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7 Habits of Highly Effective Freight Brokers

By Dennis Brown, CTB, President, Logistic Dynamics, Inc.

Recently I re-read a classic book by Stephen Covey, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. I couldn't help but consider the question; were Covey's teachings universal enough to apply to a niche market like the freight brokerage business? After all, Covey published this book back in 1989 and to the best of my knowledge he had absolutely no clue about the freight brokerage business or the freight industry in general. So I took Covey's 7 habits and related it back to my experience meeting, hiring and training hundreds of freight brokers during the past 7 years and the result is this article, "7 Habits of Highly Effective Freight Brokers."

1. Be Proactive

Freight brokers need to be aggressive and persistent in their efforts to find new clients so being proactive and willing to take the initiative and responsibility for ones actions and deci-

sions is a critical step on the road to success. The key is to remember, that if you are not focused on growing your business, your business it is most likely shrinking. Regardless if you are selling face to face or over the phone, the way to grow your business is to proactively talk to and surround yourself with potential customers and carriers partners with a driving focus on providing them value where others have failed. You can't expect to sit back as a freight broker and have customers and carriers beating down your door. In a nutshell, stop blaming others or the surrounding circumstances and make the conscious choice to take the initiative and responsibility for your daily choices, actions and outcomes.

2. Begin with the end in mind

I was taught long ago, the ability to visualize and define with complete clarity the end result you desire is a critical component to be successful. This applies to almost any goal large or small, so if you are interested in starting your own freight brokerage or if you're a freight broker agent and you want to grow your business, you have to be willing to take the time to define exactly what success would look like. After and

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only after this critical step should you worry about the “How to.” The habit of creating this clear and concise vision upfront is the difference between living “by design” rather than “by default.”

3. Put first things first

Once you have defined what success looks like it's time to create a plan and execute. This is where planning, organization and prioritizing become critical. So to “put first things first,” means to know which tasks or activities to focus on and when based upon prioritization, relevance and urgency. Another critical component is the ability to monitor and evaluate if your actions are moving you in the desired direction you wish to go. The job of a freight broker requires the ability to multi task at a high level while keeping all the balls in the air. The ability to prioritize your tasks and activities based upon your big picture goal, as opposed to just the immediate perception of urgency, can make all the difference on whether the desired outcome from number 2 is achieved. In other words, stay focused on the end you desire and execute with precision. Remember, a plan is only as good as the paper it's written on without proper execution.

4. Think win-win

The most successful freight brokers always think win-win. This means considering everyone involved, including customers, carriers, drivers, employees, agents and anyone else involved in delivering the freight. By valuing everyone's contribution and focusing on mutually beneficial relationships freight brokers are able to develop strong, long-term relationships that can serve everyone's needs, wants and desires.

5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood

“If we were meant to talk more than listen, we would have two mouths and one ear,” said Mark Twain. Listening with the intent of understanding rather than a focus on responding promotes an environment of mutual respect. Being a good listener is vital to the success of a freight broker because the specific details surrounding any shipment can make all the difference. It's important to ask open ended and clarifying questions to insure you have all the

details before you reply or propose a solution to the other party.

6. Synergize

To synergize means to combine the efforts of multiple people with the goal of achieving what no one person could do alone. By creating solutions together you promote healthy and collaborative relationships. The bond between a freight brokerage and their freight agents or a freight broker and their carriers are good examples of synergistic relationships, because both allow everyone to achieve more together than could be achieved alone. A freight brokerage relies on its agents to find and service customer's needs while freight agents rely on the freight brokerage to handle all the financial management, technology and other back-office related functions. Freight brokers rely on carriers for truck capacity at fair rates to serve their customers and carriers rely on brokers for freight to keep their trucks moving, including but not limited to backhauls, head hauls and round trip freight. Please keep in mind, true synergy is difficult to achieve without first applying numbers 4 and 5 above.

7. Sharpen the saw

In order to be successful long term, balance is a critical component and freight brokers are no exception. Physical, emotional, mental and spiritual are the four key areas that represent a balanced life. In my experience, it's not uncommon for freight brokers and other small business owners to get caught up in the routine of life without renewal. To achieve balance it's necessary to invest in renewing your mind, body, heart and soul. Failure to balance can lead to being less productive and possible health related issues both physical and mental.

Habits of Highly Effective People has sold over 10 million copies and I believe one of the main reasons why the response has been so great to what could have been just another self-help book, is the fact that the 7 core habits do transcend both time, industry, job title and beyond. So, regardless if you're new to the logistics industry or a veteran freight broker, I believe we can all benefit from Covey's teachings which extend way beyond the scope of this article.

Dennis Brown, CEO of Logistic Dynamics, an agent-based brokerage, can be reached at 716-250-3477 x1333 or by email at dbrown@logisticdynamics.com