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Positive Attitude - The Key to Success

A positive attitude leads to positive results and negative attitude leads to negative results. Having a positive attitude is dependent on several factors such as job satisfaction, keeping oneself updated, an excellent time management and having a changed attitude towards others, including having more positive interaction.

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Positive attitude plays a vital role in rendering a job worth doing and successful. However, in India, where people normally salute large amount of wealth as they salute the flag, it becomes difficult sometimes to base our job satisfaction on factors other than the most obvious ones of emoluments, power and prestige. In fact, liking our job for what it is can provide us with a bigger payoff than the fat salary alone. We can sit around bemoaning the fact that we are not in the fast lane, that we are underpaid, that the corporate world is not treating us the way we desire but it won't do us any good. Sufficient pay package, power and prestige must be given to an employee. On the other hand, self-esteem, pride in a job well done and a sense of importance and indispensability are all bonuses we can give ourselves. We have to put in 40 hours a week at work whether we like it or not, then why we should not develop an attitude of loving our job. In fact, positive attitude in our work will generate immense interest in work for us.

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Liking our job

In India, sages and leaders have always advised that good, honest and hard labour is something that is not only necessary for survival but also purifies the soul. Work is a matter of finding a suitable job that is compatible with our aptitude and capability and is, consequently, interesting and satisfying. People do the same work their fathers did or they learn a different skill that the community needs. But we must not forget our own aptitude and accompanied delight out of work that ultimately make the job successful and the aspirant a satisfied person.

If we still hold to the traditional viewpoint, we may like to ask ourselves whether it really pertains to our 21st century situation. We needn't become a doctor just because our father and our grandfather were doctors. We needn't become an engineer or a management professional because they are the only professions that our community seems to have a current need for. In fact, there are thousands of other possible professions for us to choose from and there is little or nothing holding us back from making a choice, as long as we back it up with proper training, aptitude and attitude.

Though we freely make our choice, we may still end up resenting our job at some point of time. There may be two primary reasons for resentment we can think of. First, people resent the fact that earning a living is wasting valuable time that they could spend enjoying themselves or uncovering what they believe to be their true talents as a novelist or artist.

The second and perhaps more prevalent reason that people find it difficult to like their work is that they feel trapped. Initially, they have some choice in the matter of what kind of work they would like to do, but once they have been in an organisation for sufficient time with greater responsibilities and more financial and personal liabilities, they have very little choice about quitting if things aren't turning out the way they had planned. A steady income can be the biggest obstacle. And while people may not mind doing something of their own free will, they absolutely resent having to do it because they have no other choice. But such a situation is likely to adversely affect the quality of performance of a person.

If we simply find ourselves resenting the fact that we have to take what the organisation dishes out because we can't afford to quit, it may be time to prepare ourselves for what we may humorously call a "cyanide capsule." It's a strange analogy, but if we ever watch secret agent movies, they always have a cyanide hidden somewhere on their body in case they are captured. If the torture becomes too much to bear, they can simply swallow the capsule. In other words, they have an option. And having an option somehow gives them the strength to hold on a little longer in the hope that the situation may change.

Updating ourselves

Rather than keeping a "cyanide capsule" ready, we can up-date our resume, cast a weekly glance through the vacancy section, and visit various industry functions where some low-key networking can take place. This is not to suggest that we simply give up and get a new job. Rather, what we are doing is providing ourselves with a constant option. We should keep ourselves abreast of the job market, have our personal statistics immediately at hand and develop some connections so that if things get unbearable where we currently work,

we could quit quickly. The big payoff is that we will rid ourselves of that constantly recurring resentment at being bound and tied to our current position. Now, when things get a little bothersome at the office, we can secretly smile and relax, knowing fully well that we could quit anytime we wanted to. This preparedness will provide us sufficient moral fortitude to face any untoward situation.

Having a positive attitude

If we understand that we aren't trapped and that we aren't wasting valuable pleasure and leisure time, it can take us part of the way down the road to a better work attitude. Moreover, there are still a few extra things we can do to perk ourselves up on a day-to-day basis.

After spending 25 years working with employees, industrial psychologist and career management consultant Richard Germann estimates that four out of five workers have something major about their jobs that they dislike. The trouble is that liking our job is essential for our success. "Those who don't value what they do will never be successful at it," he explains, "those who don't enjoy their work will ultimately fail."

At the core of adopting a positive attitude is accepting the simple notion that we must assume responsibility for our own situation. That's not to say that it is all our own fault if we seem to be stuck in a dead-end job. But we have more power than we realize.

Most people feel controlled by their environment, but they really aren't. They have to learn to manage that environment because they can get from it what they need. We should remember that nobody - neither boss nor peer - is likely to have the time or inclination to help us overcome our career problems. It is largely up to us to do what we can do to initiate a change in attitude. Here are some ways to get started.

Planning for job satisfaction. People should be encouraged to create their own definition of job satisfaction. People should start breaking down their fantasy into the smallest possible parts. If they see themselves as a junior executive working under a great boss in the marketing department, when in fact the person is currently a clerk working under a tyrant in purchasing, then he should start looking for little 'stepping-stone' goals that will get him from one position to the other.

In that situation, for example, the first thing to do is to see if the person can get a transfer to a different section of purchasing. This will at least get him away from the tyrant's clutches. It should be done, even by accepting a slightly lower level position. Then, the individual may feel the need to have some additional training or qualification. He should find out exactly what qualifications he would need to move up the ladder and then start researching ways to acquire those qualifications. They don't need to be big steps that he takes, but they need to be well ordered and regularly executed. Developing and following our own plan of action is one of the biggest ways to improve our attitude.

Treating ourselves as autonomous. In effect, this is a little mental exercise that we can play on ourselves. We may start thinking of ourselves as a small business or an independent contractor with one major customer - ourselves.

The most useful part of this concept is that it moves us from an outwardly controlled motivation of simply pleasing our boss to a more internalized one where we recognize and improve our skills for our own pleasure. This also counteracts the general frustration that

overtakes the best of us and leads us to think, "why work any harder if what I'm doing is acceptable."

To put all this into a more definite image, we should picture ourselves working at some job that demands that an occasional report be written. It turns out (much to our surprise) that we can turn out some nice phrases. It may not matter to the bosses upstairs that they've got a blossoming novelist on their hands, but we should realize that our writing skills may open a whole new area for us. So instead of routine facts typically expected and accepted in reports, we should take the extra time to make the words glow and thereby perfect our product for a broader market.

Separating work from leisure. Employees might work the occasional extra hour or two in the evening looking to the exigencies of work. Then, they start taking work home regularly to look at after dinner. Soon, Saturday morning and afternoon become nothing more than office hours when they don't have to dress up. In effect, work becomes like an ill-mannered guest who takes up more and more of their time. Most people don't even notice it happening, but suddenly they don't have a separate life apart from work, and they resent it.

We are not saying that taking work home is a taboo. But doing it all the time is. The interesting thing is that many people take work home, work at it a little and then watch television. They never actually get any substantial work done, but, on the other hand, they don't enjoy their leisure also because their work is sitting there tugging at their conscience. This wouldn't be so bad except that if we always have some work to do lying around, we will never enjoy ourselves during our leisure time and we will resent our job for putting us in the predicament we are in. This will be, in fact, detrimental for our efficiency and effectiveness, thus leading ultimately to lack of interest and delight in work.

If we do have a heavy workload, we should have alternate evenings of intensive work and intensive leisure. Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings (or whatever appeals to us), we should do our work and try not to get sidetracked. But on our leisure nights, we should not even bother taking work home if we can possibly help it. If we leave it at the office, it can hardly sit on the dining table spoiling our evening with silent reprimands.

Striving for overall success. This is simple. We should take our hobbies and leisure activities as seriously as we do our work. This doesn't mean that we should drive ourselves crazy over them, but at least strive for the same kind of proficiency and take the same kind of pride in them that we do in our work.

The reason for this is that we can wean ourselves off from the feeling that work is the only thing that matters. A trap many people fall into is that they get their whole sense of identity from the office. This may be great when things are going well, but things don't always go well. If our self-esteem is a direct outcome of our work situation, we are bound to have a bad attitude when the going gets rough. But if we can tie our esteem to our outside endeavours also, then we can maintain a balanced and positive attitude even if the office forecast calls for thunderstorms the next day.

Changing attitude toward others. The biggest influence on job satisfaction is relationships with others. So, if we dislike our job and we dread going to work each morning, chances are that it is at least partly because we are not getting along with those around us.

We don't have necessarily to like the people we work with, but at least we should be able to

interact positively with them to get the job done. We do not have to have outside relationships with them, but we have to have some sort of positive relationship, some level of comfort with them. That is a goal that can be achieved only when we dedicate ourselves to a shift in attitude.

When we smile in an elevator, our fellow passengers invariably respond with a smile. The same thing can happen in our office when we start to relate to others with sincere friendliness. If we initiate positive interaction, we are inviting positive reaction. It is in the human nature to pay in the same coin. Our superior's perception about us will improve right along with our attitude, almost magically.

Having more positive interactions. Until recently, we may have been uncomfortable interacting with colleagues. We should not be surprised if they know how we feel about them. After all, we probably have lapsed into a pattern of complaining about our job, about our boss and about the work environment. We should stop complaining and start talking to people in a more positive way. The attitude of others will also change. From a practical point of view, refraining from complaining will make a marked difference in how we feel about our job. We can still complain occasionally but we should not make it a constant theme.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate that if we change our attitude a little, we are likely to change as to how people feel about us. They may actually like having us around. And we may actually start liking being around in the office. Organization may start thinking that we have become quite indispensable for it, thus creating in us a sense of belongingness with the organization leading to the mutual benefit of each other.

As we progress from an era of information to an era of knowledge, organizations need to use effectively the tools they already own but they seldom use them. To use these tools effectively, everyone in the organization must acquire new attitudes and approaches to work. The guidelines for improving employee attitude discussed in this paper will lead to improved capability to share and not impose knowledge, decentralize decision making, increase transparency and above all increase returns on time invested. We must not forget that most of our failures may be ascribed to the lack of our proper attitude towards those situations. Positive attitude will generate positive results and negative attitude will generate negative results.

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