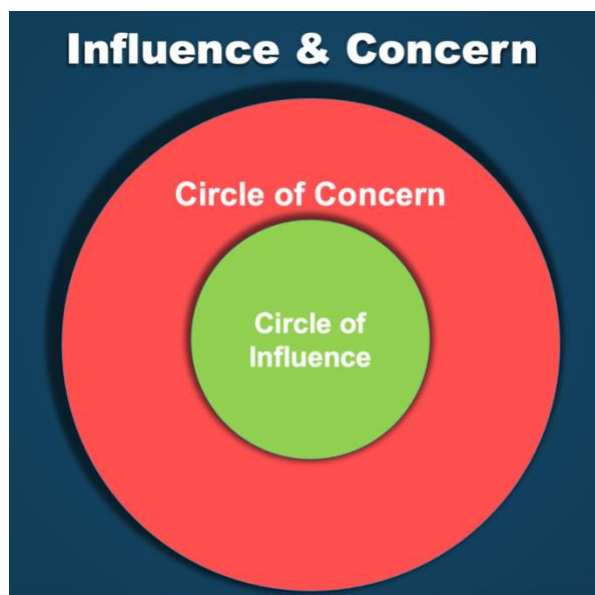


Influence & Concern

A Framework for Proactive Leadership

Adapted from Stephen R. Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (1989), Habit 1: Be Proactive

In his landmark book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Simon & Schuster, 1989), Stephen R. Covey introduced one of the most practical models in leadership development: the Circle of Influence and Circle of Concern. Simple in concept, powerful in practice - it asks a single clarifying question: *Where are you putting your energy?*



The Circle of Concern encompasses *everything that matters to us* - organizational politics, other people's behavior, the economy, policies we didn't design, circumstances beyond our control. These concerns are real and legitimate. But much of what lives here is outside our direct control.

The Circle of Influence is smaller - but it's ours. It includes our choices, our responses, how we communicate, how we lead, and how we invest our time and attention. This is where energy creates results. The key insight Covey offers: ***where you focus determines your effectiveness.***

The key question is this: *Are there things in my life that I'm concerned about, but where I have no influence?*

The ratio matters. It's not just about whether concerns outside your influence exist - they always will. What matters is the *ratio*.

If there are a lot of things I care about but have no influence over, that's a recipe for frustration. When your Circle of Concern vastly outweighs your Circle of Influence, you're constantly focused on things you cannot change. Conversely, if I focus on the things I can influence, and don't take on things over which I have little or no influence, I can feel more empowered and have a more sustainable sense of efficacy. The difference lies in my *mentality*.

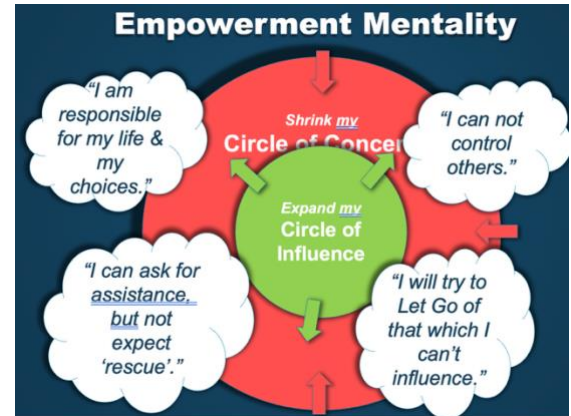
Three Mentalities

How we respond to our Circle of Concern reveals a great deal about our *mindset*. Covey identified two orientations - reactive and proactive - and the practical application for leaders adds a third: a distinctly action-oriented Leadership Mentality.



The Victim Mentality: When we focus primarily on our Circle of Concern, we develop a reactive orientation: “It’s not my fault.” “There’s nothing I can do.” “They are making me feel this way.” In this mode, the Circle of Influence is small compared to the Circle of Concern – there are many things I’m concerned about over which I have little or no influence.

The Empowerment Mentality: A shift in focus changes everything. When we turn attention toward our Circle of Influence, we take ownership: “I am responsible for my choices.” “I cannot control others.” “I will let go of what I can’t influence.” The Circle of Influence expands as we invest in it, and our Circle of Concern shrinks as we let go of that which we cannot influence.



The Leadership Mentality: Effective leaders go further - they act proactively on their Circle of Influence while consciously deciding what to release: “What CAN I do?” “What are my choices?” “What do I need to let go of?” This is not passive acceptance; it’s strategic focus.

What separates this from the Empowerment Mentality is not degree - *it’s direction*. Empowerment is an inward shift: reclaiming your own agency, taking ownership; Leadership takes that same shift and turns it *outward* - using your Circle of Influence to help others find theirs.

Reflection Questions

Use these questions to work through any situation where you feel stuck, frustrated, or uncertain about how to proceed:

1. What are all the things that “concern” me in this situation?
2. For each factor, relationship, or condition:
 - A. What aspects of this CAN I have influence over?
 - B. What aspects do I have no reasonable influence over?
 - C. What changes or choices do I need to make?
 - D. What do I need to “let go of”?
3. What are the most crucial actions I need to take?