

When bad attitudes happen to good companies

by Connie Brubaker

Ever had an employee saddled with a perpetually negative attitude? Someone who constantly whines, complains, attacks, criticizes and just plain sours the work environment around them?



Connie's Comments

You aren't alone. In the course of helping companies better their customer service, we naturally offer strategies for dealing with problem customers. But we also have to address the needs of employees — "internal customers" — before they can become integral parts of a customer-focused organization.

Inevitably, someone asks: how do you handle a problem employee?

My answer seems to surprise many of the participants. I tell them that it's not up to them to change that person — in fact, they *can't* change that person. We just don't have the power. We can influence, we can motivate, we can inspire — but that's all. Real change has to come from within.

So, with that in mind, what should you do? What can you do?

In 20 years of owning three KFC franchises, I unfortunately was faced with problem employees on more than one occasion. The signs were unmistakable: refusal to follow the rules, chronic tardiness and absenteeism, a persistent inability to get along with other team members, or other attitude problems.

At first, I tried to solve the prob-



lem with a hands-on approach. I tried coaching them. I tried mediating between them and their coworkers. I tried implementing action plans.

But when the situation failed to improve, it became clear to me that all that attention was really just rewarding them for their bad behavior. In trying to help improve them, I was inadvertently enabling them.

And as I stepped back, the pattern became clear. No sooner would we seem to solve some particular problem than another one would show up. Eventually I realized that the problem wasn't the problem — the problem *employee* was the problem.

Once I learned to differentiate between people having problems and

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Attitude 101

6 negative attitudes that can disrupt and destroy a workplace

- ◇ Inability to admit wrongdoing
- ◇ Failure to forgive
- ◇ Petty jealousy
- ◇ Belief in self-importance
- ◇ A critical spirit
- ◇ A desire to hog all the credit

by John C. Maxwell

Years ago, on one of his audio programs, sales guru Earl Nightingale told this story:

A team of six American mountain climbers were asked, "Can you make it to the top?"

Five of the climbers said, "I'll give it my best." One climber, however, answered simply, "Yes, I will." Not only was he the first climber to the summit — he was the only one.

Confidence can move — or climb — mountains. Remember that next time you make a sales call.



"We're a Limited Partnership. We're limited by Allan's pessimism, Elizabeth's abrasive personality, and Dave's refusal to work weekends."

In this issue of SOLUTIONS:

- How to deal with problem employees
- Spotting negative behavior
- Ten steps to a Positive Mental Attitude

Ten steps to a Positive Mental Attitude

A positive mental attitude (PMA) is indispensable in any situation. It fosters the kind of can-do, will-try spirit necessary for real success. Here are 10 ways to create a PMA in yourself:

1. Count your blessings daily and give thanks.
2. Keep your mind on the things you want — and off the things you don't want.
3. Read, relate and assimilate self-help materials.
4. Use positive suggestions.
5. Set and achieve a goal daily.
6. Be a "goodfinder," not a faultfinder. Look for the good in others.
7. Believe in yourself.
8. Share a part of what you have — a part that is good — with others.
9. Help others develop PMA. By so doing, you will help yourself.
10. Use your greatest power — the power of prayer.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude."

— Thomas Jefferson

Handling those problem employees

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problem people, the remedy became simple. As my friend Barbara Metzger of Maximize advises her clients, "sometimes you have to give employees the chance to be successful — somewhere else." As painful as it is to fire someone, it's the clean cut that heals quickest.

The relief the other employees felt, by the way, was clear. They respected me for requiring everyone to adhere equally to the rules. They appreciated that I valued and protected a positive, relationship-based culture. And they knew they could trust me to make tough decisions for the greater good.

So if your company's success has been hindered by similar difficulties, here's the solution: Establish a culture of excellence. Never compromise it. Help

willing employees with training and coaching (I've seen some remarkable changes in attitude and performance in those ready to embrace change).

But for those stubborn problem employees who simply will not change their behavior — get rid of 'em.

You owe it to your team, your customers and to yourself.

NEED A SPEAKER? Connie Brubaker is a certified Integrity Systems® business consultant and professional speaker who focuses on sales, customer service and leadership. Her speeches include **Leadership Matters: Motivating Your Employees to Success**; **The Emotional Side of Selling: Discovering What's Holding You Back**; **The Magnolia: a Southern Woman Shares Her Struggles and Triumphs**; and **Turn Storytelling into Storyselling: Using Stories to Make a Connection**.