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Period 2

The Effectiveness of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

“By fighting you never get enough, but by yielding you get more than you expected.” These words come from an old proverb referenced in Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Even though the book was first written nearly 80 years ago, much of its advice still rings true today. However, the majority of people still do not heed his wise words. There are a number of probable causes, the first simply being the lack of awareness of Carnegie’s guidelines. Another problem lies in the nature of humanity itself. Much of Carnegie’s message is lost through a lack of persistent effort. Utilizing Carnegie’s advice through concrete lifestyle changes can make the world a more harmonious place.

One year ago, I found myself volunteering at my local hospital with a friend of mine. We were assigned the task of handling the post at Outpatient Registration while the security guard, who normally does the job, was busy. The work itself was not particularly difficult, as the majority of what we did involved signing patients and visitors in and then sending them on their way. Of course, the job was not meant to be so simple. Soon enough, a clearly distressed woman came to our desk and demanded the location of a patient who was recently admitted to the hospital. We were not capable of answering such a question, and guided the woman to the desk of a more experienced hospital employee. However, the woman soon returned with a furious look on her face. She exploded in a fit of rage, complaining about how we were wasting her time and how we should have known what to do in such a situation. Amidst the confusion, my friend decided to defend herself by hurling a number of devastating truths in return. An argument ensued and I, in my relative inexperience, could only watch. Soon enough, the security guard came back to aid the woman and the conflict was forced to a close.

My friend was certainly not wrong. The best that we could have done was send the woman to someone else. However, the situation could have been handled in a better fashion. After reading Carnegie’s book, I realized that I could have proactively emphasized with the woman, especially given the morbid circumstances of a hospital. I could have prevented the argument by stopping my friend from lashing out in defense. Perhaps if the argument never occurred, the woman might have retracted her anger. Alas, nothing can be done about the situation now. One can only speculate.

The most evident problem in that situation was the lack of awareness of Carnegie’s advice. At that point, I had only heard the book’s title mentioned once, let alone its content. Since I did not know about what Carnegie had said, there was no possible way for me to use his advice. This is a relevant reason for why most people do not use Carnegie’s guidelines. Even though his book is a bestseller, and has been for several years, it is nearly impossible to issue a copy of any book to an entire population. Therefore, the range of Carnegie’s advice is limited by the nature of the distribution of written works.

Of course even people who read Carnegie’s work may not fully apprehend what he has to say. The reason for this lies in the very nature of human beings. Carnegie himself states that in order to get the most out of the book, one must develop “a deep, driving desire to learn, a vigorous determination to increase your ability to deal with people.” However, that very simple requirement necessitates a lot more effort than it seems. It is much easier to just read past that line as if it was no more important than any other line. Thus, the book becomes just another piece for recreational reading, rather than one that can fundamentally change one’s life.

All in all, Carnegie’s book can be used to revolutionize how one deals with other people. However, it is limited by both its distribution and the amount of effort that is required to make a significant change. As a result, the book cannot change the lives of every single human being. Nonetheless, the more people that heed Carnegie’s words, the better the world will become.

\*I have neither given nor received help on this essay, except from my teacher.