

# LMI Journal



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## Influencing the Behavior of Others

By Paul J. Meyer

Earning the respect of your associates and learning to use your power more productively will increase the results you are able to get by working with and through people. Although your authority may come with your job, the power to use it must be earned.

How effectively you establish your authority and influence the behavior of others is based on your ability to develop these characteristics:

- Treating all people with basic human dignity and respect regardless of their position
- Focusing on behavior, effectiveness, and results rather than personalities
- Caring about team members as people first and as workers second
- Having and using expert information about the work itself
- Using effective communication skills to understand others and to be understood
- Being open to new ideas for improving productivity
- Demonstrating a willingness for personal growth and change
- Living up to your commitments
- Making necessary decisions in a timely fashion
- Being on time for meetings and appointments
- Upholding policies and procedures fairly and equally
- Giving more help, encourage-

ment, and praise than you receive • Bringing out the best in people and helping them succeed on the job.

### A Positive Approach to Discipline

A common misconception is that discipline is primarily punishment and penalties. Although discipline includes enforcing established performance expectations, that is just a part of a positive approach to discipline. Positive discipline means training to produce skills, habits, and attitudes that lead to successful performance. It is within this context that you can most effectively carry out the responsibilities of your position. When you train, instruct, encourage, and reinforce patterns of behavior that increase productivity, you are building a foundation for long-term growth and development.

Self-discipline is at the very core of success. Because it is central to gain mastery over one's personal and professional life, you can benefit from knowing what you can do as a

leader in your organization to ensure that each member of your work team develops a strong sense of self-discipline. You are responsible for your team members' knowing what




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to do, their having or developing the skills for how to do it, and guiding them and encouraging them to assume responsibility for doing it.

Your own attitude toward carrying out a positive approach to discipline determines how effectively you are able to influence members of your work team. Two important characteristics that command respect and earn you power to use your authority already have been identified. **Keep these characteristics in mind as you interact with your work team:**

- ▲ Always treat team members with dignity and respect. Harsh criticism or punishment creates short-lived fear motivation. Sometimes called coercive power, this kind of power may change the behavior momentarily but usually leaves the team member hurt, angry, and resentful. A person with this mindset rarely becomes self-disciplined. In contrast, individuals who make changes because they want to and are given clear instructions how to change are much more likely to provide their own internal motivation and assume responsibility for getting their work done.
- ▲ Focus on the behavior and take corrective action to help the team member get back on track. When someone has not followed the established procedures or has failed to meet productivity expectations, avoid harshly criticizing or punishing the person. Instead, focus on the behavior and identify the most appropriate corrective action to help the team member get back on the pre-determined track of performance.

Delivering an angry public reprimand or even discharging a team member on the spot may be tempting at times but offers more harm than good – for the team leader and the team member. Such action vents hostility, displays coercive power, bolsters the ego, and sometimes removes an irritating source of frustration momentarily. Some leaders may even rationalize that they are correcting a bad situation, but in reality they are only dealing with it impulsively and temporarily. Explosive, destructive reactions are clearly not treating a team member with basic human dignity and respect. It greatly diminishes the hard-earned respect of the team leader and generally destroys the motivation of the team member.



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A positive approach to discipline offers a decidedly superior way to work with and through people to accomplish desired results.

### Attitude Is the Key

A person with a positive attitude and average skill is preferable to a person with a good deal of skill and a negative attitude, according to many organizational leaders. One department manager put it this way: “I can train someone to do what we need done, but I cannot change an employee with a negative attitude into a positive and productive team player. I just don’t have the time.”

Your attitude is the key element of your personality that will either help you move ahead or hold you back. Your attitude cannot be controlled by anyone else. Only you can determine the attitude you bring to your workplace.

Everything derives from attitude – friendships, relationships, commitments, faith, healthfulness, and achievements. Since mental transformation involves changing the way you think, any sort of forward growth or progress begins with your thought process. And, because all things begin with thought; attitude literally is everything.

But what is an attitude? Is it a mindset, a reaction, or a response to what is happening? Is attitude a way of thinking? These answers are partially correct, but a clear, concise definition of attitude is, simply stated: Attitude is a habit of thought.

A habit is something you do unconsciously, without thinking. Similarly, an attitude is a habitual way of thinking. Attitude determines to a large extent your health, happiness, and success. A negative attitude produces negative results just as surely as a positive attitude paves the way toward success and happiness. More than any other quality, your attitude exerts a profound effect on your self-image, accomplishments, and success.