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Overcoming Negative Attitudes

Because a positive attitude forms the foundation for a positive self-image, building a positive attitude is the most effective method for developing a positive self-image. Knowing exactly what a positive attitude is will help accomplish this important task. Simply stated, a positive attitude is the opposite of a negative attitude; it is entering every activity without giving mental recognition to the possibility of defeat. A positive attitude creates a dynamic aura; people with a positive attitude have a positive expectancy toward self, other people, the organization, work, the market, new ideas – toward life in general.

Almost all of us have at least a few negative attitudes from time to time. In addition, you will often notice these same debilitating habits of thought in others. Recognizing negative attitudes for what they are is the first step toward taking specific actions to replace them with more productive attitudes; once negative attitudes are acknowledged, replacing them with more positive, constructive attitudes is a matter of commitment and persistence.

Here are frequent negative attitudes encountered in the workplace:

- ◆ *Blaming others.* Blaming others causes one to react with hostility toward other people or circumstances in order to avoid accepting personal responsibility. When you as a leader in your organization assume responsibility for your work, your decisions, and the results you produce, those in your work group will be more likely to follow your example. Take strong, appropriate action to develop a corporate culture in which people do not blame others but assume responsibility for the consequences of their decisions.
- ◆ *Giving up.* One of the most common reasons for failure is simply giving up before the goal is reached. To work on eliminating this negative attitude and habit, adopt a "Never Give Up" attitude on every goal you set, and demonstrate that determination as you lead your work group through the action steps required to reach that goal. View stumbling blocks as stepping stones. Learn all you can from obstacles; then go over them, under them, around them—or straight through them.
- ◆ *Excessive worry.* It has been said that worry is the interest, paid in full, on troubles that rarely happen. Worry fritters away valuable energy and immobilizes. In contrast, facing each situation as it arises – identifying a goal, developing a plan of action, and then taking constructive steps – is the most effective way to overcome the crippling habit of excessive worry.
- ◆ *Indecision.* "Analysis paralysis" keeps some intelligent leaders from moving forward to the organization's goals; they spend so much time gathering information, analyzing data, and reconsidering issues that they never get around to making a decision and moving on. The most effective individuals are those who gather information in a reasonable amount of time, assume a certain degree of calculated risk, and then make the best decision they can based on the available information.
- ◆ *Feeling guilty.* This attitude is caused by conditioning that implies you're not smart enough, not good enough, or not experienced enough to do anything right. People who accept such conditioning suffer from a low self-image and blame themselves for everything that goes wrong. Whenever one of your team members appears to assume false guilt, help that person to analyze the causes of the problems, what steps can be taken to rectify the situation, and how to avoid similar pitfalls in similar situations in the future. Help them to see the things "done right" rather than focusing entirely on the things "done wrong."
- ◆ *Unreasonable fear.* Helping people to understand that fear robs them from using more of their potential may help motivate them to change this negative attitude. Another important approach is to analyze each situation

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in which unreasonable fear is experienced and to formulate an appropriate plan of action to react more constructively in similar future situations.

◆ *Overdependence*. Overdependence is often expressed as a strong need for the approval of others – a desire so strong it causes people to act against their own best interest. Try to give the overdependent team member opportunities to experience success. Encourage them to enjoy the intrinsic satisfaction that comes from a job well done. As they use more of their potential and grow and develop, they will find that the positive attitude of being independent offers more gratification than the negative attitude of overdependence.

◆ *Fear of success*. Many people actually fear success. These people feel unworthy and undeserving of success. A great deal of courage is required to leap this hurdle to a positive self-image. Those who fear success need to be convinced that it is appropriate to like themselves, and that they are worthy of success.

If you have a tendency toward one of these negative attitudes, now is the time to work toward a new self-image.

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