

A positive attitude can make all the difference

by Connie Brubaker

Recently I spoke to the Women's Chamber of Commerce about persevering in tough times, about how some people not only manage to survive adversity, but actually seem to thrive. It's as if trial brings out the best in them, like precious metals being purified—beautified—in the forge's fire.



Connie's Comments

Since I love sports, many of my heroes are athletes. Not long ago an unknown golfer named Ben Curtis won the British Open. He had never before won on the PGA Tour, was ranked a distant 396th in the world, and only qualified to play in the Open after surprisingly placing 13th in a tournament two weeks before the Open itself. Needless to say, the commentators didn't spend a lot of time discussing Ben Curtis' chances.

Until, that is, the leader board showed Curtis in first place going into the final round. Still, no one really expected him to win, not with Tiger Woods, Vijay Singh and Davis Love III hot on his heels. Not when Thomas Bjorn took a three-stroke lead with only four holes to play.

But Ben Curtis refused to become flustered, looking as cool and confident as if he'd been out shagging balls on the driving range instead of playing for the crown jewel

of professional golf. Unknown to anyone, Curtis had told himself the night before, "I am going to win the British Open tomorrow." Note the

Ben Curtis didn't say "I'm going to give it my best shot." He said "I am going to win the British Open tomorrow."

wording. He didn't say "I'm going to give this thing my best shot," or "I think I can do it." No. He said, unequivocally, "I'm going to do it."

Then I think of Lance Armstrong during last month's Tour de France. From the beginning, things went wrong for the four-time defending champ. He contracted a stomach virus before the race that weakened him. During an early stage, a malfunctioning brake pad kept rubbing against his wheel, slowing him. He became almost dangerously dehydrated during an early time trial. The crisis finally came during the final grueling climb of the 15th stage when a spectator's bag looped around Lance's handlebars, dragging him to the ground in a heap.

It looked like that would be the end of his hopes for a record-tying fifth consecutive championship. But instead of lying there in self-pity, Lance jumped back on his bike and, as disbelieving spectators watched, roared into the lead, winning the

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Business Spotlight

Terry L. Belt has operated a general law practice in Austin for nearly 25 years. He has been a part-time instructor in business law and other subjects at the University of Texas for five years. In addition to his law practice, he has also assisted businesses in raising capital locally and internationally.

Solutions: Is there anything about your practice not commonly known that you'd like prospective clients to know?

Terry: Over the last 31 years of practicing, I have had only three secretaries. My present legal assistant has been with me 14 years.

S: How has sales training helped you as an attorney?

T: I recognize the importance of selling myself (experience and integrity) in the initial interview more now than before. I try to listen more. My clients can feel better about their choice in attorneys.

S: How do you assure prospective clients of not only your expertise as an attorney, but also of your integrity?

T: I tell them that I give away com-

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"And that's why we should always be polite to our customer."

In this issue of SOLUTIONS:

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- Employee empowerment at the Ritz.

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Building People, Productivity and Profits through Integrity

Take charge in adversity

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stage and ensuring his eventual Tour title.

Like all of us, I've had my share of personal struggles, like the death of my husband and a failed business. Though the times were difficult, the lessons I learned have been invaluable. Mostly I've learned about the power of hope and positive thinking. It's true that we're shaped *by* our experiences, but we sometimes forget how much we in turn can shape those experiences.

The next time you feel hopeless, whether it's because a client refuses your proposal, or yet another voice mail goes unreturned, or because your life feels like it's spinning in place, reach deep down into yourself and say, "I can do it. I will do it." And remember, tomorrow is another day—it's largely up to you to make it a better one.

Attorney emphasizes client service, integrity

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mon sense and good coffee and that I only represent clients that I want to be a friend. I will visit with anyone for 30 minutes without charging them because I only want to represent someone that has realistic views of the law. I tell them that I want to represent them for life on all of their legal issues and, therefore, all of my retainers are refundable. I tell them that while I will charge them at a fair rate considering my experience, that I will also try to replace the fee that they pay me with referrals from my friends and clients.

S: What advice would you give new attorneys about client relations that you wish you'd received when you started out?

T: Returning phone calls and emails on a daily basis pleases a client a lot. Never believe that putting off a call is better than making it on the day that it was received. Keep a data base and notes about each client and communicate with each one on a yearly basis.

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this level of responsibility. Employees are hired for their character rather than their experience. They are encouraged to seek innovative ways to give extra service or make guests happy. And they aren't beaten up when they make bad decisions.