

Attitude for Success



Your attitude defines and delimits your level of success. If you have a generally lousy attitude, you'll never really be successful. If you have a generally upbeat attitude, however, you'll always achieve at least some level of success.

Your attitude determines how you interpret what events mean. Take obstacles, for example. Everyone who pursues any goal will inevitably run into obstacles. Your attitude determines what those obstacles mean and therefore how well you deal with them.

If you have a lousy attitude, you'll see obstacles as threats and annoyances. Even if you overcome them, you'll find the process frustrating, which will make future obstacles harder to cope with.

If you've got a positive attitude, you'll see obstacles as interesting or even fun. Even if you fail to overcome them, you'll find the process invigorating, which will make future obstacles easier to overcome.

I ran into (or, more actually, almost ran into) a perfect example of this the other day. I was trying to find a parking space in a covered car lot. Suddenly, another car zipped around a blind corner and we would have crashed if we both hadn't quickly braked.

Same event.

My first thought was: "Wow, I'm sure glad that we (meaning me and the other driver) have fast reflexes!" I'm not *exactly* sure what the other driver thought, but she gave me the single-finger salute accompanied by an expletive.

Same event, different attitude.

Now, it's never pleasant to be the target of that kind of animosity, but my next thought was to feel sorry for her. She was in a small car with four kids and clearly having a horrible day. (I felt sorry for the kids, too.)

Clearly still furious, she drove off even faster than she'd been driving before. I, however, slowed down because I took the almost-accident as a warning that I needed to pay more attention to my driving.

Same event, different attitude, opposite outcome.

The outcome for the other driver was an action that made her drive more dangerously and thus increase the possibility that she'd actually have a fender-bender next time. My outcome was to make me a better driver.

Everything in business is exactly like this. Stuff happens. Your attitude determines how you interpret and experience those events, and therefore strategies and tactics you'll follow in the future.

This is not to say that people who suffer from lousy attitudes don't win sometimes. They do, but it's always with massive hassle and complaint. When they finally win, they feel *exhausted*.

Similarly, having an upbeat attitude doesn't bulletproof you against failure. You'll fail sometimes, but your attitude makes it easy to learn from your mistakes. And when you do win, you feel *exhilarated*.

Some people believe that their lousy attitude is part of who they are. This is not so, your attitude is something you are doing. It is not a character trait.

Regardless of what you do for a living, your real job--the foundation of what you will or won't accomplish--is your attitude. The more upbeat you are, the more likely you are to be successful at whatever you do

How to Create a More Positive Attitude

1. Remember that YOU control your attitude.

Attitude does not emerge from what happens to you, but instead from how you decide to interpret what happens to you.

Take, for example, receiving the unexpected gift of an old automobile. One person might think: "It's a piece of junk!" a second might think: "It's cheap transportation," and a third might think: "It's a real classic!"

In each case, the person is deciding how to interpret the event and therefore controlling how he or she feels about it (i.e. attitude).

2. Adopt beliefs that frame events in a positive way.

Your beliefs and rules about life and work determine how you interpret events and therefore your attitude. Decide to adopt "strong" beliefs that create a good attitude rather than beliefs that create a bad attitude.

To use sales as an example:

- *Situation*: The first sales call of the day goes poorly.
- *Weak*: A lousy first call means that I'm off my game and today will suck.
- *Strong*: Every sales call is different, so the next will probably be better.
- *Situation*: A customer reduces the amount of an order at the last minute!

- *Weak:* Customers who change orders can't be trusted.
- *Strong:* Customers who change orders are more likely to be satisfied!
- *Situation:* A big sales win comes seemingly "out of nowhere."
- *Weak:* Even a blind pig finds an acorn once in a while.
- *Strong:* You never know when something wonderful will happen!

3. Create a "library" of positive thoughts.

Spend at least 15 minutes every morning to read, view, or listen to something inspirational or motivational. If you do this regularly, you'll have those thoughts and feelings ready at hand (or rather, ready to mind) when events don't go exactly the way you'd prefer.

4. Avoid angry or negative media.

Unfortunately, the media is full of hateful people who make money by goading listeners to be paranoid, unhappy, and frightened. The resulting flood of negativity doesn't just destroy your ability to maintain a positive attitude; it actively inserts you into a state of misery, pique, and umbrage. Rather than suck up the spew, limit your "informational" media consumption to business and industry news.

5. Ignore whiners and complainers.

Whiners and complainers see the world through crap-colored glasses. They'd rather talk about what's irreparably wrong, rather than make things better. More importantly, complainers can't bear to see somebody else happy and satisfied.

If you tell a complainer about a success that you've experienced, they'll congratulate them, but their words ring hollow. You can sense they'd just as soon you told them about what's making you miserable. What a drag (figuratively and literally)!

6. Use a more positive vocabulary.

I've written about this before, but the point is worth making again. The words that come out of your mouth aren't just a reflection of what's in your brain--they're programming your brain how to think. Therefore, if you want to have a positive attitude, your vocabulary must be consistently positive. Therefore:

- Stop using negative phrases such as "I can't," "It's impossible," or "This won't work." These statements program you for negative results.
- Whenever anyone asks "How are you?" rather than "Hangin' in there," or "Okay, I guess..." respond with "Terrific!" or "Never felt better!" And mean it.
- When you're feeling angry or upset, substitute neutral words for emotionally loaded ones. Rather than saying "I'm enraged!" say "I'm a bit annoyed..."