



Synergize[®] :

How 1+1 Can Equal More for
Your Organization

FranklinCovey



Synergize means interacting and cooperating to produce a combined effect that is greater than what individuals or groups might achieve separately.



Etymologically, synergy originates from the words “together” and “work,” but at its best, synergy is so much more than simple collaboration. It connotes action, energy, and generativity. A team that can synergize can create momentum beyond what each person could do on their own.

Professional teams often seek out this source of energy and inspiration but too often find themselves weighed down by friction between team members. To synergize, a mindset shift is required, with all members of the team truly coming to believe that two heads are better than one. Think teamwork, open-mindedness, and embracing the shared adventure unearthing fresh solutions to old challenges.

With the right mindset in place, most of us work better in pairs and are more likely to discover things together than alone. One plus one equals three, or six, or sixty, or more! When two people have genuine interactions, value each other’s differences and are open to each other’s influence, they are more likely to find new insights, develop novel ideas, and invent new solutions.

To truly synergize, we must acknowledge the value of differences, including emotional and psychological differences, among people. According to the American Psychological Association, academic studies “confirm the intuition that two heads are better than one,” an effect the APA attributes in part to social motivation.

Synergize is Habit 6 within *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*®, a framework developed by Dr. Stephen R. Covey that has empowered and inspired readers for over 30 years and has helped transform millions of lives across all ages and professions. These habits offer a system to help leaders and employees manage their professional lives more effectively.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Habit 1: Be Proactive®

Focus and act on what you can control and influence instead of what you can't.

Habit 2: Begin With the End in Mind®

Define clear measures of success and a plan to achieve them.

Habit 3: Put First Things First®

Prioritize and achieve your most important goals instead of constantly reacting to urgencies.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win®

Collaborate more effectively by building high-trust relationships.

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood®

Influence others by developing a deep understanding of their needs and perspectives.

Habit 6: Synergize®

Develop innovative solutions that leverage differences and satisfy all key stakeholders.

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw®

Increase motivation, energy, and work/life balance by making time for renewing activities.



Why Synergy Matters for Organizations

The 7 Habits begin with what Dr. Stephen R. Covey refers to as Private Victories (Habits 1–3) and ultimately progress to Public Victories (Habits 4–7).

Private Victories are characterized by independence, while Public Victories are characterized by interdependence or success in working with other people. In the first three habits, we take responsibility for our life, set our priorities, and center our energy around achieving those goals. Having taken those steps, we can then build trusting relationships and engage with others in an effective manner. Private victories enable the mastery of your own habits to build character, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence, which can then be used to create Public Victories in the workplace and broadly in life. Habits 1-3 reinforce taking personal responsibility, setting priorities, and developing an effective plan. Habits 4 and 5 establish trust and influence.

Habit 6—Synergize—allows us to reap the benefits of working together, building on the foundations of the previous steps. As Dr. Stephen R. Covey said: “Synergy is better than my way or your way. It’s our way.” Habit 6 leverages teamwork, open-mindedness, and a sense of adventure to find new solutions to old problems.



“Synergy is better than my way or your way. It’s our way.”

– Stephen R. Covey

Case Study: How APi Group Grew with FranklinCovey

APi Group partnered with FranklinCovey in 2012 to help grow and develop a culture that could improve its portfolio management of several dozen disparate companies in the safety and specialty contracting sectors. Believing that leadership is the biggest differentiator between average performance and excellence, the team relies on training to get the most from people. “We knew that we couldn’t become bigger unless we had great leaders at all parts of our business,” APi’s Vice President of Learning and Development Bob Randall said.

APi took a rigorous approach to learning, namely: start with pre-work, have employees take the course itself, follow with seven weeks of micro-learnings, schedule follow-up meetings with supervisors to support learning and, finally, offer a refresher course after six months.

Since engaging with FranklinCovey, APi’s revenues have grown tenfold, from \$600 million a year to more than \$6.5 billion.



The Importance of Valuing Differences

A key mindset shift is required for many companies to stop mistaking uniformity for unity. Instead, they must think of differences as strength.

Valuing differences is what really drives synergy. Most organizations today still operate under the “command and control” management model, focusing on positional power, hierarchy, and compliance. But that leadership model, which was most applicable in a manufacturing-driven business landscape, is ineffective in today’s more complex and knowledge-driven world, where a “trust and inspire” approach is far more powerful. Having the ability to synergize starts with creating a culture where behavioral differences among people are valued, leading to collaborative communications rather than communication that is merely respectful—or worse, defensive.

The quality of communication at any organization can fall broadly into three categories:

- **Defensive:** A type of fear-based communication often found in low-trust situations. Defensive communication is ineffective, producing Win/Lose or Lose/Lose outcomes and generating more reasons to defend and protect.
- **Respectful:** This mid-level communication is common among mature people who communicate politely but not empathetically, leading to compromise but limiting creative possibilities. Compromise tends to mean $1+1=1.5$, producing a modest form of Win-Win.
- **Synergistic:** In high-level communication, $1+1$ can equal 4, 16, or even 1,600. A high degree of trust produces better solutions than may have originally been proposed—and all parties know it.



6 Tips for Synergistic Communications



1. Ask open-ended questions that begin with “how” or “what.”

PRO TIP: Before a 1-on-1 meeting, come up with two or three thought-provoking questions that begin with “how” or “what” to show curiosity and spark creativity.

2. Draw out issues with follow-up statements and questions.

PRO TIP: When a direct report says something interesting, can you offer encouragement with a follow-up question that will allow them to share more?

3. Don’t sabotage your words with contradictory body language, voice, volume, tone, etc.

PRO TIP: Developing body language awareness is tough. Focus on one thing at a time. One week, it might be giving your full attention when speaking with a colleague. The next, it might be maintaining a positive tone when under stress.

4. When you want to know more about people’s rationale for doing things, be wary of starting questions with the word “why.”

PRO TIP: Defensive conversations are rarely productive, so seek to understand—not to judge.

5. Use “we” and “us” instead of “you.” Be mindful when giving praise or accepting blame.

PRO TIP: To foster trust and ensure your team feels valued, give your direct reports credit when things go well and take accountability when they don’t.

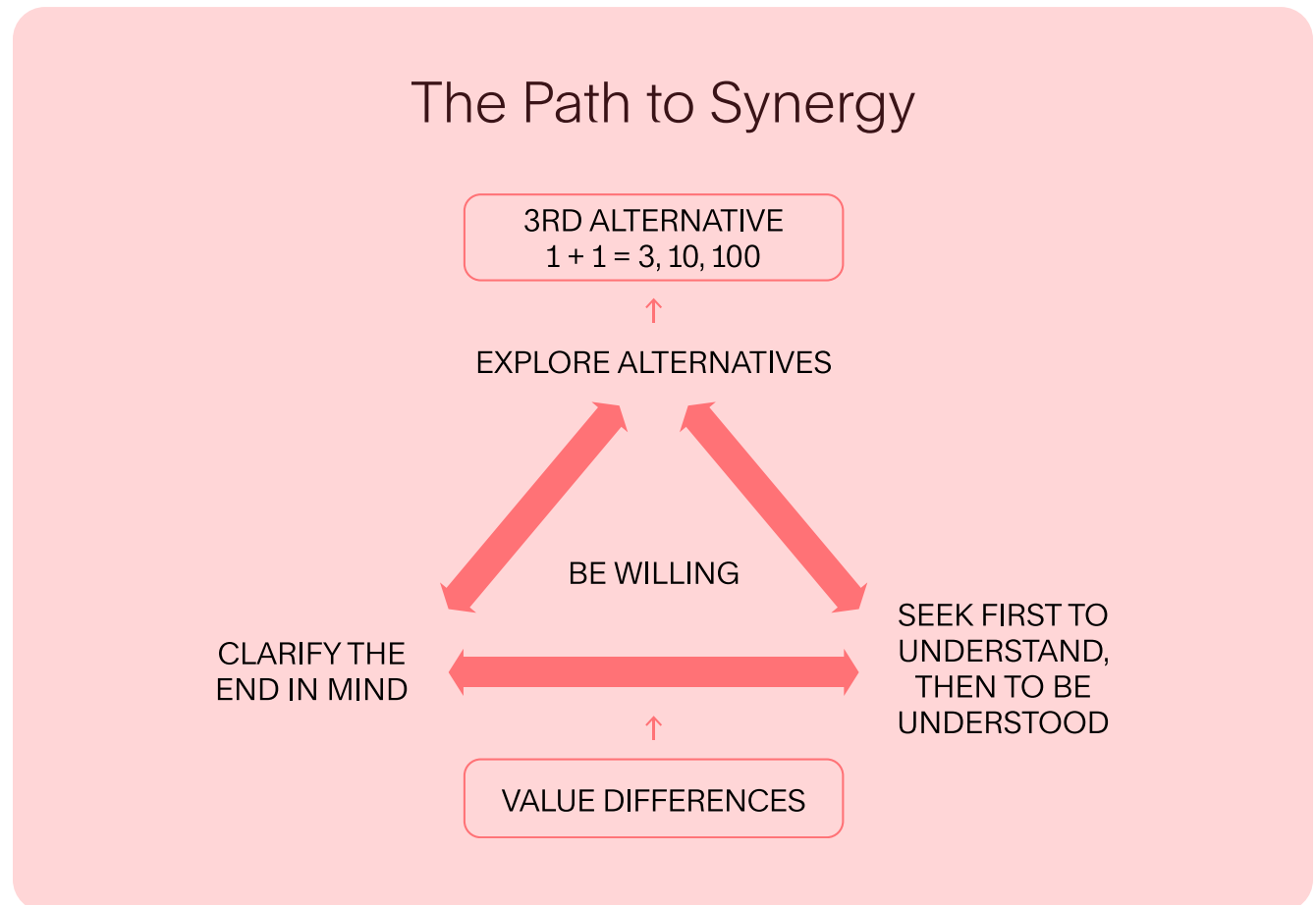
6. When there’s an uncomfortable silence, wait 10 seconds. Then clarify.

PRO TIP: Silence can indicate you’ve hit on something difficult but critical. Don’t rush to fill the silence; take a beat—or several—and see what happens. Then, ask clarifying questions to gain understanding.

Being Willing to Synergize

Synergy starts with a “be willing” mindset. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Clarify the end goal and keep that in mind while exploring all the alternatives before finally embarking on action.

Mississippi Power experienced synergy after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when the electric utility found itself with nearly 12,000 volunteers who came to the state to help rebuild and repair critical electricity infrastructure. Having too many linemen and not enough leaders, Mississippi Power’s chief executive acted decisively, making each of his linemen a leader responsible for a team of volunteers. “They brought everything to bear that they had learned as part of the 7 Habits,” he said. “We were able to get the lights back on in 12 days, which is just unheard of.”



Synergy is the highest activity in life—the manifestation of all *The 7 Habits* combined.



It doesn't happen overnight; in fact, mastery of the first five habits has to come first. Creative cooperation emerges only once the Private and Public Victories of the habits have been achieved. Think of synergy as the capstone to the first five habits. By tapping into synergy, teams can value every member's unique contribution and allow those differences to guide them to new, previously unforeseen conclusions that will lead to shared growth.

Unlock Potential. Unleash Performance.

We've reimagined the *7 Habits*® course to be even more relevant and impactful for today's workers.

The *7 Habits* framework is rooted in universal principles that are timeless, trusted, and proven. We've kept the core principles that made *7 Habits* indispensable while making them more relevant, scalable, flexible, and accessible for today's needs. The course will spark engagement across your organization and create undeniable impact at every level.

FranklinCovey is the most trusted leadership company in the world, with operations in more than 160 countries. We transform organizations by building exceptional leaders, teams, and cultures that get breakthrough results. Available through the FranklinCovey All Access Pass®, our best-in-class content, experts, technology, and metrics seamlessly integrate to ensure lasting behavior change at scale. Our approach to leadership has been tested and refined by working with tens of thousands of teams and organizations over the past 30 years.

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