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*Equipping, Enabling, and Encouraging Marketplace Leaders*

## Building Positive Attitudes Builds Results

Seldom, if ever, will a thing be done by someone who thinks it cannot be. Building your business requires the work of people who believe that a thing *can* be done.

The evening of October 21, 1931 lights all over the United States were dimmed to honor the passing of Thomas Alva Edison at the request of President Herbert Hoover. Years earlier one of Edison's lab assistants said they had failed to make a working electric light despite 10,000 tries. Edison replied that they had not failed once, but that by having tried 10,000 times they were just that much closer to having found the answer.

Imagine where we would be today if Edison had replied, "You're right, let's quit trying." Edison believed they could make an electric light work, and he passed that positive attitude on to his young employee.

### **The origin of attitudes**

The simple fact is we have attitudes about everything. They are either positive or negative and they shape the way we think, feel, and act about everything in our lives. Attitudes are shaped by:

- The family – your parents shaped your attitudes by the way they dealt with you from the day you were born.
- Group culture – the groups you belong to shape your attitudes (work, religious, race, sex, economic, etc.)
- Significant others – throughout our lives our teachers, counselors, neighbors, bosses, peers, relatives, and spouses shape our attitudes.
- Mass media – television, radio, newspapers, and magazines all play a significant role in shaping our attitudes.



## The affect of attitude on self-image

Our attitudes affect our self-image; the way we feel about ourselves. They also affect the way we interact with others.

Consider the Israelites. Having fled from hundreds of years of oppression in Egypt they stood at the edge of the Promised Land. Moses asked a group of twelve men to go into the land, explore it, and bring back a report about the land and the cities prior to the invasion (Numbers 13:17-20).

The men spent 40 days exploring the land. When they returned they talked about a wonderful land flowing with milk and honey, but then they started talking about how powerful and fortified the cities were, concluding that they could not successfully invade the country. Before they were done they said the land devoured those living in it, and that they seemed like grasshoppers in comparison (Numbers 13:27-33).

The more negative the talk became the more negative their conclusions. The negative report from ten men spread throughout the Israelite camp until the people cried out that it would have been better if they had stayed in Egypt or died in the desert (Numbers 14:2-3). The result was the Israelites wandered in the desert for 38 years until the entire generation of negative thinkers died.

Joshua, son of Nun, replaced Moses as commander. He led the nation back to the Jordan River and looked into the Promised Land. Once again men were sent to explore the land. Then men went into Jericho and met Rahab the harlot. Rahab recognized them as Israelites and told them how afraid the city was of the Israelites.

They had heard from their parents how powerful the Israelite God was; parting the Red Sea, and giving the Israelites great military victories. A generation later the inhabitants of Jericho were still afraid of the Israelites. Imagine how afraid their parents must have been when Moses had sent the twelve men into the land 38 years earlier!

The men reported back to Joshua, *“The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us”* (Joshua 2:24). Based on this positive report the nation took the city, and eventually the rest of the Promised Land. What was the difference? Certainly God had not changed. He had decided to give the land to the Israelites back in Moses’ day. The difference was the positive attitude based on their faith in God.

## Attitudes and work

An employee’s perceptions often play a more important role than facts in developing their attitudes about the work.



## **1. About the company.**

Employees develop attitudes about the companies they work for based on how consumers feel about their product or service, and the image of the company to the community. If the company is community minded, with products that are well received by consumers the workers will likely develop positive attitudes about their company. If however, the company gets bad press for being an environmental polluter, with products that don't meet consumers expectations then the employee will develop negative attitudes about the company

## **2. About my boss.**

Employee's attitudes about their bosses are shaped by whether the boss understands their job, appreciates their work, and gives them credit for successes. Employees with positive attitudes about their bosses are confident that the boss listens to them and really cares about them. Further, the employee with a positive attitude about the boss believes the boss is well qualified, and is fulfilling the responsibilities of the job.

## **3. About my peers.**

Employees who have positive attitudes about their peers view them as strong performers, well qualified for their jobs, who care about each other and their mutual success.

## **4. About my work.**

Employees with positive attitudes about their work believe that what they are doing is important to the company and the work they do will in some way have a lasting impact on the company's business. This is true whether the job is sweeping floors or reporting to the Board of Directors as the CEO.

## **5. Confidence Quotient.**

Employees who have confidence in their ability to do a quality job will have positive attitudes. When employees see the company commit resources to their training and development they feel valuable. Employees who are insecure about their ability to do quality work, and who do not feel they have been properly trained for their positions will quickly develop negative attitudes about their work.

## **6. Future Security.**

Employees with positive attitudes feel that they are doing important work, and have secure jobs that will continue to challenge them in the years ahead. Employees with negative attitudes feel



that they are in unimportant jobs, doing unimportant work in dead-end jobs, or jobs that have unstable futures.

## Getting Started

Here are ten biblical principles to help you develop and maintain positive attitudes in the workplace:

### 1. Set positive goals

Everyone knows high achievers regularly set goals for themselves. As you consider goals that are important to you make sure that they are positive goals; goals that will focus on, and achieve that which is important to you.

Paul writes, *“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:13b-14). Paul clearly had a goal in mind, and he wasn’t going to let past difficulties keep him from reaching towards achieving future goals.

### 2. Develop specific action steps to achieve goals

Goals in and of themselves do not help us very much unless we also develop specific action plans that will help us achieve our goals.

Moses did precisely this as he instructed the spies going into the Promised Land to determine the strength of their armies. Nehemiah also developed very specific action steps when he went to rebuild Jerusalem. Luke wrote, *“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?”* (Luke 14:28).

### 3. Review progress toward goals frequently

You can review your progress yourself, but a wise leader will also get feedback from superiors, peers, mentors, and those whose opinions he trusts. Solomon wrote, *“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding”* (Proverbs 4:7).

Check progress toward goals and ask for feedback regularly. The longer you wait to assess progress the more likely you will find yourself off-course.

### 4. Underscore the positive

Develop a habit of reviewing your work to see the positive in what you have done. Paul wrote to the Philippians, *“Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right,*



*whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything is worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things” (Philippians 4:8 NAS). Paul’s admonition is clear; find the positive and dwell on it rather than the negative.*

It is important for you as the leader to convey a positive attitude at all times, and to be able to reinforce the positive attitude in others. This is impossible to do if you focus on everything that is wrong, but is easy if you focus on the positive.

## **5. Associate with positive people**

Attitudes are contagious so surround yourself with people who have a positive outlook. Moses understood how contagious negative attitudes are when he said, *“And now, is anyone afraid? If you are, go home before you frighten the rest of us!” (Deuteronomy 20:8 LB)*. Moses was giving instructions to the military commanders about who should be allowed into the army. He didn’t want anyone who wasn’t fully committed that might have a negative attitude because he knew that their attitude would affect others.

Gideon provides another example as God reduces the size of his army from 32,000 to the 300 bravest men and Gideon then defeats the Midianite army that *“could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore” (Judges 7:12)*.

## **6. Turn negatives into opportunities**

View negative situations as opportunities. No work environment is perfect so there will be times when things go wrong. If you approach these difficult times as opportunities for growth you will maintain and spread a positive attitude in your organization. James writes, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever your face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance” (James 1:23)*. Every difficult or negative situation is an opportunity for you to stand apart from the crowd by being positive. Endeavor always to turn negatives into opportunities!

## **7. Maintain good physical, emotional, and spiritual health**

Your good mental and physical health shapes your attitudes. Maintaining your health is an important part maintaining a positive attitude. *“Being cheerful keeps you healthy. It is like slow death to be gloomy all the time” (Proverbs 17:22 GN)*. Making time for exercise, rest, you family, and God will go a long way toward keeping a positive attitude.

## **8. Believe in yourself**

You have overcome difficult situations before, and the difficulty you face today is probably no worse than other situations you’ve faced. Believe that you have the skills to overcome a negative



situation by maintaining a positive outlook. *“If the axe is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success”* (Ecclesiastes 10:10). Know that God will give you the strength and skill to face every challenge if you look to Him.

## 9. Serve others

Consider donating time to the service of others. The opportunities for service are endless; churches and para-church organizations always need volunteers, so do hospitals, schools, etc. Find a worthy organization and give them a few hours a month. You’ll be amazed at how this simple act of service will change the perspective you have on the rest of your life.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul exhorts them to *“Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. So, then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of the faith”* (Gal 6:2,10 NAS).

## 10. Focus on God

It is difficult to maintain a positive attitude when things are going well most of the time, and near impossible to do when chaos erupts all around us.

The key to keeping your head when all around you are losing theirs is to keep your focus on God. As Luke points out, *“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”* (Luke 16:13 NAS). To keep your focus on God join a church, consider a good bible study, read your bible every day, and spend time in prayer.

# One Final Thought

There are a number of people who expound the “power of positive thinking.” They say that your power to think positively leads you to positive results.

This is where the Christian leader must separate themselves; the ability to maintain a positive focus is driven by our faith in God. Consider the prophet Jeremiah’s warning to Judah, *“But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit”* (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

Keep your focus on God and will not only have a more positive attitude yourself, but you will help those who work with you to keep a positive attitude as well.