



Dear Friend,

*Knock, knock.
Who's there?
Nobody.
Nobody who?
No, seriously, nobody.*

Okay, forgive my sorry attempt at humor. But, let me explain my bad knock-knock joke. Whether you own or manage a for-profit business, a non-profit organization, an educational institution, take your pick, you need people knocking on your door (the real one or the virtual one). That's right. You need clients, members, service recipients...customers! You need new ones to come in and your existing folks to stay.

How do you do that? How do you attract people and make them customers (i.e., translate their interest into revenue)? How do you keep them coming back and, even better, sending others your way? The goal is to create not a *satisfied*, but a *loyal*, customer base.

Did you know that organizations that develop a loyal customer base typically grow their revenue at about twice the rate of their competition? Who wouldn't want that? Well, they achieve such results by weaving a customer focus throughout their culture. In those successful settings, the entire culture is built upon valuing customers. Of course, there's a focus on external customers -- the people who purchase goods or services. However, there's an equally strong emphasis on fellow employees -- the internal customers -- because, in the words of Bill Marriott Sr., "The way you treat your employees is the way they will treat the guest." So, profit is not the driver; it's the byproduct of customer attention.

So, what is the linchpin to creating customer loyalty? It's seeking to establish trust with each customer at every point of connection. Building trust is Job #1. You do this by putting your customer's needs ahead of your own. Listen carefully to what they say (and what they don't say) to determine their questions, concerns, or interests. Then, attempt to meet those needs, either through what you offer or through a referral to a trusted colleague. And, if something goes wrong, express regret; deal with the problem swiftly; and resolve the matter fairly.

People buy from, or associate with, those whom they trust. Once trust is established, your customers/clients/service recipients/members are more interested in your suggestions and your guidance. They seek your assistance, are willing to pay for it, and refer you to others.

To learn more about achieving customer loyalty, contact me at 301-280-5950 or inquiries@execadvantagellc.com.

I wish you many loyal customers. Enjoy this month's newsletter!

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Opt for Optimism



While many of you may be scratching your heads as to the merit of this salutation amidst the current economic climate, the often overlooked mindset of optimism can have a very real effect on how we view others and situations and, most notably, how others perceive us. And, this perception more often than not translates into both happiness and success in your personal relationships and professional careers. Optimism is not only a philosophy -- but a lifestyle. Those who see the best in situations and in people are those who tend to receive the best out of every situation and the most out of their relationships with others.

Living optimistically can melt away worry and open new doors of opportunity as well as provide personal and professional satisfaction. By committing to a positive frame of mind, others will soon take notice and perceive you as successful and secure. These are key attributes of those who are ready to take on the next level of advancement.

The following are just a few considerations to keep you on the proactive side of positive thinking:

Renew Your Outlook.

Optimism is not only a thought process -- but a way of life. You can choose to believe you are hopeful and living in abundance, or you can live with compounded worry and hopelessness. It is very easy to fall into the fear trap, but it is far more satisfying to see the joy in the beautiful things that surround you in everyday life. **Start a Gratitude List.** For every new day, write down something that went well for you that day. Keep it simple, and see your day-to-day successes!

Unplug. As the many media outlets serve to inform and entertain us, these days everything seems to be doom and gloom. Let's face it, just watching the news can be downright depressing.

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Shared Leadership

If you look at the most successful teams in any sport, you will find a common bond within the team. Sometimes, it is called chemistry -- as if just the right mix of chemicals has created a special new formula. Other times, it is postulated that there was strong leadership provided by key players and everyone else responded favorably to their lead or "charisma."

I believe there is merit to the leadership issue -- with one notable exception. If a team begins to heavily rely upon their selected or anointed leader, they become dependent upon the leader for their overall performance. While great leaders are necessary and very helpful to raising performance standards, true leadership for high performance teams is shared leadership.

Let me explain. When a team has "a" leader, the team becomes dependent upon the leader for their confidence and, most importantly, their "will" to win!

This is fine as long as the leader is focused, injury-free, and having a good game. However, if the leader is unprepared, loses self-confidence, or is just having a bad day, the team usually suffers and can lose -- even when they have more talent.

This is the point of shared leadership -- interdependence! At the pinnacle of long-term team success is the principle of shared leadership. Every member of the team is taking ownership and responsibility for the overall performance of the group. No one panics or becomes negative at the first sign of adversity. In fact, teams with shared leadership strengthen their resolve and focus at the first sign of adversity and unite as one. They support each other and take care of their own responsibilities to insure the success of the team. Excellent teams know that each person has an

Wipe Out Worry. Worry serves to do little more than drain your energy. In addition, this thought process most often snowballs and creates even more dread and fear. Try this strategy: for every element of anxiety, replace it with a completely opposite scenario, and dwell on that thought until you can imagine yourself in *that* situation. Before long, you *will* be in that situation!

Spin a Positive Web. Viewing situations from a positive vantage point will equate to even more success. By overlooking the negative and praising the positive, you will be further on your way toward an optimistic mindset. Not only will you attract more positive people in your life, but the people around you will soon take notice.

Reach Out to Others. By sharing your optimistic attitude with others, you serve to boost your own positive energy as well as those around you. Just imagine the satisfaction you can feel by mentoring another or offering advice and encouragement. An optimistic outlook is not only contagious -- but it can get you noticed.

When you really think about it, chances are you have much more than you ever thought possible five or ten years ago. Be grateful and giving, and more of the same will continue to come your way!

~ Reprint permission granted By Alison Sfredo - The Training Connection, Inc.

How Do You Go from 'Super Worker' to Supervisor?

The function and role of a supervisor is critically important to an organization. But the startling fact is that most supervisors are promoted from within, with little or no training. They go from being a 'superworker' on Friday to a supervisor on Monday.

They get promoted because of their knowledge, skills, and sometimes because they are just a nice person. Now, certainly, those are important qualities as a worker, and you wouldn't want to promote someone that didn't have these qualities. (Why would you promote someone that just isn't a nice person, is not dependable, and is unable to do their job?)

But, the qualities that made them a 'superworker' are not necessarily the same qualities they need to be a supervisor. In fact, surveys have shown that only 15% of the reason people get a job, keep it, and move ahead is due to their technical skills and knowledge.

What about the other 85%? Studies show that the other 85% of the reasons someone gets a job, keeps it, and moves ahead is due to people skills and people knowledge. You now must be able to get others to do what you used to do so well.

But where do you get these people skills? Often, this is what gets overlooked. It's usually by trial and error. (And, we all know what happens when we do that....)

It is vitally important to develop these "people" skills ASAP!

Use this list below to evaluate yourself and to create a plan of action to become the best supervisor in your company.

Successful Supervisor Traits:

- 1) Has ability to motivate others in a positive way to get results
- 2) Is a self starter, and takes initiative to do what needs to be done
- 3) Communicates well with the management team, colleagues, and subordinates
- 4) Has great organizational skills and planning abilities
- 5) Possesses good decision-making skills
- 6) Is able to adjust to change
- 7) Has good goal-setting and achievement skills
- 8) Has a great attitude

In addition, think in terms of excellence, profitability, return on investment, and effectiveness.

Your action plan should include specific steps to improving on those traits you feel are not as strong as you would like. Concentrate on your weaknesses, but be sure to review your strengths to determine if there is more you can do to reinforce your strong traits.

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Respect

Studies over the past 60 years have regularly shown that employees covet *respect* almost as much as money-- and, some even rate respect higher than cash. Such consistent results clearly demonstrate this point: You'll breed loyalty if you treat employees as individuals and positively recognize them for their contributions to the organization.



assigned duty or role for each play. Personal pride can override fear and indecision, while moving each individual within the team to carry out the assigned duty.

Good teams rely upon individual leadership while great teams share the leadership. Everyone takes individual responsibility for their actions and results. This explains why some teams have started the season playing as champions behind their leaders -- only to fall back into the pack after a key injury to their designated leader. Great championship teams unify together, sharing the leadership role, the responsibilities, and the accountabilities for high performance standards.

The real question for you -
- Does your team share the leadership role or depend upon one or two individuals to provide the energy, passion, and discipline for the winner's edge?

~ Written by Voss W. Graham of InnerActive Consulting Group in Cordova, TN

Leadership can be thought of as a capacity to define oneself to others in a way that clarifies and expands a vision of the future.
~ Edwin H. Friedman

When one door closes, another door opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us.
~ Alexander Graham Bell

Sooner or later, those who win are those who think they can.
~ Richard Bach

About Executive Advantage

At Executive Advantage, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about Executive Advantage, contact us at inquiries@execadvantagellc.com.