

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Attitude of Leadership: Leading During Turbulent Times

While flying back from Rochester New York, I was sitting in the one person aisle seat smashed up against the window of a small regional jet. We were flying into a major storm front 300 miles east of Chicago. Twisted like a pretzel in the unusual plane seat trying to read a book, I remembered something about the attitude of leadership. Three decades ago I discovered that airplanes have attitudes and in this particular moment I was hoping my plane had a good attitude. I learned that an airplane's attitude does not change. What does change are the flying conditions. The attitude has to do with the airplane's relation to its surroundings. The plane's attitude is responsible for keeping the right position in relation to the ground, the correct angle of the plane, and the appropriate speed to maintain flight. During this aggressive storm, I could sense the pilot trying to hold the airplane in position despite nature's attempt to disrupt his flight plan.

While taking on head winds in the current business climate, leaders must maintain the right attitude. Leaders serve as the mediator between external threats and employee reactions. As a passenger in the small vulnerable jet, I was at the mercy of the pilot. I had to trust that he knew how to keep the right attitude. As leaders, your people need to be able to trust that you will keep the right attitude. Remember that the leader's attitude isn't what needs to change. Rather, like the



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stormy weather around the airplane, circumstances change and the leader needs to absorb the reality of those circumstances while maintaining the required relationship between key stakeholders in his business.

So, the Attitude of Leadership is for all practical purposes a sort of agility skill. Leaders need to efficiently size up the big and small shifts in their workplace climate and serve as the absorbing nexus and stabilizer of these energy shifts. This skill is not as elusive as some may imagine. I have experienced the power of a leader's attitude numerous times throughout my life, ranging from my father's steady thinking when I was escorted home in a police car one night, to a college football coach who gently guided us into victory amidst an

onslaught of talented opponents, to being part of a leadership team that against all odds completed our assigned mission. Effective leaders lead strong when the circumstances are calm or chaotic. To help overcome this current economic onslaught, I believe our healthcare companies need a heavy dose of Attitude of Leadership. To improve this skill, I suggest the following steps:

1. Take responsibility for your attitude.
2. Read as much as you can about a leader's attitude. Currently my favorite book on the subject is *Leadership Agility*, authored by Joiner and Josephs.
3. Ask three of your employees to give you feedback on your attitude. You want to know if they find your attitude as fickle as the weather or as steady as a surgeon's hand.

One of my favorite business coaches is author and speaker Brian Tracy. He has written dozens of books on self leadership and breakthrough performance enhancements. His following words serve as an emotional ballast for me.

"You cannot control what happens to you, but you can control your attitude toward what happens to you, and in that, you will be mastering change rather than allowing it to master you." -Brian Tracy

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