

ATTITUDE

“A GREAT MAN SHOWS HIS GREATNESS BY THE WAY HE TREATS LITTLE MEN”

THOMAS CARLYLE

“ARE YOU READY? LET’S ROLL”

**TODD BEAMER, PASSENGER ON UA FLIGHT 93,
SEPTEMBER 11 2001**

(TODD BEAMER LED THE PASSENGER RUSH ON THE TERRORIST HIJACKERS WHO WERE AIMING FOR THE WHITE HOUSE. EVERYONE ON BOARD LOST THEIR LIVES, BUT THE PLANE CRASHED IN WOODED COUNTRYSIDE. TODD BEAMER’S ATTITUDE AVERTED MUCH GREATER LOSS OF LIFE AND DESTRUCTION).



Attitude is the most important asset a person brings to an organization. Attitude is demonstrated in one's reaction to change, self-development, others and to responsibilities. A positive attitude to one's responsibilities, co-workers, customers (internal/external) and to the business dynamics labels one's contributions.

The main focus of this book is to help readers develop competencies that enable them to act as leaders, whatever their position in the organization. People expect leaders to demonstrate courage, confidence, decisiveness, energy, enthusiasm and a positive approach. All of these qualities depend on having or developing a good attitude.

Attitude is the first thing that people notice about a person. Your attitude can affect the whole way in which they perceive you, regardless of your talents. If you snap and snarl at someone you've never met before, are they likely to remember that you also happen to be a math genius? Of course not—all they will remember is that your attitude ruined their day and they will give you a wide berth in future.

But there is an even better reason for thinking positively. In recent years, a great deal of research has been carried out into the benefits of positive thinking. Positive thinking can have a hugely beneficial impact on our physical health and our ability to manage stress (see **Further Reading**—*Anatomy of An Illness* by Norman Cousins).

By "positive" we do not mean unrealistically optimistic or Pollyannish. The most optimistic of people sometimes have bad days. But we can develop a positive attitude in a challenging environment by taking a given situation and exploring its possibilities for action, improvement, achievement. A positive attitude is viewing a mistake or a mishap objectively, asking what we can learn from it, how we can improve next time. A positive attitude helps us look at problems and challenges as opportunities and act on them. There is nothing unrealistic about any of this. Those who foster a negative attitude are being more unrealistic by failing to acknowledge that possibilities lie in any given situation.

Throughout this book you will find that the majority of competencies relate to attitude in some way. Coincidentally it is alphabetically the first that you come across, but it is also the competency that every reader should begin with. By developing the right attitude first, we can make rapid, tangible and lasting progress in most other skills for leadership and living.



□ **A busy CEO inspires calm and tranquility**

The CEO of Ren Ci Hospital and Medicare Center in Singapore is a Buddhist monk. Venerable Shi Ming Yi manages some 400 staff and is responsible for raising a budget of more than SGD\$6 million a year to cover costs. He is also abbot of a monastery in Singapore and a temple in Malaysia. Somehow he also finds time to act as Secretary-General of the Singapore Buddhist Federation.

In many ways he lives the typical life of a CEO, with frequent travel, a packed schedule from dawn to dusk, frequent media appearances and meetings with influential decision-makers. Yet he adopts none of the alpha-male postures of many CEOs. He is a youthful looking 39, talks calmly and gently and wears flowing saffron robes, but inspires immense respect and commitment from all those who have dealings with him.

Source: The Singapore Straits Times

□ **Anyone can make a difference with the right attitude**

Singapore is not renowned for its service in shops and public transport. But these two examples show the difference a great attitude can make.

Singapore taxi driver Chua Kim Chwee was breakfasting at a coffee-shop in the city center when he saw a man being carried away on a stretcher to an ambulance. He recognized the man as a passenger he had dropped off earlier at a hotel. So he got into his taxi and followed the ambulance to the hospital.

The patient was an elderly American tourist who had been taken ill soon after arriving at the hotel. Mr. Chua visited him every day for the next nine days, bringing the patient dinner and other necessities. Why? "I decided to take care of him because he had no relatives, no friends here. And I knew him already, so I just couldn't leave him like that."

Meanwhile bus driver Ong Guan Keng gets numerous *hongbao* from appreciative passengers during Chinese New Year. His bus route serves a housing estate that has many elderly residents and young children, and Mr Ong is well-known for his patience in waiting for the elderly and very young to board the bus and be safely seated before he sets off. True, this adds time to the journey, but Mr Ong has built a lasting rapport with his regular passengers, based on mutual trust and respect for their needs. Comfort and safety are more important to them than speed.

PREVIEW

STRENGTHS

- Walks the talk
 - Communicates positive support for group/organization goals
 - Publicly supports management
 - Recognizes when personal/organizational change is needed
 - Seeks personal learning/development
 - Acknowledges customer needs
- Shows others courtesy and respect
 - Supports others and their organizational goals
 - Adopts team/group requirements

DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

- Doesn't agree / understand company goals
 - Feels self is more important than others or the organization
 - Resists development and learning
 - Resists customer needs
- Is not open with others; does not demonstrate empathy
 - Is a poor communicator
 - Is a poor listener
- Is arrogant / defensive; doesn't accept others
 - Resists team and group assignments
- Perceives situations negatively
 - Shows signs of stress that may be affecting objective thinking

EXERCISE**□ Attitude Checklist**

✓ If feedback indicates that your relationships with others are not as harmonious as they might be, check the following:

Q Do you understand your own behavioral and communication styles?

A Behavioral feedback tools such as DISC, MBTI, 360° feedback, etc. can be a positive learning and development experience. Performance appraisals and skip level interviews can give you valuable insights on perceptions of you and on how your attitude is affecting the organization.

Q Do you become emotional and lose your composure under stress? Do you shout and verbally abuse others?

A Try analyzing situations that lead to loss of composure. If you are angry and upset about something, defer the interaction until you feel calmer and more objective.

Q Are you impatient with people who don't operate at the same pace as yourself? Do you jump in and finish their sentences for them if they are hesitant in their speech?

A Use some calming tactics to slow your pace. Identify areas where you can both compromise—they can pick up speed and you can slow down so that more profitable interactions ensue.

The danger with impatience is that you will intimidate people who don't think as quickly as you do. They will become even more inhibited.

Q Are you arrogant? Do you believe you know better than everyone else?

A If you have a much better knowledge of a technical subject than anyone else, learn to act as a teacher, willing to share your knowledge, rather than show off your superiority.

Q Conversely, are you painfully shy? Do you avoid personal interaction with others? You may come across as aloof and cold, when in reality you simply don't communicate very easily.

A Shyness affects more people than you realize. As clear communication becomes more important than ever, so does managing shyness. This may be part of your natural communication style, but consider attending assertiveness training or an esteem building program.

STRENGTHS

□ Walks the talk

- Managers with great attitudes never expect others to perform tasks or demonstrate behavior that they do not display themselves. They “walk the talk”—display the commitment they expect from others. They practice the Golden Rule—“Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you”. It works!
- There is a world of difference between effective delegation and simply offloading tasks. Thoughtful managers delegate tasks and projects to subordinates to develop their skills or to make best use of their strengths. They never simply “pass the buck”.
- Managers with great attitudes accept the need to work additional hours. But someone who just stays late because it looks good—“present in body but not in mind”—is no use to anyone. More and more, organizations recognize the need for an effective balance between work and home life. Good managers willingly put in significant extra time when the need arises. They encourage their team to do the same but ensure that their extra efforts are recognized.
- Willingness to initiate activities without being told to do so demonstrates a proactive attitude. It is also a vital ingredient of leadership. Proactive leaders understand that their responsibilities go beyond the specific job description. They identify and act on opportunities both in their own area and across the organization.
- A positive customer attitude is a differentiator in today's competitive world. A positive appreciation for internal customer needs can make collaboration much easier. External customers are the life-blood (cash flow) of every organization. Meeting and exceeding customer needs is a key measure of individual success. This enhances the manager's sense of contribution and a positive overall attitude.
- Active listening is a necessary step in displaying a positive attitude to others. By demonstrating good habits, good managers give others a positive feedback; they are valued. Active listening helps people feel that positive dialogue is taking place. (See **Listening** for a description of the Active Listening process).

STRENGTHS**□ Shows others courtesy and respect**

- Honesty and integrity are the two fundamental tenets of a good attitude towards others. No amount of flattery, smiles and false bonhomie will disguise insincerity.
- Many organizations admire a “just do it” approach—action-oriented people are results-focused—they get things done. But extensive research shows that people will respond far better to calls for action if they are accompanied with respect and courtesy.
- Managers with great attitudes know their own communication styles and understand the areas where they should modify to interact better with others.
- When dealing with different functions, or locations, or cultures, good managers understand without judging other groups. They see people as individuals, understand their own prejudices, deal with people equitably, and learn to negotiate for win-win outcomes.
- At some point all managers have to interact with people they don’t get along with or don’t like. They don’t make judgments but think about how to depersonalize the relationship by restating questions, not showing verbal or body language that puts other people on the defensive; and they stick to the issues .
- Showing a great attitude depends a lot on treating people fairly. Fairness does not simply mean treating all people the same. Every individual has different needs and expectations. Fairness results from treating each one equitably, according to his or her needs, but each person still feels fairly treated. Together with trust, fairness of treatment is one of the fundamental keys to motivating people.

DEVELOPMENT NEED

Doesn't agree / understand company goals

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Show a positive attitude and commitment to the business
 - Our attitude affects everything we do. A positive attitude helps us work more effectively, interact well with others, boost our physical health and manage stress.
 - Employees take their cue from their managers and their leaders. A manager who demonstrates a positive attitude will foster that mindset in the team. This is especially important when new recruits join a company. Most new employees feel uncertain during their first few weeks. What you do to demonstrate your faith in the business and in them will have a lasting effect on their development.
 - When you are dealing with upset customers, internal or external, you must demonstrate unshakeable commitment to your organization, its products and services. That is why the best sales consultants have a strong belief in the products they sell. You then work with the customer to arrive at a solution that exceeds their expectations.
 - A positive outlook does not mean unrealistic optimism. All businesses and their employees experience setbacks. When this happens, managers who demonstrate a positive outlook don't gloss over problems—they analyze the full and far-reaching impacts and take remedial measures to steer the project back on course.
 - Attitude has a significant bearing on the way we respond to a crisis. We can all choose how to view an event—positively or negatively. Research shows that when we choose a positive attitude, our physical energy levels increase, more blood flows to the brain, enhancing our creative thinking powers—in fact we can harness our adrenalin and other chemicals that we generate to goad us into action.

ACTION PLAN

- ✓ In day-to-day management tasks, sometimes managers do experience a loss of motivation. They get bogged down by repetitive tasks, long hours, bureaucracy, office politics, career dead-ends, lack of resources, high subordinate attrition rates and so on.
 - If this is happening to you, the first thing to do is to acknowledge it and identify the cause.
 - Redefine your priorities. Look at your own personal goals and vision. Are you where you want to be in your career? Do your personal goals align with those of the organization?
- ✓ When you join an organization, you sign a contract that requires you to carry out specific tasks. Over and above these explicit tasks, as a manager it is your unwritten duty to demonstrate commitment to your work and organization. This generates confidence and trust and develops cooperative work relationships.
- ✓ It may be that your values have changed. Or perhaps the organization has been subject to a merger or takeover, and your aims no longer fit with theirs. If this is the case, identify areas where your own values do match the organization's. Write them down and use them as a starting point to identify further areas where you could modify your aims to fit more comfortably with the organization.

MEASURE RESULTS

- a. Talk to your boss. Examine practical ways in which you could make your job more interesting and challenging.

- b. Reaffirm your commitment to your work and your organization.

- c. Put in place your own personal performance standards indicator to boost your attitude on routine tasks.

- d. Do all you can to help your fellow employees, your customers and your managers. Being of service to others is the most motivating of all activities.

DEVELOPMENT NEED

Is not open with others; does not demonstrate empathy

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Demonstrate openness to others
 - Encourage an “open door” policy with your team. Don’t keep your door closed or hide behind technology as a barrier to personal interaction with your team. If an employee wants to see you urgently and you are busy, explain the deadline and make an appointment as soon as you have finished. Recognize when a member of your team needs to talk immediately, and adjust your priorities accordingly.
 - Be approachable in your dealings with peers and subordinates. Use eye contact, a sincere expression, open body language, and nod in acknowledgment. Clear the desk of immediate tasks and make it clear you are giving them your full attention.
 - Actively seek opportunities for interaction. Your team will take their cue from you. Initiate conversations. Remember the interests each member of your team has and refer to them. This is not idle chat or small talk. It’s a very effective way of putting the other person at ease, making it easier for them to articulate their concerns.
 - Build rapport. You do not have to be best buddies to build rapport. Courtesy, mutual respect and acknowledgement of each person’s individuality and contribution go a long way towards building rapport.
 - Clear communication helps build rapport. Ensure that you clearly communicate the team and organization objectives and goals to everyone so that they all have a common vision to work towards.
 - When dealing with peers, you are working as part of an informal team. So aim to collaborate with them as you would on a formal team. Sometimes, of course, you will need to bargain or negotiate. Avoid trying to “score points” off peers and colleagues.

ACTION PLAN

- ✓ Be sensitive to others' concerns. When you deal with subordinates, they can often feel intimidated in voicing their concerns to you. They might fear that they will be seen as negative, or ineffective.
 - Show interest in work and non-work areas of direct reports.
 - Ask about their plans, their aspirations.
 - Be ready to listen to personal problems if direct reports want to share them with you.
 - Monitor workloads and recognize additional effort.
 - Watch for signs of stress and take prompt action to address the problem.
 - Be compassionate and flexible within reasonable limits. If a consistently good performer needs some time off or some additional help, arrange for them to have it.
 - Treat all subordinates fairly and equitably.
- ✓ On the other hand, avoid becoming too involved with your subordinates' problems.
 - Listen to each team member's individual needs. If they want to moan or let off steam, let them do so, but only as a first step to building a positive plan for solving the problem.
 - Don't allow your willingness to lend a sympathetic ear encourage persistent moaners and complainers. Instead, use a teachable point of view to encourage a more positive attitude on their part.

MEASURE RESULTS

- a. Understand each team member's individual needs.

- b. Be non-judgmental and objective in your dealings with all subordinates.

- c. Use **Active Listening** to ensure that you clearly understand the real issue. See **Listening** for more guidance.

DEVELOPMENT NEED

Is arrogant/defensive: doesn't accept others' viewpoints

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Give and seek honest attitude feedback
 - You cannot develop a good attitude unless you know your strengths and weaknesses. Today's development ethos focuses on strengths—the more you work to your strengths, the easier it is to manage your weaknesses.
 - A 360° feedback exercise will give you an excellent base to start recognizing your strengths and limitations as others perceive them. Behavioral analysis tools are also very useful for clarifying a development program for yourself or your team.
 - If you are in a senior position, you may be accustomed to giving feedback to others—but how good are you at receiving it?
 - A 360° feedback exercise is an excellent way for you to understand how your performance is seen by others because it elicits information in a non-threatening way. It focuses on positive developmental measures and does not seek to rake over past mistakes or apportion blame.
 - However, getting feedback is only half the story. It has to make sense to you—you have to acknowledge its accuracy, and you must desire to take action where a change in approach or attitude is indicated.
 - If you receive negative feedback on your attitude from someone on a one-to-one basis, try to avoid becoming defensive. This gets in the way of constructive advice that is designed to help you.
 - Don't try to hide your mistakes and keep them to yourself. Share them with trusted others. They will have a different perspective of the error and can contribute some very helpful advice. They will also be more open in sharing their mistakes with you and you can also learn from these.
 - Avoid blaming others or “shooting the messenger”. Take responsibility for your actions and resolve to do it differently next time.

ACTION PLAN

- ✓ Your attitude when dealing with problems will have a significant bearing on the outcome.
- ✓ When delivering bad news don't delay. Give the information to the individual who is most affected and/or who can take action. Go directly to the person involved so they have the opportunity to fix the problem. If that is not possible, be careful about who you share the information with.
- ✓ When delivering tough feedback, be direct. Be specific and keep to the facts. Don't exaggerate or use inflammatory language. It's best to give feedback when you have your emotions in control and can deal with the problem in an objective manner. Courage and self-confidence come from doing the right thing, not from imposing your will or taking vengeance. Stay calm—don't get sidetracked.
- ✓ Don't be a critic. People appreciate problem solvers. Never have a complaint without having thought through some solutions. Put yourself in the role of facilitator, not critic. Be open for others' point of view.
- ✓ When you are personally involved, it's very important to focus on the facts. It is okay to be upset with the behavior, not the person. Practice the art of active listening and playback what you hear the other person saying. If you get to a total impasse, re-schedule your meeting to allow time for thought.

MEASURE RESULTS

- a. Recognizing mistakes and resolving to learn from them is a very effective way of analyzing your strengths and weaknesses. The next time you attempt something and fail, ask yourself:
 - What can I learn from this?
 - What would I do differently next time?

- b. Don't procrastinate on a problem involving direct reports. If you do not take prompt action, the problem will invariably escalate. Consult your human resource team on matters involving organization policy.

DEVELOPMENT NEED

Perceives situations negatively

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Manage stress and boost your attitude
 - Are you burning out? Dealing with stress and pressure is within your control. The same event can cause stress in one person and yet energize another. Learn to interpret events in the most positive light. A “problem” becomes a “challenge”, an opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. Some situations may be especially upsetting to you and it may be important to minimize exposure to those as much as possible. Identify stress “busters” that work for you. A walk, a good laugh, sports, reading, music, prayer and meditation. Make time for Stress Busters. Remember learning to relax is a necessity not a luxury—it re-fuels your energy and enthusiasm.
 - Tight deadlines excite some people and terrify others. Pressure can cause undue stress and anxiety. When you thrive on pressure and deadlines, you may need to slow down and examine the implications of your decisions. When you are stressed by rushed thinking, stop and step back for a moment. Analyze the reasons for your stress and you'll probably find that you need to focus on the issue alone and not the consequences. Once solved, you can then plan the consequential actions.

“SERENITY PRAYER”

GOD GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT
CHANGE
COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN
AND WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

DR REINHOLD NEIBUHR, 1932

ACTION PLAN

- ✓ Do your least preferred activities first to get them out of the way; then enjoy the sense of accomplishment.
- ✓ Focus on the contribution you are making to your current job. What do you do that makes a difference? What do you do that no-one else does?
- ✓ Understand work habits that can generate stress—poor time management, procrastination, obsessive perfectionism, lack of organization and poor prioritization of tasks are the chief culprits.
- ✓ Learn to control anger and emotional outbursts. These can be extremely upsetting for you and the person on the receiving end. They can affect your stress levels long after the confrontation.
- ✓ Take care of your physical health. Eat and drink sensibly, get enough sleep, avoid smoking and take exercise.
- ✓ Build stress-busting activities into your daily routine. Activities include meditation, affirmations, prayer, exercise, listening to soothing music, creating a calming environment. See **Further Reading** for some suggestions.
- ✓ Learn to resolve conflict quickly and effectively.
- ✓ Nothing can drain individual or group energy faster than a bad attitude. Science credits positive thinking/good attitude with a healthier immune system, lower blood pressure and overall a longer and healthier life.

MEASURE RESULTS

- a. Examine what it is that you really want. See **Drive, Prioritization and Goal and Target Setting** for more help.

- b. To make the best of your current job, make a list of what you like and don't like to do. Concentrate on doing more activities you enjoy and plan to delegate the things that are no longer motivating to you.

- c. Determine what you can do to shift the balance so that you begin to enjoy the job again—talk to your manager and discuss all options.

IN A NUTSHELL

- ✓ Attitude is the most important attribute a person contributes to an organization.
- ✓ Our attitude affects everything we do. A positive attitude helps us work more effectively, interact well with others, boost our physical health and manage stress.
- ✓ Each behavioral style may communicate in a way that affects others' perception of our attitude. Identify your own behavioral style and understand where modifying your communication style would be most beneficial.
- ✓ Walk the talk. Never expect others to do anything you wouldn't do yourself.
- ✓ A great attitude means a proactive approach, actively seeking challenges and making a difference across the organization.
- ✓ Show courtesy and respect to others. You can still get results—indeed, better results. People respond positively to courtesy and consideration.
- ✓ Treat others fairly, across all groups, functions, cultures. Being fair does not mean treating everyone the same, but rather equitably, according to his or her needs.
- ✓ You can't address impact of your attitude on others unless you are willing to listen to and act on their honest feedback.
- ✓ Be fair and non-judgmental when delivering feedback to others.
- ✓ Show responsiveness to your team. Acknowledge their concerns and listen for the underlying issues.
- ✓ Demonstrate your commitment to the organization. Identify and address any underlying issues that are draining your commitment and energy.
- ✓ Learn to manage stress effectively. It can take a heavy toll on your health and on your effectiveness.
- ✓ Your attitude affects your ability to manage stress.



- *Attitude is Everything*—Keith Harrell
 - Keith Harrell offers an enlightening, inspiring and practical guide for gaining control of your career and your life by ridding yourself of negative attitudinal baggage, building positive attitudes, and then turning them into action. Includes a 10-step process for turning attitude into action.
- *The Relaxation Response*—Dr Herbert Benson
 - Based on studies at Boston's Beth Israel Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Dr. Herbert Benson showed that relaxation techniques such as meditation have immense physical benefits, from lowered blood pressure to a reduction in heart disease. *The Relaxation Response* demystifies the mantra meditation used in the transcendental meditation program, explaining how anyone can reap its advantages with or without the help of a guru. Essential reading if stress and inability to relax are affecting your attitude and drive.
- *Learned Optimism*—Martin E. Seligman
 - This groundbreaking book teaches readers how to choose optimism—thereby gaining an essential new freedom to build a life of real rewards and lasting fulfillment .
- *Anatomy of an Illness*—Norman Cousins
 - An inspirational book, first published many years ago, that describes how Norman Cousins worked with his physician to overcome a crippling disease. Using laughter, courage and tenacity, the author showed how powerful a weapon the mind can be in overcoming illness and setbacks.
- *Man's Search for Meaning*—Viktor E. Frankl
 - Viktor Frankl endured years of unspeakable horror in Nazi death camps. During, and partly because of, his suffering, Dr. Frankl developed a revolutionary approach to psychotherapy known as logotherapy. At the core of his theory is the belief that man can choose his attitude towards any event. Not an easy read—much of the book is intended for serious students of psychology. Nevertheless an inspirational work, especially for anyone who believes that they are trapped into negativity through unavoidable circumstances.