

Does Attitude Really Count?

For as long as I've been a professional I've heard that a person's attitude makes a difference. You've probably heard all the cute sayings about attitude – "Your Attitude Determines Your Altitude", "Attitude is Everything", "The Only Thing You Can Control is Your Attitude". Every sales manager talks about attitude. Every leader talks about attitude. Every entrepreneur hears about attitude.

Let's face it. No one is against having a positive attitude. It's kind of like mom and apple pie. There's nothing to be against. But anyone who has worked with me knows that I don't go with the crowd. I tend to be an independent thinker and as such, often see things differently than others. Over my professional career, I've been a student of human nature, and one of the areas I make note of is attitude.

Attitude has an interesting dynamic around it. I've observed, for instance, that people with a positive attitude tend to hang out together and people with a negative attitude also hang out together. Of course, each group tends to support the views of each other person within their group. The positive people see themselves as optimistic and forward thinking. The negative people see themselves as realists. Additionally, each group tends to view the other group somewhat unfavorably. The people in the positive group tend to look at the negative group as complainers, while the negative group tends to view the positive group as naïve, unrealistic, and/or overly "cheery". I guess it's a matter of your perspective. Each group feels they have an accurate view of reality – or more precisely, THE accurate view of reality.

One thing I'm sure of in life is that a person's perspective determines their reality. And here is where these two groups begin to differ. I've noticed very different behaviors from people depending on their attitude. You see, attitude not only determines how a person sees things, but also affects their consequent actions as well. Our attitude determines our perspective, which in turn determines our reality. How does attitude and perspective affect our reality? Let me share a story as an example of how this happens. A number of years ago I had a friend who became focused on the potential problems surrounding the change of the millennium (Y2K). As he began to "research" the topic, the foretelling of upcoming disasters became his reality. In fact, the more he listened to radio talk shows the more he accepted their topics as "reality". The more articles he read on the subject the more he accepted the writings as "reality". The more websites he visited about Y2K, the more he accepted their perspectives as "reality". By the time the end of December came around, he had stockpiled water and food, and was pleading with me to move up to the mountains to escape the impending terrorist attacks, falling planes, food shortages, crashing cars, and lack of water. January 1, 2000 came and went without incident. He never spoke to me again.

Obviously none of us are worried about Y2K any longer, but this story underlines how our attitude definitely affects how we conduct ourselves and our life. Our attitude creates our reality. But be clear, it's OUR reality, not THE reality. I've observed that positive people tend to view challenges as speed bumps while negative people see them as obstacles standing in the way of success. Positive folks often face the same challenges as negative folks, except that negative people have their thoughts and energies focused on the problems and the consequences of the problems, while the positive people focus their thoughts and energies on succeeding despite the problems. (Yes,... including rate increases.) I've observed that negative people often adopt a

defeatist mindset, taking on the role of a victim, while positive people often adopt a solution-oriented mindset and set about creating their own opportunities. Consequently, I've come to understand that having a positive attitude indeed makes a significant difference not only in a person's level of success, but also in their enjoyment of their life. It even determines whether they succeed at all.

But here's the unusual thing... NO ONE VIEWS HIMSELF OR HERSELF AS A NEGATIVE PERSON!

People who are negative view themselves as "realistic". (Wait a minute... isn't "reality" a matter of perspective?) So the challenge is to determine whether you're a "negative" person.

Here are some guidelines:

- If you feel that your course in life and business is determined by others, then you need to adjust your attitude so you can shift your reality.
- If you feel that the cards are often stacked against you, then you need to adjust your attitude so you can change your reality.
- If you feel that your company, manager, agents, and/or clients don't support you, then you need to adjust your attitude so you can change your reality.

We each have the ability and power to literally change our reality.

How does one turn a negative attitude into a positive one? The same way someone with a positive attitude maintains it. You need to eliminate the negative inputs, influences, and factors in your life and introduce positive ones. We're bombarded with messages throughout the day and night. Some of them are good and some of them are just plain bad for you. We get "messages" from family, friends, co-workers, radio, newspaper, TV, music, the internet, billboards, books, magazines, and any number of other sources. If YOU don't decide what goes into your head, then someone else will. You need to take control of what you feed your mind. Here are some tips on how to adjust and maintain your attitude:

Eliminate the Negatives

- Stop reading the newspaper
- Stop watching TV news
- Stop seeking the negative on the internet
- Stop hanging around negative people

Introduce Positives

- Start hanging around positive people
- Start reading motivational or inspirational books – biographies, personal growth, success principles, etc.
- Start listening to CD's – motivational, personal growth, uplifting music, etc.

Does attitude really count? Can attitude really change your reality? I guess it depends on your perspective...

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