

Public Leadership AcademySM



*Improving Employee Attitude in a Political Environment:
Breaking the Cynical-Critical Cycle*

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Outline

- I. Attitude Defined
- II. Why Attitude?
- III. “Proven” Ways To “Improve” Your Attitude
- IV. Attitude Improvement Coaching Exercise
- V. Responding To Difficult Behavior Professionally
- VI. Identifying Six Non-Productive Attitude Types
- VII. Strategies For Handling Non-Productive Attitudes
- VIII. Overcoming Government Worker Stereotypes
- IX. Team Attitude Assessment and On-The-Job Assignment

I'm "passionate" about _____, because

"Proven" ways to "improve" your attitude:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

How Would You Respond?

Directions: Work individually – Class discussion

Write down how you would actually respond in each situation.

Don't think too long – Put down your very first response!

Scenario #1 <hr/>	
Scenario #2 <hr/>	
Scenario #3 <hr/>	
Scenario #4 <hr/>	

4 Ways To Handle Problems (When You Own The Problem)

1. Assertively

Knowing what you want and being able to take action toward accomplishing it without putting another person down.

Assertive behaviors: _____

2. Aggressively

Putting another person down; using judgment words.

Aggressive behaviors: _____

3. Timidly

Avoid dealing with conflict. Hinting.

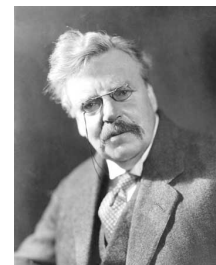
Timid behaviors: _____

4. _____ - _____

Typical behaviors: _____

“The thing I hate about an argument
is that it always interrupts a discussion.”

--G.K. Chesterton



Assertive Replies

1. "I understand, but..." _____

2. Broken record _____

3. "I do not agree." _____

4. Stress your feelings _____

5. "That's not the point." _____

Approximately 20% of the people in your work and personal life cause you 80% of your stress. Find out who those 20% are and learn how to effectively communicate with them. You'll be more at peace and they'll respect you more.

--Brian Muir



Challenging Attitudes

In each box, put 5 if it **Almost Never** describes their current behavioral tendencies
 10 if it **Sometimes** describes their current behavioral tendencies
 15 if it **Almost Always** describes their current behavioral tendencies

Total the numbers for each behavior. The highest category indicates their current tendency.

Complaining Attitude

	Blaming others or the system.	
	Whining when things go wrong.	
	Seeing life as unfair and feeling unlucky.	
	Refusing to accept responsibility.	
	Complaining about how awful life and/or work is.	
	Feeling powerless to take control of their life and/or career.	
	Not wanting to find solutions to problems.	
	Wanting sympathy or someone else to fix their problems.	
	Feeling that others have a much easier life.	
	Total	

Timid Attitude

	Acting withdrawn and passive.	
	Refusing to participate or contribute.	
	Not willing to voice an opinion or take a stand on an issue.	
	Not wanting to “rock the boat” or create any conflict.	
	Going along with what others want.	
	Showing little enthusiasm for life.	
	Having trouble making even simple decisions.	
	Saying yes to unwanted and/or disagreeable requests.	
	Not following through on projects.	
	Total	

Know-It-All Attitude

	Being critical of those who have opposite views.	
	Being an “expert”.	
	Acting superior and condescending.	
	Trying to impose their views on others.	
	Having an opinion on every subject.	
	Stating a viewpoint as fact.	
	Giving not only the answer but <i>the</i> answer to every situation.	
	Having an arrogant tone of voice and posture.	
	Interrupting others.	
	Total	

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In each box, put 5 if it **Almost Never** describes their current behavioral tendencies
 10 if it **Sometimes** describes their current behavioral tendencies
 15 if it **Almost Always** describes their current behavioral tendencies

Total the numbers for each behavior. The highest category indicates their tendency.

Critical Attitude

	Criticizing and belittling others, publicly or privately.	
	Sniping at people in groups.	
	Talking behind others' backs.	
	Sometimes exploding in anger.	
	Using jokes or sarcasm as a way to put others down.	
	Expressing negative emotions and moods.	
	Being outgoing and fun one minute and the next making hurtful comments.	
	Saying others are too sensitive or can't take a joke.	
	Not letting others make general statements-pinning them down.	
	Total	

Manipulative Attitude

	Acting in a controlling manner.	
	Focusing mostly on their preferred outcome.	
	Disregarding others' feelings or suggestions.	
	Liking to shake things up.	
	Wanting to win at any cost.	
	Coming across as intimidating.	
	Having a strong voice and direct gestures that overwhelm.	
	Interrupting people.	
	Having forceful ideas.	
	Total	

Can't-Be-Done Attitude

	Tending to analyze every detail.	
	Focusing on the negative in every situation.	
	Playing "devil's advocate".	
	Being slow to make decisions.	
	Seeing obstacles as overwhelming barriers.	
	Being a "wet blanket" to any new ideas.	
	Uses phrases such as, "This will never work" or "We've tried this already".	
	Having a negative tone of voice and closed body language.	
	Not being enthusiastic about anyone else's ideas.	
	Total	

Now review all six totals. The one with the highest score is your chosen person's primary unproductive behavioral tendency. Circle the one that is theirs and then review that section, circling the two phrases that best describe their behavior within that tendency.

You may also take this survey for your own self-awareness exercise by using the extra boxes.

Strategies for responding to complaining behavior

1. *Clarify the purpose.* In a tactful way, ask what she wants from you. “Wendy, do you want my suggestions, or do you just want to talk and let off steam?”
2. *Actively listen and paraphrase back.* “So, when you had the priorities changed on Wednesday, you understood the due date was extended?”
3. *Acknowledge their feelings.* “Wendy, it sounds as if you feel overwhelmed.”
4. *Ask clarifying questions.* “Do you really want to quit your job, Wendy?” This is what I call a jolter question. Often, when they complain they don’t realize how badly they’re coming cross to you.
5. *Ask for alternatives.* Don’t give advice unless asked for. “Wendy, what alternatives have you considered besides quitting your job?”
6. *Ask for specific results.* Ask them how they would solve the problem at hand. Hold them accountable for their responsibilities. “Wendy, if this could turn out the way you want it, what would you want from this situation?”

1. Clarify: _____

2. Paraphrase: _____

3. Acknowledge feelings: _____

4. Ask clarifying questions: _____

5. Ask for alternatives: _____

6. Ask for specific results: _____

Strategies for responding to timid behavior

1. *Describe the behavior.* “Tom, you haven’t given us your opinion and you have been very quiet.”
2. *State what you want them to do.* “Tom, it is important that we have your viewpoint on this project.”
3. *Ask for a commitment.* Get them to agree to a course of action. “Would you agree, Tom to have that report completed by Wednesday at 3:00 in the afternoon?”
4. *Ask questions.* You may be surprised to see they have a lot to say if you ask direct questions. “Tom, explain in more detail what it was like to work on the Johnson project. What were the problems involved?”
5. *Use direct eye contact.*
6. *Put them in charge.* Help them develop assertiveness. “Tom, I’d like you to present the opening remarks to the Finance Department.”

1. Describe behavior: _____

2. State what you want them to do: _____

3. Ask for a commitment: _____

4. Ask questions: _____

5. Use direct eye contact: _____

6. Put them in charge: _____

Strategies for responding to know-it-all behavior

1. *Be prepared and state the facts.* Have the latest information. Refer to authorities. If you have solid information, quote your sources.
2. *Ask detailed questions.* “How would you apply that concept to our project? Please go into more detail, Jim.”
3. *Never argue or challenge.* Arguing or challenging only makes the know-it-all more determined. Make clear, concise, and factual statements. Ask questions.
4. *Actively listen.* Respect the know-it-all’s views and paraphrase back to him what you heard. Don’t interrupt. “Jim, did I understand you to say that violent crime fell last quarter by 50 percent?”
5. *Be respectful and tolerant.* Model integrity by being respectful, tolerant, and logical. Don’t be counterproductive by trying to prove that you are right or by being dogmatic. Indicate that you appreciate his/her knowledge and experience.
6. *Acknowledge different viewpoints.* Concede that you see the situation differently and that you are willing to listen to different viewpoints. In other words, let Jim be the expert.
7. *Don’t paint them into a corner.* Leave them room to save face.

1. Be prepared and state the facts: _____

2. Ask detailed questions: _____

3. Never argue or challenge: _____

4. Actively listen: _____

5. Be respectful and tolerant: _____

6. Acknowledge different viewpoints: _____

7. Don’t paint them into a corner: _____

Strategies for responding to critical behavior

1. *Stay calm.* Keep your voice low, calm, and even. Look the critic directly in the eye. “Barb, I’d like to listen to what you’re saying, but you are speaking too loudly.”
2. *Express your feelings.* “Barb, that remark was uncalled for. It was insulting and I feel angry.”
3. *Use confident body language.* Stand tall and confident. Let them sense the seriousness of the situation. Don’t giggle, smile, or make use of sarcasm or jokes.
4. *Focus on the problem.* Don’t get detoured. “Barb, we were discussing the schedule, not Bob’s personality.”
5. *Ask for a private meeting.* Don’t allow them to belittle you in front of a group. “Barb, this is not the place to discuss my budget figures. Let’s meet in my office.”

1. Stay calm: _____

2. Express your feelings: _____

3. Use confident body language: _____

4. Focus on the problem: _____

5. Ask for a private meeting: _____

Strategies for responding to manipulative behavior

1. *Stand up.* Look directly at him/her. Speak in a low and direct voice. “Cindy, I expect you to clear decisions with me first before acting independently.”
2. *Don’t argue.* Be firm. “This is a team project.”
3. *Make your points clearly and forcefully.* Don’t fight. “Cindy, I expect to co-sign all proposals.”
4. *Ask for their objections.* “Cindy, tell me more about your concerns regarding my giving the presentation.”
5. *Calm him/her down.* “I want to hear your points, Cindy, but you are speaking too loudly and too fast.”
6. *Demand respect.* “Cindy, you interrupted me. Please let me to finish my point.”
7. *Find common ground.* Look for compromise if appropriate. “We both want the project to be successful. Let’s compromise on who does the presentation.”
8. *Get an agreement.* “In the future, Cindy, will you agree to discuss the proposals first before you make independent decisions?”

1. Stand up: _____

2. Don’t argue: _____

3. Make your points clearly and forcefully: _____

4. Ask for their objections: _____

5. Calm him/her down: _____

6. Demand respect: _____

7. Find common ground: _____

8. Get an agreement: _____

Strategies for responding to can't-be-done (cynical) behavior

1. *Remain optimistic.* Remind yourself that you choose your attitude, don't be influenced by another person's negative one.
2. *State your optimistic viewpoint.* Don't be unrealistic or compensate by being too sunny. "Peter, I believe there are several advantages to taking on the Borden project."
3. *Actively listen.* Paraphrase back to them. Don't argue. Respect their point of view and don't try to talk them out of it.
4. *Ask for alternatives and solutions.* Get them to list possibilities. "Peter, what are the alternatives to turning down the project? Could we add overtime?"
5. *Take action independently.* If possible, move ahead on your own. "I understand, Peter, that you have reservations about the project. I will work with Jason on it, however, because it must be done."

1. Remain optimistic: _____

2. State your optimistic viewpoint: _____

3. Actively listen: _____

4. Ask for alternatives and solutions: _____

5. Take action independently: _____

Attitude Team-Assessment

For each statement below, circle the number that most closely reflects the overall attitude of your team:

1 = The statement is **rarely true**.

2 = The statement is **sometimes true**.

3 = The statement is **often true**.

4 = The statement is **almost always true**.

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. They serve their customers with enthusiasm. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. They treat each other with courtesy, respect, and professionalism. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. They support the elected officials. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. They are proud of their community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. They embrace the goals and policies of city leaders and management. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. They support and follow you--their manager. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. They are passionate about working in local government. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. They enjoy their work and job descriptions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. They handle interpersonal and team conflict in productive ways. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. There is a spirit of camaraderie among them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. They trust each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. They put the team and organization before their own ambition. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. They accomplish team objectives. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. They avoid team cliques. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. They work productively with other teams and departments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. They contribute to team meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. They work cooperatively to complete team tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. They avoid cynicism. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. They work creatively to adapt to complex team situations, such as change. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. They feel a sense of ownership for team and organizational goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Add the numbers you have circled – total score

“Quote, Unquote”

Zig Ziglar: “Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude.”

Experts agree: “Success is 80 percent attitude and 20 percent aptitude.”

IQ only accounts for 20% of career success! There are many other factors, including wealth, education, family environment, temperament, blind luck, but more importantly, “emotional intelligence”.¹

Henry Ford: “Some people believe they can — some believe they can’t — they are both right.”

Tom Peters and Nancy Austin: “Everyone should feel a passion and excitement — about their work!”

Charles Kingsley: “We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements in life, when all that we need to make us really happy, is something to be enthusiastic about.”

Webster’s defines passion as: “A strong liking or devotion to some activity, object or concept; an object of intense desire, a driving or deep interest.”

Tom Peters and Nancy Austin: “When we are engaged in work that comes from our passion, it feels natural and right. We feel alive, magnificent, capable of extraordinary things.”

“What are the basics of managerial success? Two of the most important are pride in one’s organization and enthusiasm for its works. A quick check of the twenty-five leading textbooks on management finds neither in any index.”

--*A Passion for Excellence*

“Look at life through the windshield, not the rearview mirror.”

--Patti Labelle

“The past is behind you,
learn from it.

The future is a mystery.

Today is a gift. That is why they call it the present.”

--Kung Fu Panda

James Allen: “A Man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts Man is made or unmade by himself; in the armory of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself; he also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself . . . joy and strength and peace.”

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

--Leo Tolstoy

“Vision without work is daydreaming. Work without vision is drudgery. But work coupled with vision shall yield to you the success you desire.”

--Thomas S. Monson

¹ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, New York, Bantam, 1995, 10 Anniversary Edition, October 2005, p. xiii,xiv.