

# **Purdue University Road School 2005**

**Leadership is an Attitude**

by

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## Leadership is an Attitude

When one focuses on leadership, interesting images and memories come to mind. Some pleasant and some, perhaps, not so pleasant. Many have on occasion made a comment that goes like, “Man, I could do a better job than him. He is no leader. In fact he wouldn’t know leadership if it was looking him in the face!”

I believe we can safely say that we all can identify leadership. At least we think we know leadership when we see it.

So let’s define leadership. \_\_\_\_\_

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From our definition, “Are leaders born with natural leadership skills or are they trained to be leaders?” (Discuss)

Let’s look at this in more detail. The evidence does suggest that there are at least six traits that leaders seem to have that non-leaders do not. Let’s review them. As we review them, also ask yourself. “How much of each one of these do I have?”

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I would suggest we had one more to our list, one that I know all of you have.

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Let’s discuss for a moment, “What are attitudes and how might this impact leadership and followership?”

How might you describe an attitude?

Attitudes are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that largely determine how people will perceive their environment and it is one's attitude that will eventually lead to a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. As leaders, it is our \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ that determine the actions, feelings, and the moods of others. Would you agree?

Describe a situation where you have seen this attitude / behavior relationship. . .

It could be said that it is our attitude that tells the world around us what we expect in return. If it is a cheerful, expectant attitude, it says to everyone with whom we come in contact that we expect the best in our dealings with each others and the rest of the world.

**Question: "Who in this session has an attitude today?"**

**Question: "Who controls your attitude?" Think about this for a moment! Discuss.**  
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**Question: "Who should control your attitude?"**

**Question: "As a leader, who controls your attitude?"**

# ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT SCALE

Please rate your current attitude. Read the statement and circle the number where you feel you belong. If you circle a 10, you are saying your attitude could not be better in this area. If you circle a 1, you are saying it could not be worse. BE HONEST.

- |  | HIGH |   | LOW |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|------|---|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. If I were to guess, my feeling is that my boss would currently rate my attitude as a:         | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Given the same chance, my co-workers would rate my attitude as a:                             | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Realistically, I would rate my current attitude as a  | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. In dealing with others, I believe my effectiveness would rate a:                              | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. My current creativity level is a:   | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. If there were a meter that could gauge my sense of humor, I believe it would read close to a: | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. My recent disposition - the patience and sensitivity I show to others - deserves a rating of: | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. When it comes to not allowing little things to bother me, I deserve a:                        | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Based upon the number of compliments I have received lately, I deserve a:                     | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. I would rate my enthusiasm towards my job and life during the past few weeks as a:           | 10   | 9 | 8   | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**TOTAL SCORE**

# Six Possible Attitude Adjustments

## **Adjustment #1                      Employ the Flipside Technique**

The pivotal factor between being positive or negative is often a sense of humor. Attitude and humor have a symbiotic relationship. The more you learn to develop your sense of humor, the more positive you will become. The more positive you become, the better your sense of humor.

Some people successfully use the “flipside technique” to maintain and enhance their sense of humor. When a “negative” enters their lives, they immediately flip the problem over (like you would a phonograph record) and look for whatever humor may exist on the other side. Then this is successful, these clever folks are able to minimize the negative impact the problem has on their positive attitude

For example, if the situation is one where the first fender dents on a new car, throw a party because you don’t have to worry about the first dent anymore.

Note to Self

## **Adjustment #2                      Play your Winners**

When retailers discover a certain item is a “hot seller” they pour additional promotional money to the product. Their motto is: “Play the winners -- don’t go broke trying to promote the losers.”

The same approach can help you adjust and maintain a positive attitude. You have special winners in your life. The more you focus on them the better. How does one do this? **THINK** more about you winners. **TALK** about your winners. **REWARD** yourself by enjoying winners.

Note to Self:

## **Adjustment #3                      Simplify! Simplify!**

Some individuals unknowingly clutter their lives with negative factors which make it difficult for them to be positive. They surround themselves with unnecessary problem-producing possessions, people or commitments. Then they complain about the complexity of their lives. The answer, of course, is to free you from complications. An uncluttered focus allows you to accept and enjoy life’s simple pleasures. It is not distracted by a host of things that can drag you down. The five following clutter areas need to be explored to help you simplify.

**1. Unused and unappreciated possessions.** Almost everyone owns something they would be better off without. It could be an extra car that takes up space, or a boat that is expensive to maintain and seldom used, or a closet full of clothes that never get

worn. Getting rid of anything you don't need, use, appreciate or enjoy can simplify your life -- and improve your attitude.

2. **Too many involvements.** Some nice people, in their desire to "do good" and gain acceptance, over-extend themselves. As a result they become slaves to business, social, or community organizations. People who are generous with their time and talents sometimes don't realize that over-commitments can cause them to become hassled. Consequently their efforts become counter-productive.

3. **Some misguided individuals devote so much time and energy to their careers;** they leave their home life in shambles. These workaholics forget that an unhappy home life can influence their attitude and cause them to turn negative in the workplace. If people with both career and home commitments want a win-win situation, they need to do a good balancing act. This often means rearranging priorities so that both arenas are simplified.

4. **Most people have the opportunity to "throw out" many negatives that enter their lives,** but procrastinate and keep these distractions around. Ultimately a buildup of minor negatives injures their outlook. Each life contains some minor unpleasant tasks. If they are eliminated with dispatch, they will not take a severe toll on one's attitude.

5. It may sound harsh, but most of us may have a few **"friends" who have become negative and need to be eliminated** from our daily lives. It is never easy; but, in some situations, it is necessary to terminate negative people-relationships to protect your attitude. This should be done quickly and without guilt.

Note to Self:

#### **Adjustment #4 Give your Positive Attitude to Others**

When you are frustrated by the behavior of others, you may be tempted to give them "a piece of your mind." This is understandable. It is a better policy, however, to give them "a piece of your positive attitude." When you do this, it allows others to adjust your attitude for you.

When you give part of your positive attitude to others, you create a symbiotic relationship. The recipient feels better, but so do you. It is interesting but true that you keep your positive attitude by giving it away.

Notes for Self

### **Adjustment #5                      Look Better to Yourself**

We are constantly bombarded through advertising to improve our image. Most messages claim with a “new look” you will find acceptance and meet new friends.

For example, you may hear, “Discover the new you. Join our health club and expand your circle of friends.”

Self-improvement of any kind should be applauded; but the overriding reason for a “new-image” is not to look better for others, rather it should be because you want to look better to yourself. When you improve your appearance, you give your positive attitude a boost. When you look good to yourself, the world seems brighter. You are more in focus. The connection between a good self-image and a positive attitude cannot be ignored. (See 15 STEPS TO A HEALTHY SELF IMAGE that follows).

Note to Self

### **Adjustment #6                      Clarify your Mission**

It seems an individual with a purpose more apt to have a positive attitude than someone without direction. It need not be an all-consuming mission that reaches for the stars, but it should be sufficiently strong to provide a steady, on-going challenge. A mission in life provides direction, helps individuals achieve better focus, dissipate fears, provides perspective and destroys uncertainty. Having direction gives a person a stronger grip on her or his attitude.

Note to Self:

## **15 STEPS TO A HEALTHY SELF IMAGE**

1. No one can make you feel inferior without your permission.
2. The way you look on the outside definitely affects how you feel and see yourself on the inside.
3. Choose a role model who used their talents and became a success.
4. Listen to teachers, speakers, and preachers who build mankind.
5. Start a new venture with a confident attitude.
6. Smile at someone (every day).
7. Do something for someone else.
8. Associate with people having high moral character.
9. Make a list of your positive qualities.
10. Make a victory list to remind you of your past successes.
11. Avoid pornography, soap operas, and horoscopes.
12. Learn from successful failures.
13. Join an organization with realistic goals and be an active participant.
14. Make eye contact.
15. Enhance or alter your physical appearance.



How important is an attitude. Listen to what Dr. Charles Swindoll says.

## ATTITUDE

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company ... a church ... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is plan on the one thing we have and that is our attitude ... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you ... we are in charge of our Attitudes.”

Charles Swindoll

## ATTITUDE GIVEAWAY EXERCISE

Below are different ways people share their positive attitudes. Some may appeal to you; others may not. Please mark in the blank opposite three (3) that fit your style -- and that you intend to incorporate into your behavior within the next 48 hours.

\_\_\_\_\_ Going out of my way to visit friends who may be having trouble with their attitudes.

\_\_\_\_\_ Being positive around those whom I have daily contact.

\_\_\_\_\_ Transmitting my positive attitude to others whenever I use the telephone.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sharing my positive attitude by sending token items such as cards or flowers to those I care about

\_\_\_\_\_ Sharing my sense of humor through more teasing, telling jokes or using the flipside technique.

\_\_\_\_\_ Being sensitive as a listener so others can regain their positive focus.

\_\_\_\_\_ Laughing more so my attitude will be infectious and others will pick it up.

\_\_\_\_\_ Communicating my attitude through upbeat conversations, paying compliments to others, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Giving my attitude to others by setting a better example as a positive person.

As you implement your choices remind yourself that the more you give your positive attitude away, the more positive it will remain.

# ATTITUDES ARE MAGIC

**FIRST:** It is **your attitude** at the beginning of a difficult task that, more than anything else, will bring about its successful outcome.

**SECOND:** Your attitude toward others determines their attitude toward you. It is a simple cause and effect relationship. We are all interdependent. So it is with life. We simply get back what we put out. The success we achieve in life will depend largely on how well we relate to others; thus, it could be said that **it is our attitude toward life that determines life's attitude to toward us.**

**THIRD:** Before you can achieve the kind of life you want, **you must think, act, talk, and conduct yourself** in all your affairs as would the person you will be become. Keep a mental picture of that person before you as often as you can during the day.

**FOURTH:** Remember that the higher you go in any organization of value, the better the attitudes you will find. And that **a great attitude is not the result of success; rather success is the result of a great attitude.**

William James said it this way:

“The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his or her life by changing his or her attitude.”

**Life is an attitude.** Staying positive is tough at times and is very hard to do, but you do have a choice and that choice will show your leadership.

**Remember Jerry! Let me share a story.**

The attitude you have is yours. The choice you make is yours. Chose the positive attitude and show your leadership to others through your attitude.

## **Leadership, after all, is an attitude!**

## **And the choice is yours!**

# Leadership is an Attitude Workshop

List three points you will try to improve on as a result of this training. Be somewhat specific and focused in your response.

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3. . \_\_\_\_\_

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Other comments: