

Teamworks Fall Newsletter '08

“Attitude *is everything* in the Workplace”

A recent national survey asked the question, “what counts more..... Employee aptitude; hard skills and technical competencies or employee attitude; relational skills, motivation and positive outlook” Nearly 60% of corporations said attitude was the no. 1 concern.

Another interesting comment I read recently on a “career” website was “Employees that have good professional skills but do not relationally get along with co-workers, clients or management are now considered *incompetent*.”

Most of the workshops that I’ve done on attitude have revealed that support staff and employees feel the word “*incompetent*” is too strong. However, when management has been asked to comment on the phrase they unanimously have agreed that “*incompetent*” is the perfect word. In addition, it is stated the employees are terminated for attitude related issues more than skill. In contrast, more employees are promoted as a result of a good attitude and the ability to get along with others quicker than those of sharp vocational skills.

Obviously both are required for a good work ethic; however, skills can be learned much quicker than attitude and social diplomacy!

FACTS ON ATTITUDE

Some facts on attitude might be helpful:

- One individual's attitude can control the entire emotional climate of an office.
- Attitude both negative and positive are contagious.
- We cannot control some of our work related circumstances, but we can choose which attitude we'll have.

It's been stated that "10% of life is what happens to us, but 90% of life is how we react to what has happened to us."

ATTITUDE IS A CHOICE

It's true and very liberating to know that we can literally choose our attitude and how we respond in any given set of circumstances. No doubt, if work conditions are less than desirable, it takes adjustment and can put us in a challenging and uncomfortable environment, but given time and perspective we CAN adapt with a good attitude.

Viktor Frankl, a Jewish psychologist, in his autobiographical book "Man's Search For Meaning" clearly spells out the horrors he experienced in the concentration camp of Auschwitz. As a survivor, he stated "One's ultimate *freedom* is the ability to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances." He went on to say that although it defies human explanation, he also observed that human resilience can adapt eventually in any difficult situation that he may endure.

The bottom line seems to be that we do not have to stay captive or victims in our workplace circumstances. We can either choose a

good perspective in spite of what's going on around us, or relocate to a more appropriate job.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Attitudes that are negative can be very toxic in the workplace.

- Never expects to succeed
- Find more reasons why something *won't* work
- Convinced that you are never going to get better than you are right now
- Wondering why people never like me
- Fell that misery and injustice is just my lot in life

As a counselor and workplace consultant I must admit that the more difficult people to understand and help are those who feel victimized and stuck in workplace situations that they are unwilling to confront , change , leave or at least respond to in a different way.

POOR ATTITUDES VERBALIZED

Most of us instinctively know what a bad attitude looks like at the office, but what does it sound like?

- It's not my job
- The other department should of taken care of it
- But I have a college degree
- We've never done it this way before
- I'm here to clock in and clock out
- I'm just an employee ID number
- I hope I get fired so I can collect unemployment

WORDS OF A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

In contrast we can hear the sounds of a positive voice a mile away. Unfortunately the voices of negativity in the workplace are much more familiar to us than the tone of encouragement. Here are some:

- * What can I do to make this a better place?
- * As long as I work here I will remain loyal to the organization.
- * I appreciate the benefit of working here.
- * I am willing to learn other task.
- * Let's cut some slack, everyone has a bad day once in a while.

MANAGEMENT AND ATTITUDES

I recently was working with a local city government agency and in the discussion relative to workplace attitude with staff, it was mentioned that it is not enough to tell us to have a better attitude when management doesn't model it as well. How true this is. As leaders whether we like it or not "water runs down hill."

When there is poor morale or a slumping attitude at work, we generally have to start at the top first so we can track where the "water" is coming from.

I asked one worker how management could create a better environment for him and he said, "a little communication goes a long way." In other words, you can help kick start my attitude if you show me respects by communicating clearly rather than just expecting.

Other Management tips:

- Don't micromanage (Look over their shoulder's)
- Don't macromanage (completely uninvolved)
- Model a positive attitude yourself
- Compliment them for a job well done
- Develop a team attitude rather than a dictator one
- Let them know that their ideas are important
- Allow them to be creative with their task

This is just good management that will engender trust in your staff. When staff trust their employers good attitude frequently follows.

ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT TIME

As stated earlier, attitude is ultimately about choice. Therefore, if you've been stuck for a while with a bad attitude at the office, it's not too late to turn it around. A few suggestions to get you going:

- 1) Recognize if your attitude needs adjustment.
- 2) Redefine if this job is for you or if you are in the right position in the organization.
- 3) Assess what changes you can personally make within the organization.
- 4) Admit to management or your supervisor that you are going to change.
- 5) Go to the right source if conflict needs to be mediated or resolved. Don't put it off any longer.
- 6) Take a deep breath, step back, and make a choice to have a new attitude!

IT'S ULTIMATELY UP TO YOU

We spend at least 35% of our life in the workplace, so striving for personal satisfaction and good work ethic is imperative.

The only one that can control your reactions or attitude in your work environment is you. It's based on personal choice and good communication with someone you trust. It would never be in your best interest to "hate" going to work everyday. So decide to make a difference at work, because "attitude is everything in the workplace."

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