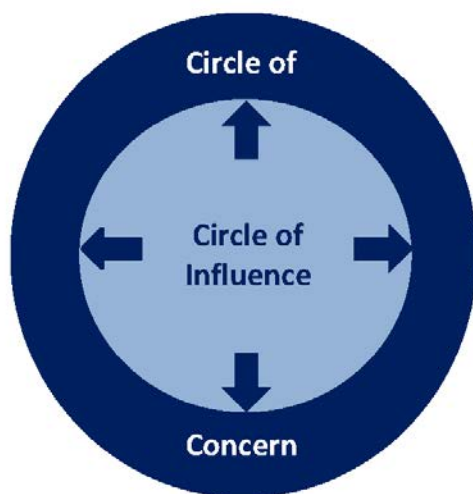


Stephen Covey's circle of concern and circle of influence

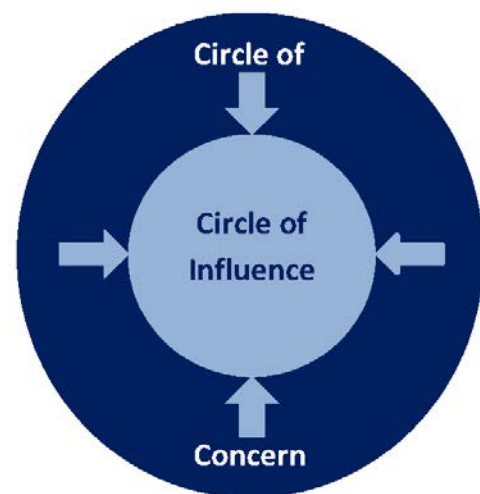
In his book *the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (1989)* Covey distinguishes between proactive people – who focus on what they can do and can influence – and reactive people who focus their energy on things beyond their control. Reactive people maintain an attitude of victimisation and blame.

Covey's Circles of Influence



Proactive Focus

Positive energy enlarges Circle of Influence



Reactive Focus

Negative energy reduces Circle of Influence

The model is based on two circles. The first is our circle of concern. This includes a whole range of things – global warming, the state of the economy, the clothes your children want to wear, attitudes in society, the organisation you work for, the things your colleagues do, the way people drive their cars etc. The actual list will depend on the individual, but the important thing to understand is that there may be little you can do about many of these things since they are outside your influence. Devoting energy on them may be a waste of time – the equivalent of shouting at the television – and time and energy once spent cannot be reused.

Our circle of influence will be much smaller. It includes the things we can do something about. The extent of this will obviously be related to your power –

the President of the USA or Chair of Ford may have far more influence than you or me.

The key is to focus your energy on those things that you can influence – this will enable you to make effective changes. If you do this you will find your circle of influence starts to increase – others will see you as an effective person and this will increase your power. Conversely, if all your energy goes into those things you cannot change your circle of influence will shrink. Not only will you drain your energy, other people may start to see you as unduly negative and critical.

Knowing how far your circle of influence extends is an important aspect of personal effectiveness. So is forming partnerships and alliances – you may not have any direct influence over something in your Circle of Concern, but you may know other people who do. A team can have a wider circle of influence than an individual.

So reactive people find their circle of influence shrinks, while proactive people find that it increases.

To read more about Covey's Circles of Influence, we strongly recommend the *"7 Habits of Highly Effective People"* written by Stephen Covey