

# Go For the Win-Win

By Craig Kitch

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In his New York Times best seller “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, Dr. Stephen Covey outlines seven specific habits that, when implemented, will greatly enhance your effectiveness in both business and personal relationships. Habit number 4 is: “**Think Win-Win**”. Win-Win is not how most of us have been trained to think. Our natural tendencies push us toward *Win-Lose*. We succumb to the belief that every interaction must have a winner and a loser, and we want to win. At the very least, we want to make sure we don’t lose. Our competitive nature combined with a fear of loss will quite often bring out the worst in us as we press on to *win*. It is this basic human trait that has brought such prosperity to the legal profession and jammed our court dockets months in advance.

What if we change the way we think? What if we actually search for ways to “win” and not let others lose in the process. What if we actually *go for the win-win*? I’ll bet someone reading this just thought: “Yeah, but nice guys finish last”. Well, I am not talking about being a “nice guy” and I am not talking about finishing last. Finishing last is not win-win. Finishing last is win-lose and I don’t want to be the latter half of that equation either. Win-win is a wonderfully creative way to approach life and it adds a pleasant twist to problem-solving as well.

Let me share a real-life story with you about a good friend of mine. His name is Glen and he lives here in the Nashville area, attends the same church as I do and has become a good friend over the last few years. Glen is a great guy. He lives life to the fullest and always ends up enhancing the lives of those around him. Quite frankly, I don’t know anyone who does not like Glen. The key to Glen’s happiness and success is not that he has no challenges in his life. In fact, he has had more than most of us. My friend’s key to success is how he handles those challenges, always looking for the “up-side” of any situation. He loves to find the *win-win*.

One day Glen was backing out of a parking space and inadvertently hit another vehicle. Most of us have been there at some point in our driving experience. Whether we are at fault or not, the initial meeting of two people that have just had an accident is usually fraught with anxiety and apprehension. Glen tells me that, as he exited his truck, he was already thinking to himself: “How can I make this better”. The vehicle was about 10 years old and the dent Glen caused, while not all that serious, was going to be expensive to fix in relation to the value of the vehicle. The police would need to fill out a report. The insurance company will send out an adjuster, get the dent fixed and reimburse the shop.

Glen decided to go for *win-win*. He asked the other driver what the vehicle was worth and offered to buy it for a fair price. By purchasing the damaged vehicle, Glen was able to make the damaged driver “whole” financially and then sell the vehicle to someone else (dent and all) to recoup most (or all) of his money. The financial impact to Glen is minimal and the other person will take the money and put it down on a nicer and newer vehicle. **THAT’S WIN-WIN**. Everyone comes out better when you reach win-win. If this same scenario had gone the “traditional” route, the outcome could have been much less desirable. In fact, the insurance company might have decided to total the vehicle, rather than repair it, and give the owner less than fair market value.

How much better would both your business and personal life be if you could just find the mutual benefit in each of your relationships? Is it easy? Not at first. But as you consciously look for the *win-win* in life, you will find it becomes a habit. Good habits produce the good things in life. Glen has been both a good friend and a good example in my life. I wish you could all know him, but obviously you cannot. What you CAN do is adopt his positive and upbeat perspective on life and set the example for those around you.