every endeavor of their organization.
Synergy allows people to work as a team, to communicate back and forth until they both come up with a good solution that they are both happy. This according to Stephen Covey is not a transaction but a transformation. They get what they both really want and build their relationship in the process.

7. Sharpen the Saw
It is all about renewing oneself. William Burroughs stated that “When you stop growing you start dying.” As leaders, we need to grow; we need to improve physically, mentally, socially/emotionally and spiritually. This is the key to be effective. We cannot lead others if we are weak, if we don’t have fresh ideas or we don’t know how to have good relationship with other people

Habit 7 allows leaders to practice the 6 other principle or habits. Renewal is the principle and the process that empowers us to move on an upward spiral of growth and chain of continuous improvement; once we are self-aware we choose the purposes and principles to live by Law of harvest – we will reap what we sow. We need to keep on moving upward by learning, committing and doing over and over again.

Citations/References/Electronic References:
https://www.depts.ttu.edu/.../books/the-7-habits-ofhighly-effective-people.pdf
https://www.stephencovey.com/7habits/7habits.php
http://www.quickmba.com/mgmt/7hab/
http://www.businessballs.com/sevenhabitsstevencovey.htm