



3.5 Leadership and Self-Awareness

Taking Responsibility for Your Success

Attitude and Your Sales Performance

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Do You Accept Responsibility for Where You Are Now?

Accepting responsibility means taking ownership of your personal behavior, the choices you have made or failed to make throughout your life. Until you accept responsibility for your success and failures, you will live in a world filled with blame, resentment and complacency. “Playing the victim” very seldom leads to a positive outcome and can have disastrous affects on your life and those around you.

It’s a fact of life that you have made poor choices, or call them mistakes, and you will continue to make more along the way. Just think for a minute about the last poor choice you made. Was it personal decision or was it a decision made in your professional life? Whatever your decision was, I’m certain you are not the first person or last who has made the same mistake. Mistakes are simply a part of life and it takes a brave person to admit those mistakes and move on.

Continuing to use this same mistake, I want you to focus for a few minutes on the consequences that resulted after your poor choice was made and answer the following questions:

1. How were you personally affected by this poor choice?
2. How did this choice affect those around you?
3. Were the benefits of your choice worth the consequences?
4. What information did you have at the time your decision was made that you could have used to make a different decision?
5. Is there something to be learned from this lesson?
6. Are you continuing to suffer today because of this decision?
7. If others may have contributed in some way which led you to make the decisions you’ve made, can you forgive them and move on?
8. Will a situation present itself again in the future which could be similar to the situation you faced in the past?
9. What controls do you have in place today which will prevent you from going down the same path?

"There is no sense in punishing your future for the mistakes of your past. Forgive yourself, grow from it, and then let it go."

– Melanie Koulouris

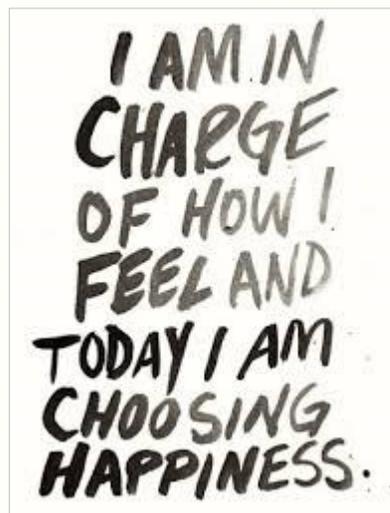


Attitude and Your Sales Performance

More than knowledge, more than desire, your attitude has more to do with your success than any other trait you possess!

Much of the art of selling is actually a combination of skill and attitude. Skills can be sharpened with practice and discipline. Your attitude is a much more complex animal to understand, but will affect your sales performance, relationships and, ultimately, your health if not checked on a regular basis.

Think about the last time you made a major purchase. How did the sales professional treat you? I would bet that the sales rep was very informative, seemed to enjoy his/her profession and had a positive attitude. On the other hand, have you ever dealt with a sales person who had a bad attitude? If you did, I'm certain you ran from him as fast as you could.



How can you change your attitude? Unfortunately, this is not a simple question to answer. Here are a few things I do on a regular basis to keep my attitude in check:

- **Spend time with positive people.** A positive attitude is contagious!
- **Get rid of the negative influences in your life.** Unfortunately, a negative attitude is contagious as well.
- **Don't worry about things that are outside of your control.** You can't change rates, your product offering or your competition. Once you understand this, you need to focus on how you can use what you have and be the best you can be.
- **Get excited about what you do!** If you don't like your profession—change careers. If you are simply bored, that's understandable. We all get bored. Hire a new employee. Change your office location. Learn a new product. Find a way to get that passion back.
- **Always try to see the best of every situation.** If you look closely, you will see that within every difficult situation lies an opportunity. Successful business owners realize this and capitalize on every market shift.
- **Do your best to walk away from gossip.** Gossip is usually negative in nature and filled with untrue rumors that can influence your attitude.



- **Make time for your family and friends.** You work hard so you can create a better life for you and your family. Never lose sight of this goal. Schedule time to spend with the ones you love and stick to the schedule. My oldest daughter is twenty-three, is a nurse and engaged to be married. It seems like only yesterday when I was teaching her to ride a bicycle. This is time you simply can't get back so enjoy every day like it is your last.
- **When you love someone, tell them.** I'm not just talking about your spouse or kids here. I once heard of a man who was dying of cancer and his comments have stuck with me for years. The interviewer asked him, "Now that you know you are dying, is there anything you would do differently in your life?" Without hesitation, the man replied, "Now that I know the end is near, I cherish every moment and when I love someone, I tell them." At that moment, I started to do the same thing. It felt funny at first hugging other men and telling them I loved them, but I got used to it. It's this love for mankind and appreciation for life that keeps your life in balance.
- **Don't hold grudges, and forgive those who have hurt you.** I have a long-time friend whom I haven't communicated with in years because of a petty disagreement we had years ago. Recently, I contacted him via e-mail to express my sorrow and apologized. When he responded with the same gesture, I felt a great deal of satisfaction knowing he knew how much I cared.
- **Write at least one thank-you card a week.** This reminds you to be thankful for your many blessings, and it may remind your friends and customers of how much you appreciate their being in your life.
- **Be thankful for what you have.** No matter how bad your circumstances may be, there is someone else who is worse off than you. If you doubt this, all you need to do is volunteer at the local children's hospital or burn center. Just spending a few hours in one of these facilities will make your problems pale in comparison. It will also remind you to appreciate every day.
- **Limit your intake of alcohol in times of depression.** Short-term depression after a negative occurrence is normal. On the other hand, long-term depression can have a dramatic impact on your well-being. Alcohol is a depressant and should not be used if you are battling depression. Seek the assistance of a professional if you can't seem to get out of a rut.
- **Worship in good times and in bad.** Having faith is the only solution for many people who seem to have problems that are out of their control. Like many people, I pray more when times are tough or when I need God the most. Whatever your religious belief, having a personal relationship with your God can keep you focused on what is really important in life.

Maintaining a positive attitude, a willingness to help others and excitement for the products you sell is a must in any sales profession.



Your Success & Your Team

Working on yourself will not only benefit you, but it will greatly benefit your employees and, in turn, your business as well. By displaying a certain attitude and perception you'll be creating a positive environment for your employees where they feel as though they can learn, grow, and make mistakes. The end result will be a better product/service.

Have you ever dealt with a person at a business, either on the phone or in person, whom you walked away from the encounter thinking, "Wow, they must really hate their job!" You can often hear it in their voice. Sometimes their responses come out frazzled, annoyed, or frustrated and it's hard, as a consumer not to feel that personally. Other times, you'll feel as if that person is cutting corners to finish the job quickly, or to get rid of having to deal with you as a client. It's never a pleasant feeling.

As a business owner the last thing you want is for your clients to feel the effects of your unhappy employee. As a result, creating a positive work environment for your staff will ensure that the service they give or the work

that they do will be their best. A positive environment that encourages growth and sustainability will also facilitate better employee retention and more promotion from within. The longer an employee stays with your business the more comfortable and sure of themselves they will be and there will be less conflicts or mistakes because they know how the systems work.

You may be asking yourself, "Ok, but where do I begin?" Here are a few questions to stuff under your thinking cap that will hopefully help you put a game plan together:

1. What "mindset" should be portrayed in order to create this kind of work environment?
2. What "characteristics" should be demonstrated to facilitate this mindset?
3. What kind of "role model" do you need to be in order to create this positive work environment?
4. What "characteristics" embody this role model?

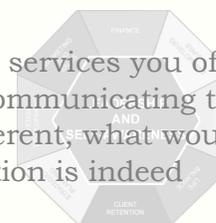
“Only you have a say in how your life turns out.”

Turn Perception Into Reality

Just remember your perception of your situation is your own reality! And so is true for your employees and customers. If you think your company and/or product is the best, your verbal and non-verbal communication will be perceived as such by those around you. But if you believe your rates are too high or your service is not superior, your employees will read your message loud and clear which will make it difficult for them to sell when you aren't the cheapest on the block.

As a leader, you must recognize the impact you have on your staff and those around you. Every conversation they hear or non-verbal message you send is received and transferred throughout the sales process. Complain too much and your employees will wonder why someone should ever buy from your agency!

Find out what makes you different, get excited about the products and/or services you offer and lead by example! Take some time now to think about the message you are communicating to your employees and clients. If you asked your staff what makes your agency different, what would they say? What would your clients say if asked the same question? Their perception is indeed their reality of who you are.



Caring for Others

Our country was founded with the principles of freedom, liberty and justice for all. But more often than not, our formidable desire to be recognized as a nation where our people are allowed to speak their minds and opportunities exist for anyone who has the ambition to do so, has created a culture in which far too many are left behind.

It doesn't take long to watch the evening news and find civil unrest, hatred and violence that is tearing our country apart. Civil unrest This is nothing new and dates back to 1861 with the Civil War. However, with the horrible events that occurred on September 11, 2001, our country, even if only for a few years, came together like never before. For once we recognized our similarities instead of focusing on our differences and we became a united nation, under God. Flags decorated most cars and flew high and proud over most businesses.

It was indeed a proud time to be an American.



Progress, all be it slow at times, has been made in every community since the inception of our Declaration of Independence in 1776. However, one could argue that over the past few years, we have taken steps in the wrong direction. Fewer flags decorate automobiles, torn and tattered ones flying high remind us of pride now lost.

We have to find a way to care for one another again. Taking responsibility for our own success should also mean helping others in need. It also means mentoring others to be the best they can be. Love others and treat each other with respect...even when they may not deserve it. Set an example and make a difference before it's too late!

Self-Improvement and Mentoring

Every day is an opportunity to grow and improve our lives and those around us. Life on this earth is short and will be over before you know it. That is an inarguable fact. Knowing this, the question becomes, what are you going to do between now...and then?

Self-Improvement and Mentoring is about taking a active approach to living life to the fullest. It's about creating the opportunity to having a better future without failing to appreciate the blessings you've been given today. Here are a few thoughts to help you improve your life and hopefully, influencing others around you at the same time.

Believe in Yourself

If you believe you can or believe you can't—you are right! You can achieve greatness! Don't allow your own doubt shortchange you from your incredible future that waits ahead!

Don't Be Afraid to Dream

Never lose sight of your ability to envision the future, to dream big, and to create steps to achieve those goals. Let your employees see you work toward this and encourage their input.



Lead By Example

Your employees, friends, family and even customer learn more about you by watching your actions rather than hearing what you say. Lead with integrity, honesty and a servants heart at all times and watch others do the same.

Knowledge is Strength

As a leader, you don't need to have all the answers but you do need to understand where you are now and where you are headed. Give your team the information and tools they need to deliver on your promise of exceptional service.

Clarity of Communication

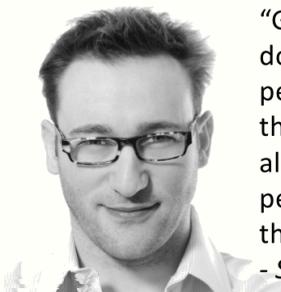
Don't make your team second guess your expectations or their role in your business. Continue to improve your communication skills and become an open leader.

Supportive and Nurturing

Leading with fear and intimidation may work in the short-term, but long-term success is better sustained by allowing your team to try new things, encouraging creativity and rewarding exceptional performance. Look for ways to encourage productivity and point out success 5 times more than you do someone's mistakes.

Listen

Really listen and make an effort to understand your team. There will be complaints, great ideas, concerns, and feedback. All of it is useful and if you can show them that you are listening and understanding, you'll show them that you care.



“Great companies don't hire skilled people and motivate them, they hire already motivated people and inspire them.”
- *Simon Sinek*



Final Thoughts

Before you move on to the next Lesson Plan, take the time now to sit in quiet reflection. Failing to accept full-responsibility, without placing blame on your environment, circumstances or others will continue to have severe consequences in your personal and professional life. Whether you are conscious of it or not, subconscious guilt could be controlling your perception of life and your mental attitude. Failing to take full-responsibility for something you should have done or did do to others can eat at you causing lack of sleep and poor health.

- ✓ **Accept full responsibility for your life today.**
- ✓ **Understand the consequences of your actions.**
- ✓ **Forgive those who have wronged you.**
- ✓ **Learn from your mistakes.**
- ✓ **Let go of guilt and move on!**

The only way you are going to create a business with meaning and live a life with no regrets is to accept the fact that mistakes are a natural part of life. And although you may not be able to control every external event that occurs in your life, you can change your reaction to this event and thus, change the course of your life forever!

*YES!
Sign me up!*

