

No Excuses!

Create a Culture
of Accountability

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Chapter One

Attitude

As we begin the discussion about attitude as it relates to accountability, there is one universal truth we must first acknowledge:

The world is not always fair!

**There is usually nothing
you can do about it.**

You simply can't -- and never will -- have everything go your way, have everyone agree with you, like you or treat you well.

These are all forces beyond your control.

The only thing you *can* control is how you respond. It's all in the attitude.

Take a moment to think about a time when you reacted poorly to something someone did or said to you. Visualize your response and the consequences of this action.

What could you have done differently?
How would a different reaction have led to a better outcome?

You always have a choice. Taking the high road will always bring a more positive result.

How often have you said, “That makes me so angry!”? (or replace the word “angry” with many other negative feelings.)

Really?

No one can make you angry. You allow yourself to get angry. It’s a choice, and never a productive one.



Years ago, I figured this out. I was making a connection in Denver – running from one terminal to another (dragging my bags at this city’s high altitude of one mile, 5,280 feet above sea level). I was huffing and puffing, and making myself miserable.

Then, I had an epiphany. If I thought of my run as cardio exercise, and the dragging of bags and equipment as weight-lifting -- after all, I didn’t get to the gym that day -- I could totally look at what I was doing as beneficial to me.

So, here it was – a situation that I couldn’t control. Simply by shifting

how I looked at the situation, I changed my attitude about it.

Since that day, I have never complained about my airplane-related “exercise” again!

Talk about an attitude adjustment!

How Would Others Rate Your Attitude?

If you are brave enough, ask a direct report, trusted peer or manager to answer the following questions:

- ✓ How well do I receive feedback?
- ✓ How do I react when things don't go my way?
- ✓ How do I respond when people disappoint me?
- ✓ What is my response when my ideas get rejected or I don't get credit for them?

- ✓ What is my attitude when I'm given a difficult task to do?

If you're not brave enough to ask someone else for feedback, hold a mirror to yourself and answer the questions as honestly as you can. All of us have areas where we can improve our attitude.

There are many things you can do to turn around your attitude. Start by committing to this basic premise:

I own my attitude – it is a choice.

By accepting 100% responsibility for your attitude, you have folded your hand and walked away from the blame game. It's probably the most important step in becoming truly accountable.

Attitudes are contagious. Believe me, I know. When the economy took a downturn, I watched some of my employees down turn with it.

Excuses were rampant for lack of sales: “It’s the economy,” “It’s too hard,” “It’s not my job.”

As I laid people off, the fog began to lift. The “survivors” weren’t being dragged down. They were working harder, smarter and more collaboratively. And, then we started to hire again -- that is really where I saw the power of one person (a new hire) with a positive attitude.

Everything for her was an opportunity, and success was her absolute mission. I watched as her attitude infused the office with a climate of positivity. One person can have a dramatic impact. You can choose to be that person and set an example that others want to live up to.

When you walk into the office, what kind of energy do you bring with you? Positive? Negative? There is no neutral. Make a decision on the way to work that you will

be positive.

If you have colleagues that have negative attitudes, they will pull you down. Choose wisely the company you keep, and hang around with winners who will pull you up and not whiners who will bring you down.

Think of your job as a gift – maybe not every day. After all, I am a realist. But, my bet is that there are many people who would be thrilled to be working and have your job.

Here are two activities to complete:

What I like about my job	What I like about my company
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

Evaluate what you like about your job and your employer. If there are aspects of your job that you find particularly rewarding, find out how you can take on more responsibility in that area.

Finally, commit to one thing that you can do to improve your attitude and do it every day. Eventually, it will become natural.

You will find this is a win-win proposition. Not only will your colleagues and managers notice the change, you will feel it.

People with positive attitudes lead happier, longer lives and are more successful.

If you're at a place where you are absolutely miserable in your job, you do have options. You can stay and accept things. You can stay and try to make positive changes, starting with your attitude. Or, you can leave.

If you are rolling your eyes right now thinking, “Yeah, right, leave and go where?” that’s understandable. It’s tough out there. But doing nothing will get you just that – nothing. Just by updating your resume and starting a job search, you will feel empowered. It will improve your attitude and make your present situation more bearable.

You have choices; exercise them!

Activity: Keep a gratitude journal

On the days when things are going well, write down what you are grateful for. On the days when things aren’t going well, read the good things that you wrote. It will remind you of the positives.

Activity: Share three things that have gone well today

(this can be done alone or with others) You can do this with your family at the

dinner table. If done regularly, everyone benefits. When you focus on positives, you will find them – even on the worst of days.

What About Leadership Attitude?

If you are a leader in your organization, never forget that your employees will take their attitude cues from you. Not only will it affect their own attitudes about their jobs, it will affect their relationship with you.

Leaders with bad attitudes about their job or organization pass that down to their staff like a virus. Before you know it, the whole team is infected.

If this sounds like you, you owe it to yourself and your team to make a change.

If, as a leader, you walk around with an attitude that makes you unapproachable, your team is paying a heavy price and accountability is impossible.

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Your staff members have to know that they can come to you with challenges and ideas, and be heard and respected. If this is not the case, your team and its results will most definitely suffer.

Last, but certainly not least, no one wants to work for a Pollyanna. Having a good attitude doesn't mean you have to display a perpetually sunny disposition in spite of obvious problems and challenges.

Rather, mirror what you want from your staff. Ownership, positive energy and a solution-oriented mentality would be an excellent place to start.

