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Attitude and Commitment: It All Starts Here

Weakness of attitude becomes weakness of character.

—Albert Einstein

Have you ever been walking down the street when you spotted, in the distance, someone who you know is a very depressing person? What do you do? Probably cross the street or duck into the nearest store. Hey, have you ever tried this one? You see him coming so you cover your face, making believe you have to sneeze? Why do you do that? Obviously, because you don't want to talk to that person and end up as depressed as he is.

But, on the other hand, have you ever been walking down the street when you see that very positive and optimistic person coming at you? What do you do then? (By the way, you know you're in big trouble when that person sees you and crosses the street!) I'll bet you make a point of stopping and talking to that person. Why? Naturally, because they make you feel good.

How do you think your clients would react if I posed the same two scenarios to them? Same way, I'll bet! You see, nobody wants to talk to someone who makes them feel lousy, but everyone wants a shot at someone who makes them feel good.

Basic human nature: Everybody wants to associate with a winner. People want to be part of a winning situation and they run like hell from losers. Why do you think winning sports teams sell out most of their games, while losing sports teams can barely give away tickets? Let's face it, if you called the Tampa Bay Devil Rays ticket office and said, "I'm coming to tonight's game and I'm bringing 50 people with me. What time does it start?" their reply would be: "Whenever you get here!"

Most people won't even admit to being part of a losing situation. Did you ever see anyone recommend a bad doctor? What could they possibly say? "Go see this guy, he's a butcher, he'll cut you up but good." On the other hand, have you ever noticed that anytime someone recommends a doctor, they always say, "She's the

top person in her field”? Doesn’t anyone ever recommend the second or third guy?

As a professional speaker, I think one of the questions I get most often from business owners, executives, and managers is, “It’s so hard to find good people, especially good salespeople. What do I look for?” I always say the same thing: Hire attitude. You can teach someone everything they need to know about your company, and in a pretty short period of time, but it’s real hard to teach attitude. And let’s face it, if they’re walking in with a bad attitude before they even have the job, do you really expect it to get better once you’re paying them?

I’m not even worried about a person’s skills. You know as well as I do that a salesperson with a great attitude but limited skills will do everything in his power to acquire those skills. On the other hand, the salesperson with great skills and a lousy attitude won’t use the skills—and if you don’t use them, you lose them.

As a salesperson, your attitude and commitment are critical to your success simply because attitude and commitment are what the clients buy. When you speak to a client or prospect your attitude and commitment are what they hear, see, and feel.

Let’s face it: No one hears the words. You know as well as I do that most people don’t listen; if you have kids, you know that most people don’t listen. But people hear your attitude, they feel your commitment, and that’s what they’re going to buy. Anyone can close a sale, but not everyone can sell attitude and commitment. Only the most successful salespeople can do that.

In my travels, I have met many people who have achieved far more success than was ever expected of them, simply because of their positive attitude and unwavering commitment to do whatever it took to be successful.

Wayne Thorpe’s father abandoned his family when Wayne was very young. When he was 13 his mother became quite ill, and he and

his three brothers practically raised themselves. Wayne graduated high school an unfocused young man. He started his career cleaning out animal cages for a drug company. But because of his positive attitude, an executive with the company took a liking to him, convinced him he had the ability to do more with his life, and encouraged him to go to college.

Once he saw he was capable of doing more with his life, the confidence he gained fed his burning commitment to succeed. Combining that with his always positive attitude, Wayne Thorpe branched out on his own 15 years ago and now owns and operates a car and limousine service, an auto detailing company, a carpet cleaning company, and a commercial cleaning company. He is one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the city of Durham, North Carolina, and a leader in the minority business community.

His positive attitude has permeated his entire organization and is the number one reason Thorpe's Inc. is so successful. I know this because since 1997 I've been a customer, and in all that time I have never used any other car service to get me to and from the airport. In the last eight years, I have done almost \$50,000 worth of business with Thorpe's Inc. just on car trips to and from the airport, and it's all for one reason: the attitude that starts with Wayne Thorpe and permeates his entire organization. And for me it all started with one phone call.

When my wife Linda and I were considering moving from New York City to Chapel Hill, we made numerous trips to research the Chapel Hill area. We checked out everything—schools, neighborhoods, shopping, traffic, cultural activities, airport, and for me, the quality of ground transportation to and from the airport.

One morning, during one of our many research trips, I opened up the local Yellow Pages and found four different car services. I called each one and told them that I would be moving to the area, I was looking for a reliable car service that could get me to and

from the airport in Chapel Hill, and I would like to ask them a few questions.

Three of the four acted as if I had the plague and they were afraid they could catch it right through the phone line. Once they knew I wasn't going to spend any money right then and there, they tried to hustle me off the phone as quickly as possible. It was like talking to a New York doctor. (If you've never spoken to a New York doctor, imagine you're speaking to someone who's walking backwards away from you as they're talking to you.)

The fourth company—Thorpe's, of course—spent so much time answering my questions and being helpful, *I* couldn't wait to get *them* off the phone.

The decision was easy—three lousy attitudes, one great one. Eight years and \$50,000 worth of business later, I often wonder: If, when I called those other three car services, I had said, "I will be relocating to Chapel Hill, and I'm looking for a reliable car service to take me to and from the airport. I expect to spend approximately \$50,000 on this over the next eight years," do you think they would have taken the time to answer my questions?

If every salesperson treated every inquiry as if it were a potential \$50,000 client, I'll bet they'd land a lot more \$50,000 clients.

My sister-in-law, Brenda Romano, never graduated from college, for one good reason: She never went. After graduating high school, she went to secretarial school. When I first met her, in 1980, she was a secretary at Wrangler Jeans. More than anything she loved music, especially rock music. She loved going to concerts and wanted desperately to get a job in the record business—not an easy thing to do.

Through hard work and hustle, she landed a job as a secretary at RCA records. I would say she worked like a dog, but she would have had to slack off to do that. She always did way more than she was supposed to do. She never let her job description define her.

She stayed late, worked till all hours covering shows performed by RCA's artists, and handled any impossible task with a "No problem" attitude.

Finally she was moved up to the promotion staff and was told that in order to be a promotion person she would have to move to Florida. She did. She did a great job in Florida and was just settling in when she was asked to take over the job in San Francisco, and had to move immediately. From San Francisco to Chicago, from Chicago to New York, from New York to Los Angeles, every time with a "No problem" attitude and everywhere doing a great job by doing more than she was supposed to do.

After moving around to a few different recording labels (always with a better position), she is now president of one of the hottest labels in the industry, Interscope Records, where she is one of the highest ranking women in the entire recording industry. By the way, most of the people who report to her are college graduates.

THE FIRST ROCK-SOLID RULE FOR ACHIEVING SALES SUCCESS

Because of their great attitudes, successful salespeople always do more than they're supposed to do.

Let me stop here for a quick rant regarding rock-solid rule number one.

I'm not a big lover of public schools. I honestly believe most of them are just jobs programs for the marginally employable. One of the many useless lessons kids learn in school is, if you do what you are supposed to do and do that all the time, you'll receive an A or a B. However, in the real world, and especially in the world of sales, doing only what you're supposed to do will get you a C, a nice average grade.

But we're not talking about average here; we're talking about what it takes to be successful. People who work in public schools are

government employees. To most government employees, “doing what you’re supposed to do” is all that needs to be done. Why do more when you get an annual raise just for hanging around? In sales, if all you do is hang around, you’re soon gone.

I received an e-mail not too long ago from one of my radio show listeners that was one of the best examples I’ve ever seen of someone who succeeded because they were willing to go the extra mile and do more than they were supposed to do. The e-mail came from Deborah Lee, who is a branch manager for a supermarket bank in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. She wrote:

[While I was] working as a new branch manager for a supermarket bank, a customer came in and after completing his transactions asked if he could borrow a Blue Book for autos. I said, “Sure no problem, If you can please return it on Monday.” Well he did, and it was a test. He was out shopping for a new bank to transfer his company’s accounts to, and I was the only person that day to give him the time of day, and not question his request.

In case you were wondering, as I was, yes, Deborah landed the account. She didn’t do one bit of selling, didn’t take even a second to make a presentation. All she did was sell attitude—the attitude that not every customer request is an attempt to put something over on you; the attitude that doing something nice for a customer without any promise of future business does not make you a sap.

The best thing is, Deborah did more than she was supposed to do without really doing anything extraordinary. All Deborah did was grant the customer’s request to borrow the Blue Book. Not exactly what I would call going above and beyond the call of duty, but compared to all her competition, she was a regular Mother Teresa.

Do you see how easy it is to beat the competition? In Deborah’s case it was loaning out a book with no questions asked. In the case of

Thorpe's Inc. it was the willingness to politely answer a few questions from a potential client. Most salespeople (and most people, for that matter) are so mediocre at what they do that most times, going the extra mile only requires you to go a few extra yards.

In future chapters you'll find that beating the competition is so easy that most times it's just a matter of showing up.

