

# The Role of Attitude Inside and Outside Today's Organizations

It's Influence on both the Employee's Private and Professional Life

Master's Thesis in Business Administration

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## Foreword

As a student of Business and Informatics with a major in Management studies, I've written my master's thesis on the subject of attitude.

I would like to express my appreciation to my tutor, Bo Westerlund for his constructive advice and assistance during the entire process of this thesis research.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Pauline Okello and James Kasavubu for their contribution towards my empirical research on the subject matter.

Last but not least, I would like to convey my gratitude to my wife, Mirembe for standing with me and helping me with the children during this intensive period of writing my thesis.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the influence of attitude on the life of an individual and the role that it can play inside and outside today's organizations. The purpose of the thesis is to gain insight on the subject of attitude and its significance both in the life of today's employee and on the management and leadership of today's organizations. I will endeavor to investigate the importance of cultivating a positive attitude and the consequences of yielding to a negative attitude. I will also discuss why attitude not only can influence the firm's progress but also the external image and advancement of the organization as well.

With the abduction and narrative approaches, I will endeavor to explain the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and ways of understanding individuals' attitudes and their influence on their overall performance. I will also attempt to address how employees in a given organization can deal with a customer who has a sour attitude. Moreover, I'll address some of the possible causes of negative attitudes. The theoretical research will help expound on the subject matter. Through empirical research, I'll attempt to address the fact that despite an employee's skills and competence, positive attitude can be an added advantage.

With an understanding based of my personal life experience, I'll explain how I struggled with negative attitudes especially during my early years in Sweden and how I eventually made an attitude adjustment. My personal experience at the Sheraton will be used as a case study on the subject of attitude. Furthermore, I'll examine some other life experiences such as the lessons I learned from my father on the subject. Besides, I'll discuss the challenge of attitude on leadership as well. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion on the fact that attitude needs to be addressed in a good-enough approach thereby circumventing the trap of making attitude appear to be the principle aspect as this may lead to absolutism.

**Keywords:** Positive attitude, negative attitude, "U-turn", challenges, goals, switch

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# 1. Introduction

## An Overview on the Importance of Attitude

My interest in this research arose out of a concern that I've had over the years after observing the employees' attitudes at Sheraton Kampala Hotel where I used to work before relocating to Sweden. I closely observed how those employees particularly with a negative attitude towards their superiors and other fellow employees, ruined their opportunities to be promoted. It's sad to note that some of them ended up leaving their jobs eventually due to their negativity. On the other hand, I also watched those employees who had a positive attitude about their job staying longer on their job and most of them had the opportunity of enjoying the privilege of being promoted. I was actually among the latter group of employees. Over the years, I've been convinced, among other things, that having a positive attitude is a necessary ingredient in the life of every individual.

Although I'm not advocating for attitude to be the only significant factor as far as the progress of any organization is concerned, I suggest that attitude is not something to be ignored. In my estimation, it is something worth paying attention to because it is among the vital ingredients in any given organization. Of course, attitude is inseparable from people and it is the people who run organizations. I will analyze the importance of the attitude through my personal life experience and with the help of an interview of some of the superiors at my former place of employment.

In my personal observations, I've noticed that most people pay closer attention on what they should wear on different occasions so that they might look good and presentable. Sad to say, a lot of people ignore what I consider to be an important aspect to put on—Attitude yet it is something that cannot be hidden from those around you for so long.

## The Research Springboard

“Does an employee's attitude really have any impact on those around and the organization at large?” asked one student. “I think that as long as the employee can do the job, attitude should not be a big deal?” responded the other student during a casual talk at a lunch break. These are the two most remarkable questions that I heard one student ask his colleague during a lunch break one summer afternoon and they have lingered on my mind ever since then. Pondering over these questions coupled with my earlier experience at the Sheraton hotel has compelled me to do a study on the subject of attitude and its impact in and around a given organization. I view attitude as one of the necessary ingredients in enhancing successful leadership and the progress of an organization.

Among other things, I suppose that attitude is one of the essential ingredients that need our attention in our attempt to ensure effective leadership in any sphere of influence, be it at home, in an organization, at school, in the sports arena and so on and so forth. Nevertheless, I'm not stressing attitude to be considered the one and only principle thing that ensures effective leadership. It is just one among other elements that when applied can lead to what I prefer to call a balanced way in the leadership arena. Besides leadership, since attitude is part and parcel of any person of a sound mind, then it is vital in any one's private or public life.

I presume to a certain extent that attitude can be associated to some of the common problems that may weaken the effectiveness of teamwork in an organization. I suppose that negative attitudes have a way of being contagious by spreading faster than good ones. If I may use the analogy of the basket of apples in relation to negative attitudes, one rotten apple left unattended to, may eventually affect the rest of the apples by making them rotten too. Of course, I'm not suggesting that an employee with a stinking attitude should be gotten rid of but rather find a better approach of dealing with such a person. This is so, because I believe that there is always room for improvement and anyone can become better in any area if that person decides to do so. However, such a person should not be ignored hoping that things will automatically get better in the sweet by and by.

## Problem formulation

In my problem formulation pertaining to the subject under study, I'll attempt to address the following questions:

- What is it that makes attitude an interesting topic of my research?
- What is the significance of the subject of attitude and for whom?
- What are some of the possible causes of a negative attitude in an individual?
- What specific role does the human brain play in shaping one's attitude?
- Besides attitude, what are the other factors that play a significant role for individual and organizational success?
- What is the role of attitude in leadership today?
- Why does it seem as though a number of people underestimate the importance of attitude?
- How has attitude influenced my personal and professional life over the years?

## Delimitation

Since attitude is such an extensive subject which cannot be covered in only one thesis research, I've purposely chosen to address my personal experience with attitude with the help of the selected theoretical and empirical studies. For over fifteen years of continual observations on attitude, the purpose of my thesis is to gain insight on the subject and its significance both in the life of today's employee and on the management and leadership of today's organizations.

## 2. Methods in Use

I've decided to use the abduction method in my thesis research on the subject of attitude. Put across by Charles Peirce (1839-1914), the founder of pragmatism and one of America's scientists and philosophers, abduction is a method that can assist in minimizing the uncertainties and difficulties associated with research work thereby leading to an increase in the knowledge on the subject. I believe that this method will enable the reader to consequently gain more insight on the theme of attitude. According to Peirce, the explanatory content of theories can be reached with the help of abduction. Abduction is a method of reasoning in which one opts for the hypothesis that would best explain the relevant evidence in the field of research. Abductive reasoning emanates from a set of accepted facts and infers their best explanations. It can also be used to refer to the production of hypotheses in a bid to explain certain observations or conclusions. According to Bo Westerlund, my management lecturer, abduction can be likened to a scenario where a hunter follows the foot prints of an animal in the forest thereby making the animal's whereabouts traceable in the end. With the help of this approach therefore, I will deal with the subject of attitude by tracking its impact on people and will leave it to the reader to finally make his or her final judgment on the importance of the subject matter.

I've used the narrative approach as well. I've opted for the narrative approach owing to the fact that the subject of attitude has for years been etched in my memory and I've seized this opportune moment to write on my personal experiences regarding the topic. This will help me explain how my experience on attitude has led to some important realizations about my life and the world at large. I believe that this will subsequently furnish the reader with some new insights on the subject matter.

According to Barbara Czarniawska (1999) in her book *Writing Management*, narrative knowledge can act as an attractive candidate for bridging the gap between theory and practice. She argues that a narrative approach may produce generalizations and deep insights without claiming universal status. She argues that even though stories and metaphors cannot substitute one another because they have different tasks to accomplish, a narrative can be seen as a mode of association by putting different things together. As a management student I perceive attitude to be an interesting subject in the field of management research. In her book *Writing Management*, Barbara Czarniawska (1999) presents the possible uses of the narrative approach in field research. From the field of management practice view point, she argues that one may not only watch how stories are being made, but also collect, interpret, analyze and deconstruct those stories. While from the field of management research, she suggests that you can put together your own story. You can also set the story together with other stories or even against other stories. She maintains that narrative forms of reporting have the ability to enrich organization studies through complementing, illustrating, and analyzing logical scientific forms of reporting.

The role of the theory study will be to bring about an increase in understanding about attitude in general. In my view, both theory and empirical components will contribute to shading more light on the subject matter—attitude, thereby supplementing my personal view on attitude. The empirical part will contribute a relatively different perspective on the theme of attitude as well.

I'll conduct the empirical study by interviewing two executives in the hotel industry. Of course, I would prefer to interview more than two people on the topic of attitude to get a

wider perspective on the subject. Nevertheless, I've not been able to do so due to the limited timeframe in which I'm supposed to complete my thesis research. Thus, I'll interview the Director of Human Resources at Sheraton Kampala hotel and the General Manager of Hotel Equatorial, both hotels situated in the heart of the business and commercial hub of Kampala City, Uganda.

According to my tutor, Bo Westerlund, there are three main voices in my thesis research on the theme of attitude, these are; the theoretical research voice, the empirical research voice and my personal experience voice. With the help of the narrative and abduction approaches, I'll to the best of my ability endeavor to relate the above mentioned voices in connection to attitude.

### 3. Theoretical Research

The theoretical study encompasses the definition of attitude; the power of attitude on a team; how attitude compounds when exposed to others; the attitude "U-turn"; negative attitude—the success blocker; negative attitude possible causes; understanding the influence of attitudes; attitudes and organizations; the winner's attitude; and your three brains.

In his book, *The Winning Attitude*, John C. Maxwell (1995) defines attitude as an inward feeling expressed by behavior. That is one of the reasons an attitude can be seen without a word being said. He is of the view that of all the things we wear, our expression is the most important. In his amplified definition of the term attitude, he forwards the following on the subject:

Attitude ...

It is the "advanced man" of our true selves.

Its roots are inward but its fruit is outward.

It's our best friend or our worst enemy.

It is more honest and more consistent than our words.

It is an outward look based on past experiences.

It is a thing that draws people to us or repels them.

It is never content until it is expressed.

It is the librarian of our past.

It is the speaker of our present.

It is the prophet of our future.



## 4. The Power of Attitude on a Team

According to John C. Maxwell (2003), people's attitudes have the power to lift up all tear down a team because attitude is always a player on the team. He argues that although good attitudes among players do not guarantee a team's success, bad attitudes guarantee its failure. In *The winner's Edge* Denis Waitley (1994) stated, "The real leaders in business, in the professional community, in education, in government, and in the home also seem to draw upon a special cutting edge that separates them from the rest of society. The winner's edge is not in a gifted birth, in a high IQ, or in a talent. The winner's edge is in the attitude, not aptitude."

Maxwell believes that unfortunately, too many people resist that notion and they want to believe that talent alone (or talent with experience) is enough. But plenty of talented teams out there never amount to anything because of the attitudes of their players.

He gives a summary of the various attitudes that may impact a team that comprises of highly talented players as follows:

<b>Abilities</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Result</b>
Great Talent	+	Rotten Attitudes	=	Bad Team
Great Talent	+	Bad Attitudes	=	Average Team
Great Talent	+	Average Attitudes	=	Good Team
Great Talent	+	Good attitudes	=	Great Team

He maintains that if you want to yield outstanding results then you need good people with great talent and awesome attitudes. When attitudes go up, so does the potential of the team. Likewise, when attitudes go down the potential of the team goes down with it.

## 5. An Attitude Compounds When Exposed to Others

In his book *Attitude 101*, John Maxwell (2003) argues that there are several things that are not contagious on a team, that is to say; talent, experience, and willingness to practice. But you can be sure of this one thing that attitude is catching. He emphasizes that when someone on the team is teachable and his humility is rewarded by improvement, others are more likely to show similar characteristics. He goes on to say that when a leader is upbeat in the face of discouraging circumstances; others admire that quality and want to be like him or her. When a team member displays a strong work ethic and begins to have a positive impact, others emulate him. People become inspired by their leader. He emphasizes the fact that people have a tendency to adopt the attitudes of those they spend time with—to pick up on their mind-sets, beliefs, and approaches to challenges.

He proceeds by giving an interesting account of Roger Bannister as an inspiring example of how attitudes "compound". During the first half of the twentieth century, many sports experts believed that no runner could run a mile in less than four minutes. And for a long time they were right. But then on May 6, 1954, British runner and university student Roger Bannister

ran a mile in 3 minutes 59.4 seconds during a contest in Oxford. Australian John Landy also broke the four minute barrier. Suddenly there after, dozens and then hundreds of others broke the record. Why? Because the best runners' attitudes changed as they began to take on the mind-sets and beliefs of their peers. According to Maxwell, Bannister's attitude and actions compounded when exposed to others. His attitude spread. Every world-class runner who competes at that distance can run a mile in less than four minutes today. Attitudes are contagious!

## 6. The Attitude "U-turn"

In his book *Pivot; How One Turn in Attitude can Lead to Success*, Dr. Alan Zimmerman (2006) has noticed that attitude makes a huge difference in determining a person's level of success in life. He made this assumption following an extensive observation after speaking for various organizations for more than twenty years. In essence, he argues that attitude seems to make a bigger difference than age, sex, race, education, circumstance, or any other factor. Two people can have the same background and face the same situations, but experience very different outcomes. It's all about attitude, he asserts.

Unfortunately, many people have no idea how important attitude is. They don't realize that their positive or negative attitudes may be making or breaking them on or off the job. They may not even realize they have the "wrong" attitudes. Dr. Zimmerman asserts that one may think that this talk about attitude is a bunch of fluff. However, he exhibits a psychological evidence to back up his claims by presenting among others, a research from Dr. Martin Seligman. In his book, *Learned Optimism*, one of the important things that Dr. Seligman discovered was that attitude was a better predictor of one's success than IQ, grade point average, or almost any other factor. He discovered that people with negative attitudes get sick more often, are divorced more frequently, and they tend to raise kids who get involved in more trouble related situations.

In his research, Dr. Martin Seligman also found out that negative people even make less money. He presents a one long-term study of 1,500 people out of which 83 percent, in group A, chose their particular jobs with a belief of making a lot of money whereas group B which comprised of only 17 percent chose their jobs because they had positive attitudes towards those jobs. After twenty years had gone by, both groups had produced 101 millionaires. The most exciting thing about this study was that only one of those millionaires came out of group A and the rest came from group B. Another amazing fact was that more than 70 percent of these millionaires never went to college. In addition, more than 70 percent of those who became CEOs graduated in the bottom half of their class. Seligman concluded that what determined their altitudes in life were their attitudes rather than their aptitudes. He maintains in no uncertain terms that positive thinking is the characteristic of successful people.

Zimmerman claims to find similar trends in all the audiences and organizations where he addresses and consults respectively. He always asks members of his audience to make a list of the words they would use to describe a winner and the list tends to be consistent regardless of the group and the first ten word on the list include attitude, enthusiasm, determination, motivation, confidence, optimism, dedication, happiness, balance and patience. According to Zimmerman, none of these qualities has anything to do with one's physical or mental ability, they all relate to attitude in some way or another.

Although he is not a physician, Dr. Zimmerman states that he has had the privilege of working with some of the finest doctors in the world while doing his program for organizations such as Kettering Medical Center and the Mayo Clinic. Whereas his program centers on the mind, the medical doctors focus more on the body. Nevertheless, according to him, they both see the definite connection between the two: your attitudes affect your health. He argues that there is medical evidence that attitude can affect one's physical health. In a research done by Dr. Thomas Hackett, a Harvard psychiatrist, it was found out that sick people who minimize the seriousness of their condition by emphasizing their optimism, hope, trust, and humor have higher survival rates than those who embrace worry as a chronic syndrome. He said, "Sometimes the best medicine is in your head... a positive attitude has a life saving effect."

Zimmerman maintains that attitudes have a definite biochemical effect on the body. An attitude of defeat or panic applies pressure on the blood vessels and has a debilitating effect on the entire endocrine system. On the contrary, an attitude of confidence and determination activates compassionate, therapeutic secretion in the brain.

According to a research carried out by Dr. James Strain, the director of Behavioral Medicine and Consultation Psychiatry at Mount Sinai Hospital, a positive attitude can help in the prevention and also in the recovery from disease. This was discovered after making a comparison of pessimistic men with optimistic men who had experienced heart attacks. It was revealed that while twenty-one men died within eight years of the heart attack in the first group of twenty-five pessimists, only six of the twenty-five optimistic men died in that time.

Dr Zimmerman strikes the difference between negative attitude and positive attitude as follows:

- Whereas the winner is always a part of the answer, the loser is always part of the problem.
- Whereas the winner always has a program, the loser always has an excuse.
- Whereas the winner says, "Let me help you", the loser says "that is not my job".
- Whereas the winner sees an answer for every problem, the loser always sees the problem in every answer.
- Whereas the winner says, "It may be difficult but it is possible," the loser says, "It may be possible but it's too difficult."

## 7. Negative Attitude – The Success Blocker

Dr. Zimmerman (2006) asserts that the end result of nursing negativity is that we wind up with millions of people who never come close to using their full potential. Worse still, we end with millions of people who spend more time tearing themselves down than they do building themselves up. He believes that incidentally very few people are fully aware of the negativity in their lives and most of them have no idea how much damage they do to themselves by nursing the negative attitude. Owing to the fact that negativity comes in different forms, he argues that most people do not realize that they may be their own worst enemies.

Dr. Zimmerman suggests that, excuses, fear, pain avoidance, bad habits, and lack of goals, among others, are some of the ways through which negativity may have infiltrated one's life or may be getting in the way of one's success.

## 8. Negative Attitude Possible Causes

### ❖ Excuses

Although one's excuses may sound perfectly reasonable or even justifiable, Dr. Zimmerman maintains that making excuses is one of the ways through which one may be sabotaging himself or herself unknowingly. According to Zimmerman, someone who is good at making excuses is rarely good for anything else. He argues that the difference between winners and losers is the way they view their circumstances. Whereas losers use their circumstances as an *excuse* to give up, winners use their circumstances as a *reason* to get going and that's one of the reasons why some people become winners while others become losers in the same situation.

He proceeds by giving an account of Walt Disney, a man who decided to use his circumstances as a reason to work harder instead of excusing himself. From a tender age, Walt Disney was a dreamer who loved to dwell in the world of fantasy, entertainment, and cartoon. But his success as a cartoonist did not come easy; it took determination.

In his first attempt, Walt approached a Kansas City newspaper with his drawings and the editor responded, "These won't do. If I were you, I'd give up this work. From these sketches, it's obvious your talent lies elsewhere."

Nevertheless, despite of editor's negative consideration, Walt was determined to pursue his strong desire of becoming a cartoonist. Walt experienced rejection after rejection as he attempted other newspapers as well. With perseverance, he kept knocking on doors until he eventually was offered a job of drawing publicity material for churches.

Thereafter, Walt embarked on a studio search and all he could find was an old mouse-infested garage. However, while in that garage studio Walt continued to draw his cartoons and write. It was from that determined humble beginning that he eventually became world famous.

Dr. Zimmerman suggests that under the circumstances, Walt could have developed a negative attitude as he had the opportunity of easily making the excuses for not pursuing his dream to be a cartoonist. Nevertheless, Walt understood that someone who is good at making excuses is rarely good for anything else.

### ❖ Fear

According to Dr. Zimmerman, fear is another possible avenue through which someone may yield to negative attitudes. The fear of failure can stop you from fulfilling your goal. Author John Gardner once said, "One of the reasons mature people stop learning is that they become less and less willing to risk failure." Zimmerman points out that although some of the fears are normal and healthy because they point out the dangers of life thereby by protecting someone from harm; a lot of people are burdened with abnormal fear that prevents them from living a full life or having a productive career. He also argues that abnormal fear can prohibit action as it hinders people from trying. Instead of making progress, abnormal fear encourages people to make excuses.

He maintains that sometimes people can get a glimpse of new opportunities and approaches to for instance, communication or management, but cannot dare to give it a try because they

are stifled by the fear of failure. As Shakespeare once wrote, “Our fears do make us fail to try and gain the heights that are possible for us.”

Dr. Zimmerman suggests that the choice is yours; either allow fear to dominate your life or you can choose to dominate your fears.

### ❖ Avoiding Pain

According to Dr. Zimmerman, an increasing desire to keep away from pain can be another avenue through which negative attitudes can find their way into one’s life. He argues that by someone thinking that a particular goal would be too hard to attain, is rather a “rational” attempt to avoid pain. Someone may not be willing to do what it takes to achieve a given goal simply because it may hurt. He agrees with the saying, “no pain, no gain.” Since most people do not want to experience any pain, they would rather give up on their goals. Dr. Zimmerman said, “People often refuse to do the things they have to do to get the results they want. Once again, negative attitudes block success.”

He asserts that whereas some people get stuck in their old ways by refusing to do what needs to be done in order to achieve a given goal or number of goals, there are those who put things off instead of doing them immediately. While those with a negative mentality think it is too hard, people with a positive attitude understand that things worth having are worth the effort.

Taking physical fitness as an example, he suggests that at times you may have to do things you don’t want to do, for instance, working out day after day whether you like it or not in order for you to build the body that you desire. He claims that whereas many people know they should change, and they are aware that those changes will bring about something far better than what they presently have, they are not willing to go through the pain and discomfort that is needed to get there. At times they keep on postponing doing the things they hate in order to create those things they love.

### ❖ Lack of Goals

According to Dr. Zimmerman, negative attitudes can hinder someone from setting goals. He views this as being disastrous because there is a clear connection between setting goals and higher achievement. By writing down goals, it helps give one’s mind something to focus on which in turn enables the mind to go to work in achieving them.

Dr. Zimmerman maintains that if someone has a negative attitude, it has a tendency of showing up in that person’s lack of goals. He argues also that one’s lack of goals will lead to a lack of discipline as well. Concerning goals, he gives an example of how a goal can lead a person to set his or her alarm for 5 a.m., and motivates him or her to get out of bed and into the gym for morning exercise purposes.

According to Zimmerman, lack of goals leads to lack of wisdom. Hence those who lack goals will spend most of their time on activities that are tension relieving other than goal achieving. He suggests that if you want to be wildly successful, it is imperative to get rid of negative attitudes and engage in setting goals. In light of negative attitudes, he attests to the fact that

most people do fail in life because they don't think the thoughts and do the things that will change their circumstances.

## 9. Understanding the Influence of Attitude

In his book *Attitude Is Everything*, Keith Harrell (2003) emphasizes the fact that it is imperative to manage and control the quality of one's life through the influence of a positive attitude. According to Harrell, attitude can be viewed as the foundation and support of everything we do; a key element in the process of controlling one's destiny and attaining mastery in one's personal and professional life. For anyone who desires a positive attitude, there is going to be a need to be committed enough to cultivate it. He says that "the most valuable asset you can possess is a positive attitude toward your life." He argues that if a person changes his thinking, he can change his beliefs. He further believes that by changing one's beliefs, then that person can change his actions. And finally by changing one's actions, then that person can change his life.

Harrell (2003) maintains that your attitude has the ability to influence your entire personal and professional life. According to him, what we think about the most has the ability to influence the way we feel, thereby influencing our attitude. He believes that we are constantly heading in the direction of our dominant thought life, that is to say, healthy and positive thoughts propel us into developing a positive attitude and the reverse is true where unhealthy and negative thoughts are concerned. Harrell asserts that attitude is one's perception of life which could either be a failure-reinforcing perspective or a success-reinforcing perspective. Attitude can be viewed as the means through which a person can attain a given level of performance in, all that he or she does, which could either be constructive or destructive. A person's attitude can either be a powerful means for positive action –or can stifle one's ability to fulfill his or her potential.

Harrell argues that although we cannot control the circumstances that befall us, we can decide to choose how we respond to those circumstances. While people with a positive attitude are influenced by what goes on within them, those with a negative attitude are influenced by what goes on around them. He mentions that one of the ways our circumstances can be improved upon is by improving our response to them.

Harrell reports that according to Martin Seligman, a noted psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, optimists (individuals with positive attitudes) are more successful than similarly talented people with pessimistic or negative attitudes. His research also shows that negative attitudes can be changed to positive attitudes. Seligman's research has revealed that our attitudes—positive or negative—can affect whether we succeed or fail in reaching our goals. In his book *Learned Optimism*, he offers empirical data where life insurance agents with optimistic attitudes had sold more policies than their pessimistic colleagues. In this research, pessimists blamed their failed sales efforts on themselves, which decreased their self-esteem and led to lower sales volumes. On the other hand, however, instead of the optimists taking the rejections personally, they had logical reasons to explain why prospects did not buy policies. Not only did the optimists sell 37 percent more policies as compared to their pessimist colleagues, but they also remained on the job longer. Whereas the optimists chose to search for specific remedies for their challenging situation, the pessimists put the blame on themselves that they were the reason for their poor performance. The pessimists

continued to do the same old things the same old way, expecting different results thereby deteriorating their self-esteem to the extent that most of them quit their jobs in the end.

Harrell suggests that each of us can make a decision to change our negative attitude or improve upon our positive attitude. He argues that it is amazing how most people pay attention to having a health or dental checkup, or even periodically they take their vehicles for maintenance, and yet they ignore carrying out an attitude checkup. He further suggests that probably you need an attitude checkup if you haven't been getting what you want out of life, or perhaps people are not responding well to you.

## 10. Attitudes and Organizations

In his book *Attitudes In and Around Organizations*, Arthur P. Brief (1998) explores how the attitudes that people bring with them to the workplace (attitudinal baggage) have the ability to affect thoughts, feelings and actions in organizations. He also addresses the question about how the attitudes of those outside the organization—stockholders, customers, suppliers, governmental officials, and the public-at-large in which the firm operates—may affect the organization. To this group he also adds prospective employees and clients. He argues that the reasons as to why the management of an organization should pay attention about the attitudes of these various groups around it are more obvious. For instance, favorable organizational attitudes held by outsiders may enable the firm to charge premium prices (Klein and Leffler, 1981), to attract better-quality job applicants (Stigler, 1962) and to boost access to capital markets (Beatty & Ritter, 1986). The attitudes of those outside the organization matter, as suggested by Baron (1996), due to the following reasons:

1. Negative attitudes may force organizations to take costly actions in attempting to avoid being damaged. For example in light of the negative attitudes held by some environmental groups toward its disposable diaper product line, Proctor & Gamble produced and mailed pamphlets with such titles as “diapers and the environment” to 14 million households.
2. Positive attitudes may lead to organizations benefiting from sustained support. For example, satisfied customers increase purchases for those goods and services where volume discretion is possible, decrease their purchases much less sharply in the face of increasing prices, and less attentive to competitive overtures (Andersen et al, 1994; Karyanaram & Little, 1994).
3. Positive attitudes are associated with establishing implicit contracts, understandings and expectations that can be more efficient than explicit bargaining and contracting. For example, Barney and Hansen (1994) argue that goodwill, in the form of trustworthiness, can serve as a substitute for more costly means of governing economic exchange relationships such as that between a buyer and a seller of raw materials.

The organization's brand equity (Farquhar, 1989), corporate reputation (Weigelt & Camerer, 1988), and goodwill (Kieso & Weigandt, 1992) are all factors that can be influenced by attitudes of outsiders. Arthur P. Brief (1998) suggests that owing to the fact that goodwill (i.e., the positive attitudes held by outsiders) appears to be linked to organizations avoiding costs and reaping benefits, one assumes that they engage in a lot of activities that are aimed at promoting goodwill.

### ❖ Goodwill and Customer Satisfaction

Arthur P. Brief (1998) argues that goodwill among customers, principally in the form of customer satisfaction, can be so attractive to an organization. He suggests that word of mouth is a potentially significant means of spreading goodwill (or negative attitudes) pertaining to a given organization. He believes that negative customer attitudes (at least in non monopolistic markets) can be expected to lead to a loss of business, whereas on the other hand, customer satisfaction promotes loyalty.

### ❖ Employees Attitudes

Arthur Brief (1998) agrees with Pugh (1997), who, building on a study by Rafaeli and Sutton, (1989), asserted that the emotions employees express on their jobs are related to those they feel and, based on the research work by Hatfield et al (1994), that customers “catch” these expressed feelings. He agrees with Pugh (1997) that these “caught” feelings influence customer perception of quality and satisfaction with service. He maintains that since feelings experienced at work are a sign of the effect of job satisfaction, in the same manner, feelings experienced by customers during a service encounter are the indicative of the sentimental component of their satisfaction with the service received. Therefore, the feelings to be addressed (moods and emotions) speak to the attitudes of employees and customers.

### ❖ “Leaky” Attitudes

Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) asserted that internal feelings exert a major impact on the display of the emotions at the place of work. According to Stenross & Kleinman (1989), these displayed emotions or expressed behaviors include facial expressions, bodily gestures, tone of voice, and language. Ekman (1993) has revealed that particular experienced emotions are associated with certain universal and spontaneous facial expressions. His research shows that even when people try to hide or fake a particular emotion with their facial expressions, true emotions “leak” through. In a research done by Ambady and Rosenthal (1992), it was revealed that although an organization’s display rules may order service workers to express positive emotions to customers, it should be predicted that at least sometimes, workers’ true feelings will leak through and be interpreted accurately by customers.

### ❖ “Caught” Attitudes

Arthur P. Brief (1998) reports that according to climate for service researchers, one of the consequences of customers reading the job attitudes of service providers is that customers tend to adopt the attitudes expressed by the service workers they encounter (Schneider & Bowen, 1992). According to Hatfield (et al., 1992), “emotional contagion” is “the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person and, consequently to converge emotionally.” The essence with emotional contagion is the notion that through interaction with another person, for instance, a service provider, one catches that person’s feelings.



## 11. The Winner's Attitude

In their book, *The Winner's attitude; Change How You Deal with Difficult People and Get the Best Out of Any Situation*, authors Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006) point out that the secret to a happy life is inside your head. You never have to be at the mercy of things or people anymore to achieve happiness. You have the answer within, and it is your choice to make the *Attitude Switch* to become the amazing you. They argue that how you live your life is a decision—a choice that begins in your brain. Once you realize it is your choice, amazing things happen. You can choose to be at war or at peace in your life. In the moment between what someone says and your reaction to it, switching to a positive attitude allows you to take a different course, to fire off different synapses and soar in a new direction.

## 12. Your Three Brains

According to a research done by Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006), we all have three type of brains; the reptilian brain, the animal brain (also known as the limbic system or mammalian brain), and the human brain (also known as the neocortex or cerebral cortex). Between the animal and the human brain lies the reticular activating system which is a kind of toggle switch that resides deep inside the brain and connects to all the feelings it gets throughout the mind and body. It is believed that the switch has the ability to turn on the operating system depending on what stimulus it receives.

Considering the most basic emotions—anger and love—Jeff and Val (2006) endeavor to explain how the switch works. If the stimulus is anger, the switch turns on the animal brain and operates from anger. If the stimulus is love, the switch turns on the human brain and operates from love. The authors argue that many people do not realize that they have a switch and therefore spend their day flipping back and forth between the animal brain and the human brain without any control over their reactions to people and events. The authors give an example of a lady walking down the road and someone smiles at her. This experience of love switches on her human brain, and as a result, she starts operating from love and smiles back at people. After walking a few meters, someone bumps into her and gives her an angry look, may be even curses her. This experience of anger switches on her animal brain and so now she is operating from anger and frustration, without even realizing why or how it happened.

### The Reptilian Brain and the Animal Brain

The reptilian brain is the one that enables our bodies to do so much multitasking such as the process of seeing, hearing, heartbeat, metabolism, among others, without even us being aware of it.

The animal brain surrounds your reptilian brain and it also focuses on your well-being. All animals have an animal brain and we, the human animal are no exception. The animal brain is about one thing and one thing only: survival! It's born in fear, lives in fear, and dies in fear. Its main job is to endeavor to keep us alive out of danger. The animal brain is always on the lookout to ensure that it is not being taken advantage of, and it has the ability to keeping a record of things people say, just to “get them” later. They authors agree with the “fight or flight” mechanism originally discovered by Harvard physiologist Walter Cannon that there is

a response system hard-wired into our animal brain to protect us from bodily harm which checks things out so that if danger is eminent, you can stay and fight, or run for your life.

According to Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006), owing to the fact that the animal brain is all about survival, it's job is to look out for any little thing that seems out of place or odd—even in safe situations like the workplace or at home. The danger is that the animal brain always wants to take over the human brain. In other words, the negative attitude wants to override the positive attitude. They argue that the animal brain is so engrossed into survival that it does not care about accepting that other people make mistakes. It lives so much in the fear of death and being taken advantage of. They believe that the animal brain approach which in essence is a negative attitude, applies to everything. Whether it is a relationship between friends, married couples, countries, customers, companies, or employees—when people operate from their animal brains they live in fear and will do anything to survive, relationships and situations become complicated, difficult and messy.

Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006) have made the following deductions pertaining to the animal brain:

- It has a tendency to justify everything.
- It lacks any sense of humor.
- It prefers to go into hiding for fear of danger.
- It lives in an environment of fear and will do anything to create it.
- It reminds you of things you did in the past so that you feel guilty and bad.
- It reminds you of things other people did to you in the past that hurt you.
- It will nag you about things in the future so that you feel worried and uncertain about tomorrow.

Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006) suggest that you can ensure that you don't operate from the animal brain by engaging the following two steps:

1. Realize you are operating from the animal brain.
2. Switch to your human brain.

They also suggest that if, for example, you realize you're being mean to someone; you switch and begin to show kindness. If you are being angry with a person, you can switch and begin to listen to his/her needs. They emphasize that no one can do it for you, you either choose to override the animal brain by switching on to the human brain or you let the animal brain dominate you by simply switching off the former, the choice is yours. Switching is a place where your external world (circumstances), meets with your internal world (your feelings and emotions). They argue that when you choose to switch to a positive attitude your entire world—both external and internal—will change.

## Animal Brain Igniters

Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006) suppose that if you are having any thoughts, feelings, or actions associated with the following words below, you are probably operating from the animal brain unawares:

Prideful	Frustrated	Judgmental	Greedy	Bored	Angry
Envious	Depressed	Worrying	Superior	Suspicious	Embarrassed
Lying	Arrogant	Jealous	Guilty	Cruel	Destructive
Cruel	Selfish	Resentful	Possessive	Critical	Uncertain

## The Human Brain

According to Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006), we as human beings have a human brain that surrounds the animal brain. This is what causes us to operate from love, acceptance, peace, and understanding. It's this brain that allows us to share, help a coworker, volunteer, and respect and honor other people. They maintain that the human brain is different from the animal brain because it operates not from the dark and low level fear and survival kind of life, but from a higher level. It is born in love, lives in love, and dies in love.

## "The Golden Rule" and the Human Brain

Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006) are of the view that whereas in the animal brain there are sides and positions to hold, in the human brain there is connectedness and the Golden rule: "Treat others as you would have them treat you." While the human animal is consumed with survival at any cost, the human being wants to love and be loved. They assert that the Golden Rule does not say "you have to believe in the same thing that I believe in" or "you have to have the same color of skin that I do" or "you have to come from the same land or have the same kind of education or history." In light of the Golden Rule principle, Jeff and Val maintain that whether you are a customer, coworker, spouse, son, daughter, parent, friend, or stranger, you want one main thing and that is love.

## Human Brain Igniters

Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006) are of the view that the following list of emotions, feelings, and actions can only be activated in the human brain. If any of the following words describe you then you are operating from the human brain as per their research.

Giving	Accepting	Truthful	Tolerant	Take action	Concerned
Reliable	Open	Optimistic	Purposeful	Considerate	Gentle
Trusting	Inspired	Thoughtful	Honest	Peaceful	Humorous
Helpful	Joyful	Patient	Generous	Modest	Encouraging
Warm	Loving	Appreciation			

## 13. Empirical Research

In a bid to garner a different perspective on the subject of attitude, I've also carried out my empirical studies by interviewing two executives who hold key positions in the service oriented organizations. I've chosen the hotel sector in my home country because that is where I worked for the most part before relocating to Sweden. One of the key people I've interviewed is Pauline Okello, the Director of Human Resources at the Sheraton Kampala Hotel in Uganda. This is one of the biggest and influential five star hotels in the country. I've also managed to contact James Kasavubu, the General Manager of Hotel Equatorial which is also another luxurious hotel in Kampala city.

The following is an account of the interview:

a. *Define the term attitude in your own words.*

Pauline defines attitude as follows:

“The term attitude means different things to different people, to me it refers to a mindset or judgment that an individual has made towards an object, a person or a thing whether good, bad or neutral which affects the way they think or feel towards that particular object. If it is a negative judgment, then it does not matter what the reality of the situation is, the object will be looked at by the individual in a negative light from the individual's perspective. A positive judgment or mindset will on the other hand make the individual to view the world with a positive outlook. Even a bad situation will be interpreted more as a challenge to be overcome than as an end in itself.”

In James' own words, he defines attitude as the mindset of someone/employee towards clients /people. The mindset can be positive or negative.

b. *Explain to what extent an employee's attitude can impact those around (in a given department) and the hotel at large.*

According to Pauline, a person with a negative attitude will always try to influence the other employees to look on the negative side of things, and will create pessimism in the team. For example, a salary increment should be a motivator and positive, but a person with a negative attitude will always find a reason to put it down and convince other workers to follow suit. An environment of negativity creates tension, distrust, suspiciousness and unhappiness. On the other hand a positive attitude, though it may also have its downside will provide a more warm, trustful, open and happy environment where workers can enjoy their work and reach their potential as they will not be afraid of challenges and will also be open to changes which is important as globalization has brought about rapid changes. The ability to adjust to situations quickly is important to survive in today's business world. Workers are more receptive to new ideas when they have trust and a positive attitude.

On the impact of an employee's attitude to those around, James maintains that good / positive attitude motivates people; you get good client response hence more sales. Positive attitude enables you to generate team spirit and hence more productivity at the work place among staff members. On the other hand, bad/poor attitude does the reverse.

- c. *Some people are of the view that attitude is not really necessary as long as an employee is competent at his/her job. Express your personal view on this notion.*

Pauline suggests that people are social animals and therefore there is no one person who lives on an island and does not need to interact with another person. An employee who is competent at his/her job would be more efficient if he/she has a positive attitude which is important for social interaction. Because of it, this employee will receive all the cooperation he/she needs from other employees to do his/her job well. While on the other hand, the employee with a negative attitude will therefore be less competent as a result of his attitude and will not be appreciated by other people, nor will he adapt to the situations easily. His competency will be compromised. Pauline asserts that attitude is therefore just as important as one's competency to be able to do a job well.

On the issue of the necessity of attitude in relation to employees' competence, James is of the view that it depends on the kind of work you are doing. If you are in customer service environment, this is the most important trait one must have, backed up with good skills. In the back office (back of the house), it might not be as vital but it is still needed in the inter-staff relationship. According to James, attitude will still determine whether one can go an extra mile to finish or accept new assignments.

- d. *As a leader, describe how you perceive the significant role that attitude can have on an individual employee or group of employees. Express your view on the subject of an employee maintaining a positive attitude.*

“An employee or group of employees whose views are not clouded by negativity work more efficiently, enjoy themselves and seek out opportunities for growth when it presents itself since they will be more open-minded,” explains Pauline. She believes that a negative person has no trust and does not see anything good in any situation, therefore misses out on opportunities. According to her, maintaining a positive attitude is important as we continuously face challenges on a daily basis.

James on the other hand argues that attitude can have a significant role in determining how employees take instructions and how fast they can be implemented. New changes are adapted faster by employees when their attitudes are good.

- e. *There are some employees with negative attitudes. Explain how you deal with such people with negative attitudes in your organization/hotel.*

Pauline: “We try to understand the source of their negativity and talk to them on individual basis to bring them out of their negative attitude. We try to point out how this negative attitude is affecting them by giving examples of behaviors or incidences that have occurred where the employees were involved and show how a continuation of such an attitude will affect their work and success in the organization and block their progress. We have excellent counseling sessions for employees which try to deal with employees with adjustment difficulties.”

Put in plain words, James suggests that employees with negative attitudes need training to realign their sick minds. Some of them need to be dealt with thorough disciplining too like suspensions or even terminations.

- f. *Is attitude only relevant in the guest contact areas or it should also be emphasized in the various departments at the hotel?*

According to Pauline, attitude is relevant in all areas of the hotel, including employees' home and social circles.

According to James, although attitude is important in other areas, he emphasizes that it is very important in guest contact areas.

- g. *Explain how the guest service agents at your hotel (especially those working in guest contact areas) are supposed to behave with regard to the subject of attitude.*

As explained under question 6 above, Pauline is of the view that positive attitude is important for both Front of the House as well as Back of the House employees. "In the hotel industry our business is about providing good service to guests, clean rooms, excellent food, drinks, etc., therefore for guest contact employees attitude is critical and of utmost importance," asserts Pauline. She says that a guest arrives after many miles of traveling, tired and in many cases in a bad mood. Thus the guest does not deserve to be received by someone who is grumpy, moody and has negative attitude. On the other hand, being at the back of the house requires interactions with various employees and other departments in order to carry out one's duties, and deliver the required service standard and attitude therefore is equally important.

Responding to the same question, James suggests that employees' attitude is important while welcoming guests and in solving / handling guest complaints.

- h. *What do you consider as the characteristics/indicators of a negative attitude in an employee?*

Pauline perceives negative attitude tendencies in an employee who happens to be angry all the time, grumpy, complaining, irritable, short tempered, suspicious, putting other people down by demeaning comments, always has a negative comment to give even in situations of happiness and excitement.

James suggests that some of the characteristics of a negative attitude may include body language, poor service delivery, too many guest complaints and loss of business and loss of return guests.

- i. *In your own words, describe your perception of an individual /employee with a positive attitude.*

Pauline describes an employee with a positive attitude as one who is warm, open-minded, at peace, his/her view of the world is optimistic, there is always hope, always looking for a positive side of any situation no matter how bad the situation is, good interpersonal skills,

relates well with others, cooperative, kind, looks for opportunities and is not afraid to take them.

James describes individuals with positive attitudes as being an asset in an organization. According to him, such employees are the secret of success of a given department and the hotel as a whole.

*j. Explain how management handles an employee with a negative attitude.*

According to Pauline, the management of Sheraton tries to help all employees to fit in the organization's culture, including those with negative attitudes through in-house training coupled with counseling. This provides a good avenue for employees with negative attitudes to adjust. Whereas most employees adjust quite well and develop positive attitudes with personal help, others may not adjust completely but make sufficient adjustment to enable them cope with the work environment.

According to James, such employees are trained; if they cannot change then they have to be fired.

*k. At times, some guests can really be complicated and challenging. How does management help the employees in handling such guests with negative attitudes especially those who work in guest contact areas?*

Pauline suggests that to recognize that the guest has a problem makes it easier for the employees to try and make the guests feel better. To have a negative attitude is quite tiring, rather than get annoyed, the employees try to understand the guests' situation and provide the comfort they need without taking offence.

According to James, management trains staff in handling challenging guests by:

- Being ready to listen and patient with the guests.
- Reassuring them that all shall be well.
- Following up and ensuring that the issue has been solved and the guest is satisfied.

*l. Describe the measures that might be taken in order to avert a negative attitude trend in an employee into a positive one.*

According to Pauline such measures include:

- Counseling sessions.
- In-house training programs that specifically target change of attitude.

In James' response, the measures include:

- Employees have to understand the hotel's Mission Statement.
- His /her role in contributing to the hotel's Mission Statement.
- Know who a client is.
- Different types of clients.

*m. Besides attitude, what are the other essential aspects that you consider necessary to make a successful employee?*

Pauline suggests that besides attitude an employee should have integrity, humility, trustworthiness, adaptability, achievement orientation, initiative, technical expertise, and communication skills among others.

In James' view point, an employee should have a good personality trait, presentable and industrious in order to be successful in his or her career.

## 14. My Attitude "U- Turn"

When I had just moved to Sweden, I spent most of my first years chasing my dream to continue my professional career of working with Sheraton hotel in the field of accounting. Prior to my departure from Uganda, I had been working at the Sheraton Kampala hotel as a Head Night Auditor. Well, upon this background, I thought it would be easier for me to get a job in any Sheraton overseas; after all it is an international hotel chain, I thought. Besides, my superior who was then the Regional Director of Finance in charge of East and Southern Africa Region had promised to give me a recommendation whenever I needed one. I was very optimistic and enthusiastic to get a job as soon as I arrived in Sweden particularly at any Sheraton hotel. In the meantime, I started learning the Swedish language because I had been informed that it was a prerequisite for someone to know the language. I was told that this would enhance my communication abilities in the Swedish community.

On the day I handed in my application letter and curriculum vitae to the then Sheraton Gothenburg Human Resource Manager, I was disappointed by her response. She informed me that it was unfortunate that they could not offer me any job owing to the fact that they were in a transition to transfer the hotel premises to the now Radisson SAS Scandinavian Hotel. As my chances of securing a job grew rather slim, the only remaining alternative was Sheraton Stockholm Hotel and when I attempted to forward my application to them, I was turned down there as well. My pursuit of working with Sheraton hotels was shattered and I eventually became very disappointed. It was tough for me to give up on that dream and I literally felt cheated when it didn't happen as I had anticipated. The last straw to break the camel's back was when I decided to forward my application to the new management of Radisson SAS Scandinavian Hotel in Gothenburg and I was rejected.

Consequently, I was devastated and began to figure out how I was going to support my family without a job. I personally did not like to depend on the social welfare system for survival. What made matters even worse were some people around me who started discouraging me that due to my background, it would not be possible to get any professional job in this



country. I became disappointed and began to feel sorry for myself as a result. I developed a pity-party and this eventually opened a door to a negative attitude as far as being employed was concerned.

In the days that followed, the resentment was revived whenever someone commented on my failure to get the job that I wanted. For quite some time, I fought this disappointment and state of discouragement. With each passing day, it became more apparent: My hopes had been thwarted. Things had not worked out the way I had anticipated. What made matters worse was that on one occasion I presented my curriculum vitae to a managing director of a small advertising company to work for him in the accounting department. Surprisingly, he responded by promising me a job later, on the condition that I had to study accounting at one of the Swedish universities. Finally, I made up my mind and decided to get rid of these negative feelings that were fostering in my mind with regard to the unemployment situation that I was experiencing. In light of Pauline's definition of a positive attitude, I made a positive judgment of the situation and I began to view it with a positive outlook. Even though it appeared as a bad situation initially, I eventually perceived it as a challenge to be overcome than as an end in itself. As per Keith Harrell (2003), I gradually began to change the way I thought about my state of affairs, which in turn changed my belief system because I began to believe that I can make it. This eventually affected my actions as I began to pursue my goal where education was concerned. This has indeed affected my life and destiny with the passage of time.

I discovered a way to embrace this major change and start focusing on being positive instead. I began to look at this challenge as a temporary setback which was not my personal fault at all. His turning me down was an eye-opener for me and in the process of readjusting my strategies, I embarked on a journey to further my studies at the university. This was a pivotal point in my life and from that moment forward, I decided to develop and cultivate a positive attitude that one day when I complete my studies, I will be able to get the professional job that I want. Through the years I've learnt to look at my setbacks in a new light with a positive approach. Although I haven't arrived yet, I'm glad I'm on my way and I'm very optimistic that I'll one day achieve my goal. Incidentally, in order for me to continue studying at the university, one of the prerequisites was to study Swedish as a second language level B (SAS B), which I did together with a few other fundamental subjects.

In essence, my decision pertaining to my career rhymes with Harrell's argument that although we cannot control the circumstances that befall us, we can decide to choose how we respond to those circumstances. I chose to be influenced by what was going on within me at the time, instead of being influenced by what was going on around me. Within me was a decision to make a u-turn where my attitude was concerned regarding my situation. While definite disappointment was round about me, I resolved that I could improve upon my circumstances by improving on the way I respond to them.

As I enveloped myself in this positive attitude, I began to shun people with a negative mentality. I was aware of the fact that negative attitudes catch faster than positive attitudes. Such people used to maintain that it was impossible for me to get my dream job here in Sweden. Nonetheless, I strongly believe and I'm even convinced that I'll one day prove them wrong. After fulfilling the requirements for applying at the university, I submitted in my application and to my surprise; I was accepted at four different universities. These were; the University College of Borås, Halmstad University, the University of Skövde and Mälardalen University in Västerås. I decided to take up the offer from Mälardalen University because I

was attracted to the Analytical Finance program which was offered in English. However, owing to the fact that the university was farther away from my family in Gothenburg, I decided to relocate to a nearby university.

Finally, In 2004 I applied for the Business and Informatics program which I had been offered a year earlier at the University College of Borås. I opted for a four years masters program which is soon to be completed this year. I've been literally captivated by the University College motto which is "Science for the professions". On the school's website, it is written, "*Science for professions* is a motto here at the university college of Borås. We provide a number of exciting educational programmes and research. On top of that, our students enter the work market soon upon graduation." I personally believe these statements to be true and not an exaggeration. This is so because a number of my colleagues have been employed directly by various organizations after completion, especially those within my program.

However, it is worth mentioning at this juncture that the journey has not been smooth sailing. I've experienced some highs and lows along the way. For instance, at the very start, we were a total of about 80 students who were admitted to the program. However, as the program proved challenging especially with the courses in programming, by the end of the second year we had dwindled to almost half of the class. Whereas some students gave up their studies and quit completely, others decided to change to other programs where they preferred to pursue their future careers. Although the going has not been easy for me either, courage, focus, determination, and a positive attitude have contributed a great deal in my educational accomplishments to date. When things proved challenging, I resolved that quitting was not going to be an option for me. Consequently, I resorted to hard work and determination. I made up my mind that no matter what, I'll one day be able to attain my goal regardless of the circumstances. As a result, I've actually been an example and an inspiration among my colleagues. They've come to realize that if I can make it, they can make it too.

## Your Positive Attitude—an Inspiration to Those around You

I'm persuaded that your positive attitude can at times play an inspirational role in the lives of those around you. This is so because people are more observant at what you do and how you conduct yourself overtime. I'm humbled by a number of individuals who, having watched me for a while, have been inspired by my decisions. Thus, I agree with John C. Maxwell (2003) that positive attitude compounds to those around you. Some people who have seen my tenacity and commitment to my studies have been inspired and as a result they have also decided to further their studies in different disciplines.

While explaining the impact of an employee's attitude on those around, Pauline described the consequences of a negative attitude to a team and the advantages of a positive attitude. She expressed a tolerant approach they utilize in dealing with employees with negative attitudes. I consider this to be a good and flexible approach because I believe that there is always hope as long as someone is given the opportunity for improvement.

James on the other hand, expressed the magnitude of a positive attitude and how a negative attitude can meddle with the profitability of the organization. His response to employees with negative attitudes was that they are trained; if they cannot change then they have to be fired. This expresses the seriousness of maintaining a positive attitude and it leaves no room for

tolerating people with negative attitudes. This lets us know the dire consequences of a negative attitude which can even cost someone's job if the worse comes to the worst.

## Paying Attention to Your Attitude

Attention is probably one of the most important gifts that a person can possess. I believe that in order for one to be good at anything, you need to start by paying attention to it. In his book, *The Principles of Successful Manifesting*, Thomas Herold (2006) defines attention as being derived from the Latin root word *attendere*, which means “to turn one's mind toward”—to turn one's mind or perhaps one's senses; the act or state of applying the mind to an object or sense or thought. In essence, it refers to the act of withdrawing from some things and giving consideration to others that you regard as important to you.

In my own experience, I've come to realize that paying attention to your attitude is a springboard to making an attitude adjustment. This may help you in diving into cultivating a positive attitude in any given environment that you might fight yourself. Just like a farmer cultivates his crops by weeding out the unwanted weeds to enhance proper growth, the term “cultivating” is used in this context to imply that at times it is not going to be easy and you have to go against your stubborn feelings in dealing with your negative attitude. As humans, our decisions to pay attention to a given thing have the ability to affect us in a number of ways. For instance, the only thing that we choose to pay attention to is what seems real to us. Whereas whatever we choose to ignore, regardless of its importance, seems rather irrelevant to us. Over the years, I've come to realize that learning to master and control my attention towards my attitude has given me the freedom to choose what happens in my life. For the most part, you are the architect of your own life because you can influence what happens in your future by the decisions you make now.

In an attempt to achieve any significant goal in life, there will be some resistance to overcome along the way as you endeavor to override your negative attitudes. Although there may be numerous things taking place in my sphere of influence, as long as I choose not to direct my attention to them, they won't have any significant impact on my life. That's why I believe that you are the architect of what really happens in your own life. Even if you do not have the power to decide and dictate the circumstances around you, you have the ability inside you to decide how to respond to whatever the circumstance. Someone once said, “You may not stop the birds from flying over your head but you can sure stop them from building a nest in your hair.” Likewise, although we may not stop negative thoughts from visiting our minds from time to time, we sure have the ability to either choose to dwell on them or to deliberately choose not to “feed” them.

## 15. Lessons from My Father on Attitude

I've personally come along way on the subject of attitude and although I don't claim by no means to have arrived, I'm glad to say that I've left and I'm on my way. On my journey on the subject of cultivating a positive attitude, there is no better example that I can give than that of my late father, John Baptist Kasabo (1923-2005). I grew up living with my parents until my early teenage years. One of the most precious things that I learnt from my dad was that he

was a forgiver and always maintained a positive attitude. He never held any grudge over any one as far as I can remember.

Of course, we all get disappointed and we may disagree over issues in life whether at home with any of our family members, at school with our fellow classmates or schoolmates, at work with a fellow employee, or even with a neighbor or a friend. We basically live with people and I'm convinced that we need each other in one way or the other in order to succeed in life. I'm a firm believer that no man is an island. You may wonder, what does this have to do with attitude, anyway? Well, I believe that learning to live harmoniously will require us to learn the importance of having a positive attitude among other things. During my father's life career, he held managerial positions for over 34 years until he retired. So he was an experienced person where dealing with people was concerned and their attitudes.

I totally agree with Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006) with their deductions pertaining to the animal brain as it relates to entertaining a negative attitude. Among other things, they believe that it reminds you of things you did in the past so that you feel guilty and bad. It can also remind you of things other people did to you in the past that hurt you. My father was totally the opposite of these negative attitude definitions. He had trained himself to switch on the human brain although he never read Jeff and Val Gee's book on how to make a switch. Once he was displeased over something, he could call you and address the issue openly with you. Then once that issue was dealt with, he would never again bring it back. He was indeed a man with a positive attitude. Negative people give up so easily and they find it hard to be courageous at anything. He was a tolerant and courageous person.

As I ponder over his positive approach to life's challenges, I remember vividly when we experienced a civil war in Uganda in the 1980's. During this period, we lost a lot of our possessions as we ran for our lives and moved to relatively secure areas. Under the circumstances, we fled to another home in the countryside and left our home that was situated in a suburb of Kampala City. As we pondered over our stolen furniture among other possessions, dad's reaction was rather different. He said, "Of course I'm concerned about the loss of some of our treasured belongings during this war. However, in all this we need to thank God that we are still alive and we can always work and replace what we have lost. Let us be honest and consider those people whose livestock and farms have been totally destroyed because of the civil war."

"By the way", he continued "worse still, there are those who have lost their loved ones during this war. Therefore, we need to stop grumbling over things and instead focus on the fact that we are all still alive. Let us therefore consider what we have lost as part of the loss caused by this civil war. Thank God the war is over now and we have the opportunity to work and replace that which we have lost during the course of the war. As long as we are still alive, that is the greatest gift of all."

No matter the challenges, his response to them was always with a deliberate positive attitude. He lived a happy and stress-free life as a matter of choice. I rarely saw my dad depressed and he was indeed a mentor and a life-lesson for me on the subject of possessing a positive attitude.

The Golden rule: "Treat others as you would have them treat you" discussed by Jeff Ghee and his counterpart Val Ghee (2006) has been something that I saw my father practice from time to time. He was a forgiver regardless of what any one did to him or failed to do for him. This was a great lesson for me.

## 16. My Personal Experience on Attitude

While cultivating a positive attitude, I've come to realize that giving up is not an option if you want to achieve anything significant in life. Whether it is a goal of being a committed employee, a successful student, a good husband and father, a successful entrepreneur and so on and so forth, you have to choose to be committed to pursuing your cause never to give up, no matter what. With regard to my education pursuits, it has been quite an adventurous journey coupled with some hurdles along the way. One of the first challenges to me was to study in the Swedish language. It was not easy for me yet I never gave up on it. My policy has always been that when I start on something, I want to go with it all the way to the end despite of the bumps and humps along the way. You should never stop until you reach your destination. You also need to cultivate patience in the process of pursuing your goal.

I suggest that part of dealing with stress is developing a positive attitude. You may argue that what does an attitude of a private life of an employee has to do with his career and how can it impact his relationship with his fellow employees and the organization at large. Although a person can play different roles in his life, for instance, a father at home, a student, a manager at work, a member of a given cultural organization, I believe that he is still the same person who should have control over his attitude. Over the years, I've observed negative people in most cases to be stressful people.

In retrospect, I recall the period when I was supposed to work night shift as a night auditor while at the Sheraton hotel which was rather challenging for me. Working night shifts is not easy because you tend to sleep during the day in order to be active and awake at night. It was quite hard for me to sleep for five uninterrupted consecutive hours. If one is not careful, it is very easy to develop a negative attitude through grumbling and telling everybody how hard it is. In fact, for some reason, my colleagues used to call it an awkward shift.

Through experience, I agree with Dr. Zimmerman while reflecting on his suggestion that, excuses, fear, pain avoidance, bad habits, and lack of goals, among others, are some of the ways through which negativity may have infiltrated one's life or may be getting in the way of one's success. If I had concentrated on giving excuses as to how working night is such an awkward shift which drains someone, I would have developed a negative attitude culminating in quitting the job and searching for another job where I would work day. Conversely, this would have hindered my chances of being promoted to the position of the head night auditor in charge of other night auditors. Through experience, I've learnt that avoiding pain seems to be a quick alternative but as far as I'm concerned, pain averters do not achieve much.

One of the things that help me in adjusting my attitude especially when dealing with offence is applying the Golden rule. Being easily offended opens a door to negative attitudes. Regardless who we are, all of us have opportunities to be offended by our loved ones, co-workers or even people around us at any given moment in time. No one is exempted from dealing with offence. Therefore, how you and I choose to react to offence is what makes the difference. Since we all want to be forgiven and loved when we fall short of other people's expectations, forgiveness is what we need to offer those who fail us or annoy us in various ways.

It is possible to be offended by what someone has said or has failed to say, by what someone has done or has failed to do, by someone failing to meet your expectations, by a cynical look, and so on and so forth. You can either choose to dwell on the hurt and nurse the pain of that unpleasant incident, hence opening a door to negative feelings, or you can let it go and get over it. In other words, forgive the person and let go of the hurt feelings and emotions. Notice I didn't say that it is going to be easy; but it is possible. The choice is yours! I've tried both but I prefer the latter to the former because it makes you feel lighter and it cultivates a positive attitude in you. You may say, "But William you don't know what that person did to me." Well the truth is that I may not know the gravity of the hurt and pain and I'm not in any way trying to make light of it. However, the truth of the matter is entertaining bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness opens a door to negativity and it is devastating in the long run. There is nothing exciting about its consequences!

I remember this one Sunday evening when we had spent a wonderful summertime together with my family. This included eating ice cream and taking photos. Being one of my hobbies, photo taking had compelled me earlier on to acquire a slim portable Samsung digital camera. I had come to appreciate its output ever since I laid hold of it. Well, on arrival that evening I requested my daughter to take some snapshots as we paused with the baby, all smiles! Then suddenly, after taking the photo, she accidentally dropped the digital camera on the concrete floor and the battery went flying. You could tell by now that my smile was wiped off my face in moments that followed. Gazing in awe, my daughter looked at me wondering what next!

As I picked up the camera and the battery my mind was racing by this time and I had to control myself and make a quick choice. I had to choose from two alternatives either to scream at my daughter or to slowdown and forgive her. Choosing the latter, I eventually told her to be careful next time as I decided to forgive her and let go. Even though the camera had cracked open and it had some scratches, I later fixed it so that it was working properly thereafter. But supposing it had all been spoiled, could yelling at my daughter change the condition of the camera at all? I bet not. Notice that we all have a variety of unpleasant experiences where we have to constantly decide to face such situations and let go. In the above scenario, I immediately made a switch on my human brain and I did this on purpose to avoid fostering a negative attitude through the avenue of bitterness and resentment towards my daughter.

When I requested her to take another photo the following day as I held the baby in my arms, she looked a bit scared. I told her, "Forget about yesterday. Hold the camera carefully by the string and take the photo." Consequently, she was relaxed as she helped me take the photo that I wanted. From this incident I realized that we all need each other especially our loved ones. Grasping this helps us to learn to be more tolerant and forgiving to our family members, our fellow employees, and even those around us because we are going to need their assistance later. Over the years, I've come to appreciate the fact that we need to learn the skills of getting along with people because you cannot succeed without people. It's all about attitude adjustment.

## **The Impact of Goal-Setting on My Attitude**

Dr. Zimmerman (2006) argues that negative attitudes have the possibility of holding back someone from setting goals. According to him, there is a clear connection between setting

goals and higher achievement. By writing down goals, it helps give one's mind something to focus on which in turn enables the mind to go to work in achieving them. I agree with him on this note because goal-setting has helped me personally in shaping my mind towards positive attitude on one hand while dealing with the negative attitude on the other. Of course, achieving my goals has not been easy and chances of discouragement are unavoidable. For instance, commuting to Borås from Gothenburg every week—Monday to Friday— has been quite a challenge to me. I remember vividly when I had just started the program in 2004, the year 2008 seemed farfetched!

I've learnt through the years that once you decide to achieve a given goal, you don't really need to figure out all the details as to how it is going to happen. Setting milestones and taking one step at a time has enabled me to stay calm, on course and focused even in the midst of discouragement. In fact, students in the various project groups at the university have actually wondered as to how I have always been stress-free even amidst tense situations. Well, I have endeavored to avoid stressful situations in my attempt to maintain a positive attitude because I know the side-effects of stress. I believe that stress and negative attitude are closely related. I also believe that stress is rather contagious if not dealt with. This reminds me of an interesting account during a lecture in management. Having observed me for a while, one of the students had this to say, "I have closely watched William for over three years and have never seen him stressed." "William you are always calm and smiling and I wish I was born like you." She exclaimed! Well, the truth of the matter is, I was not born like that at all. This is something that I've had to cultivate and develop over a period of time. I'm also convinced that anybody can do it. Nonetheless, it is not always easy as we all have a lot of opportunities to be stressed, take offense and maintain a negative attitude yet with determination we all have the ability to make the necessary adjustments.

I'm actually convinced that avoiding yielding to stress and cultivating a positive attitude are choices we all have to make on purpose. Our bodies were not designed to handle stress that's why if we are not careful we can easily burn-out.

For instance, looking at the "big picture" of completing my studies has helped me to adjust my attitude on the difficult subjects so that I've had to work hard to complete them. Always putting what I refer to as the "big picture" before me, coupled with dedication and commitment to achieving my goal has actually helped me to stay focused. Another thing that has helped me to stay optimistic is the fact that despite of the challenges, no situation is permanent. In other words, whatever has a beginning must have an end as well.

According to Dr. Zimmerman, people with negative attitudes tend to avoid pain. I agree with him on this matter. I believe that such people tend to dislike anything that encroaches on their comfort zone. The problem with avoiding pain is that it blocks one's ability from achieving anything significant in life. The notion "no pain without gain" fits well in this context. This does not mean that we need to suffer physical pain in order for us to be able to achieve anything significant in life. Pain can be experienced in various forms. For instance, having to sacrifice your leisure time in order to fulfill something significant can be rather uncomfortable. As for me, I've had to sacrifice my summertime in a bid to complete my thesis and this has not been so exciting on my behalf. My goal here has been to complete my thesis which is a gain. However, I've had to sacrifice spending time with my family and friends which I consider to be a temporal pain in this context.

According to Zimmerman, lack of goals leads to lack of wisdom. Hence those who lack goals will spend most of their time on activities that are tension relieving other than goal achieving. He suggests that if you want to be wildly successful, it is imperative to get rid of negative attitudes and engage in setting goals.

In light of negative attitudes, he attests to the fact that most people do fail in life because they don't think the thoughts and do the things that will change their circumstances. As for me, I refuse to be a failure in life so I constantly make deliberate adjustments in my thought patterns and embark on thinking about what is positive instead.

## Attitude's Influence on a Product or an Organization Image

One summer morning as I was checking the oil level of our car, I happened to engage in a casual conversation with a certain gentleman who was waiting for his wife in the parking lot in our residential area. This elderly gentleman, who seemed to be interested in automobiles, had parked his Audi A6 besides our car. He proceeded to open the front of his car so I could see its engine and how he checks his oil level. I was fascinated at how this car's engine was protected because it was my first time to have a glance at it. I asked him how long he had been in possession of this Audi because it was in such a very good condition. "A couple of years", he responded. He went on to say, "after driving a number of other car models, I'm finally satisfied with this Audi because I've had it for a while." He continued to say, "As far as I'm concerned, Audi is in the Mercedes Benz category and it is a durable and comfortable vehicle."

As the conversation continued, I responded to him how I'm interested in the Volvo SUV in case I'm planning to buy an SUV in the future. He was quick to respond by saying, "not Volvo, I don't recommend you to buy any Volvo car, young man." "Why shouldn't I?" I asked in amazement! He said, "You see, I'm now in my pension years and I have been working for the Volvo Company for over 35 years. Most of the current Volvo models are not reliable because they breakdown a lot. Those cars are so full of electronics and once the car breaks down you have to tow it to the Volvo dealership because you can't do a thing to fix it. They have to put it on the computer to locate where the problem is. This can be an expensive venture." From this conversation it was without a doubt that this gentleman was biased with Volvo cars to the extent that he would not recommend them to anyone. This is an example of how a given brand name can receive a negative image to those outside the organization. As a matter of fact, I gradually began to lose interest in the Volvo cars because I don't want to go through such a hustle of owning a car that breaks down very often. In other words, after that lengthy conversation about the disadvantages associated with a number of modern Volvo cars, I began to develop a negative attitude towards that brand of cars and it might take a while for me to be convinced otherwise.

In retrospect, through my personal experience, I agree with John Maxwell (2003) when he argues in his book *Attitude 101* that you can be sure of this one thing that attitude is catching. I was literally swayed by the negative attitude that this gentleman had on the Volvo cars despite of the fact that he had been an employee in Volvo Cars Corporation for a relatively long period of time. I'm no longer interested in the modern Volvo cars as I used to be simply because of a change of attitude.



## 17. The Role of Attitude in leadership

Leadership is such an extensive subject to deal with and leaders in today's competitive business world are faced with a number of challenges in an attempt to establish a relatively 'good-enough' leadership style for their respective organizations. The phrase 'good-enough' is used in this context to refer to a leadership approach that avoids the extremes but rather embraces a balanced approach pertaining to management and the organization. By extreme, I mean that one does not claim a given method or style of leadership to be superior above all the rest thereby making the already existing ones appear to be inferior and inappropriate as this will tend towards absolutism.

In my opinion, the assumption that effective leadership is a result of special training is a myth. This is the belief that leaders are produced through special educational courses and training. It should be noted that there is nothing wrong with someone undergoing some form of educational training in the field of leadership. It is vitally important to note that true and effective leadership is not a technique, a method, a style or the acquisition of skills in the field of leadership. It is rather the manifestation of an attitude based on the knowledge of who you were born to be – your purpose. I think that your attitude about yourself has a tremendous impact on your daily life and whether you fulfill your central life purpose.

Among other things, I suppose that attitude is one of the essential aspects that need our attention in our attempt to ensure effective leadership in any sphere of influence, be it at home, in an organization, at school, in the sports arena and so on and so forth. Nevertheless, I'm not stressing attitude to be considered the one and only principle thing that ensures effective leadership. It is just one among other elements that when applied can lead to what I prefer to call a balanced way in the leadership arena.

I presume that attitude can to a certain extent be associated to some of the common problems that may weaken the effectiveness of teamwork in an organization. I suppose that negative attitudes have a way of being contagious by spreading faster than good attitudes. If I may use the analogy of the basket of apples in relation to negative attitudes, one rotten apple left unattended to, may eventually affect the rest of the apples by making them rotten too. Of course I'm not suggesting that an employee with a stinking attitude should be gotten rid of but rather find a better approach of dealing with such a person. This is so because I believe that there is always room for improvement and anyone can become better in any area if that person decides to do so. Of course people are people and we should not be surprised when they make mistakes. I'm not advocating that people's mistakes and negative attitudes should not be ignored. Such mistakes and negativity can always be confronted in a non-critical approach giving a person room for improvement. However, such a person should not be ignored hoping that things will automatically get better in the sweet by and by.

There is a possibility of adopting attitudes that can help a leader to keep on going to the next level in his or her career. Owing to the fact that attitude is a contagious phenomenon; it is probably every leader's desire that their team is catching the right one.

With reference to the animal brain igniters forwarded by Jeff Gee and Val Gee (2006), I have personally encountered negative people to be judgmental and critical about everybody else around them. They are quick to identify mistakes and what should be done but they are not practical. In other words, they are hesitant to take action because they fear to take risks. They are never sociable people and they tend to isolate themselves from others for fear of being hurt. They tend to have no genuine friends because they are ever suspicious about being hurt.

Their negative attitudes elude them from being grateful for other peoples' achievements and they ultimately end up being lonely, sour and depressed. They always find it difficult to realize any mistake with them because they are always right. This implies that they are very hard and complicated to help as they are not apt to teach and correct. As far as I'm concerned, there is nothing exciting about maintaining a negative attitude that's why I opt for cultivating a positive attitude.

Attitude can make or break you and the people you lead. It should be noted that although good attitudes on any given leadership team do not guarantee its success in its organizational endeavors, bad attitudes have the ability to mess up the leadership team in question. There is a possibility of adopting attitudes that can help a leader to keep on going to the next level in his or her career. Owing to the fact that attitude is a contagious phenomenon; it is probably every leader's desire that their team is catching the right one.

As a leader, it is not possible for you to keep on ignoring the various attitudes of the people you lead and expect to achieve success automatically. In light of the influence of attitude on team work according to John Maxwell (2003), I believe that attitude can make or break you and the people you lead. It should be established that although good attitudes on any given leadership team do not guarantee its success in its organizational endeavors, bad attitudes—left unattended to—have the ability to mess up the leadership team in question. It is worth noting therefore that there are no shortcuts; everyone reaps what he/she sows whether good or bad.

I believe that true leaders are distinguished by a unique mental attitude that springs from an internalized discovery of self, which in turn creates a strong positive and confident self-concept and self-worth. Attitude has the ability to influence the entire life of a leader and it can control his or her response to life, danger, crises, disappointments, failures, challenges, and stress.

## 18. The Sheraton Experience—Case Study

Several years ago, I had an opportunity of working at the Sheraton Hotel in Kampala, Uganda where the aspect of employees' attitude was something that was given special attention because everything at the hotel was geared to customer satisfaction. The customer was treated as a king and among other things; customer satisfaction was viewed as having an impetus on the profitability of the hotel. At Sheraton it was believed that a disgruntled customer could ultimately cause the hotel to lose business by discouraging the prospective customers from not coming to that hotel in the future.

### *The Sheraton Guest Satisfaction System (SGSS)*

The Sheraton Kampala Hotel's mission statement was derived from the following ITT Sheraton mission statement which states that “ At ITT Sheraton, we are committed to becoming the number one hospitality company in the world by attracting and retaining the best employees, and by providing total customer satisfaction in order to increase long-term profits and value for our owners and ITT.”

In pursuit of the above, a number of rules were to be observed by the employees in what was referred to as the Sheraton Guest Satisfaction System with the help of the ‘moment of truth approach’.

A moment of truth is any episode in which the customer comes into contact with any aspect of the organization and gets an impression of the quality of its service.

## Moments of Truth

Rule 1:

Greet and welcome the guest immediately;

- Have eye contact.
- Use the guest’s name.
- Answer phone within 3 rings.
- Do not delay first contact.

Rule 2:

Give the guest your total attention;

- Show the guest he/she is your #1 priority.
- Use TLC listening skills and empathy (TLC - Two way, Listening with focus, Clarify and confirm).
- Concentrate/ pay attention.
- Do not service two guests at one time.

Rule 3:

Make the first 30 seconds valuable;

- Make each situation special.
- Encourage the guest to express his/ her feelings and needs.

Rule 4:

Be natural;

- Let your true warmth come through.
- Avoid robot impression. Be your unique self.
- Avoid stiffness and an “air of superiority”.

Rule 5:

Be enthusiastic and cordial;

- Sometimes your voice is the only tool you have to make a good impression.
- Use positive, welcoming body language.
- Live in the “now”! Each guest contact is a new one.

Rule 6:

Be the guest’s advocate/ representative;

- Make the guest’s problem your own.
- Apologize.
- Take personal responsibility to solve the problem.
- Get back to the guest to confirm the solution.

Rule 7:

Use common sense and think for yourself:

- Think beyond limits of habit/ tradition.
- Look for new ways of doing things.
- Think “and”, not “but”.
- Discuss with your supervisor any rules/ policies which hinder guest service and reach consensus with your team on innovative solutions.

Rule 8:

Make the last 30 seconds valuable;

- Thank the guest for coming to the hotel.
- Stress that we want him/ her to return.

Rule 9:

Take good care of yourself;

- Get enough sleep to maintain the high level of energy you need for the job.
- Eat healthy foods and don’t poison your system with unhealthy foods, nicotine or other drugs.
- Keep a healthy, positive mental attitude and avoid being susceptible to the influence of other people’s negativity.

Dealing with challenging situations requires using the customer interaction cycle in its entirety to turn a dissatisfied customer into a satisfied one. Particular emphasis should be

placed on the Understanding and Helping stages. It is important to be focused, personable, and sincere, and to keep in mind that the customer's strong language or angry words are not intended to be perceived as a personal attack. Focus on the customer. Deal with the customer first by making the customer feel listened to and understood. Then fix the problem.

In using the cycle in challenging situations, begin by *Receiving* the customer in a way that communicates a positive attitude through verbal and nonverbal language.

The *Understanding* stage communicates to the customer that you know how she or he is feeling. Showing empathy is especially important when the customer is upset or irate. The words you use calm the customer and move the conversation in a positive direction. Your use of the understanding skills makes a critical difference in whether makes a critical difference in whether a dissatisfied external customer will become a loyal customer, and whether a difficult internal customer will work and cooperate with you in future interactions.

Know what to do to a complaining customer

- Listen to customer.

Do not just let the customer talk, really listen. The customer may have a valid point and is just presenting it inappropriately. Try not to interrupt and if the complaint is not too loud, let the customer run out of steam. Do not trivialize the problem.

- Remain calm and pleasant.

Speak softly and directly. Do not add fuel to the customer's fire by becoming excited, matching wits or trying to get the upper hand. Control the situation by controlling yourself. It is very difficult for irate customers to play their game when the opposition refuses to play.

- Do not take any remarks or behavior personally.

Try to get the heart of the matter by leaving personalities or traits out of the picture, what is the issue? If you maintain your professionalism you will not lose your dignity and you will look very good in the eyes of others. You will also have a good laugh about it sometime later in the employee cafeteria.

- Solve the problem.

Solve the problem or at least make an attempt. Get a supervisor if one is needed or contact someone who can help. Do not pass the buck by sending the customer on a *wild goose chase*. Your goal is to solve the problem quickly and directly. Remember that customers often do not often know your organizations' set up and may be frustrated because they simply don't know where to turn for help.

- Apologize and thank the customer.

Thank the customer for bringing the matter to your attention even if you did not cause the problem. Acknowledgement is a powerful tool for disarming aggression.

*(Adapted from hospitality by Jonathan Scott)*

In real life experiences, challenging situations are part of life implying that a leader will face issues one way or the other in his or her leadership career. I think that challenges have a way of tainting peoples' attitudes and a leader must be prepared to handle such situations as they arise without resorting to panic and frustration.

Challenges should not come as a surprise to any leader that is why it is important to be prepared to face any eventualities with courage and patience. For instance, at times we were faced with system breakdowns and we had to do manual postings which required a lot of perseverance because it affected the smooth running of the hotel operations.

The challenges I faced helped me to practically learn how to yield to flexibility, courageousness, being understanding, team work, humility, discipline to being focused on the big picture; that is to say, the ultimate goal. At Sheraton we treated everyone as being special with a high degree of understanding and with a level of personal service. We worked towards cultivating meaningful connections with our guests and with one another. In general, being in charge of the night audit helped me to learn first hand and it had an impact on developing my leadership potential.

In his book, *contingency, irony, and solidarity*, Rorty (1989) suggests that the world does not speak. The world can once we have programmed ourselves with a language, cause us to hold beliefs. But it cannot propose a language for us to speak. Only other human beings can do that. The realization that the world does not tell us what language games to play should not, however, lead us to say that a decision about which to play is arbitrary, not to say that it is the expression of something deep within us. Europe did not *decide* to accept the idioms of Romantic poetry, or of socialist politics, or of a Galilean mechanics. That sort of shift was no more an act of will than it was a result of argument. Rather, Europe gradually lost the habit of using certain words and gradually acquired the habit of using others.

With reference to Rorty's argument above, the language of attitude that has been spoken at the Sheraton overtime has in a way tended to influence the Sheraton management to hold on to positive attitude beliefs thereby shaping the guest satisfaction system culture. Addressed closely, it tends towards metaphysics and being rather rational in their approach. This may lead to getting stark in a particular way of thinking by insisting on a certain way of doing things. I reckon that Sheraton management should gradually adjust from being too tight on their rules pertaining to maintaining a positive attitude towards guests to becoming more flexible and considering other alternatives as well since the world is changing and what was applicable several years ago might not be very effective by now. They should gradually distance themselves from that already established culture by not totally discarding it but by rather being open to embrace other more flexible vocabularies that are subject to being re-defined as time goes by.

Truth can be envisaged through our awareness or consciousness about the way things appear in the real world. This truth can be designed or created with the help of a language that we choose to speak. Leadership can be seen as one of the ways we learn to take responsibility in designing the truth. This will help us get freed from the so-called negative freedom where one finds himself or herself in an environment where he or she has no awareness of the truth concerning a given situation. In a philosophical context, it is imperative to view language as a symbol for reality and the description of that reality.

Leadership is about how we can speak with the help of a new language and it also shows how the truth can be constructed or created. It should be noted that it costs to create or construct

the truth in any field in life and there has to be someone who is willing to pay the price of what it takes to construct that truth. It is also important to note that contingency plays a big role during in the construction of a given vocabulary.

The different environments that we find ourselves in have colored or shaped us. The contingency of language can be used to help construct the truth. However, it is important for someone to understand how something is constructed in order for you to be able to change it, hence writing another language. In other words, it is vitally important for someone to understand the old language before embarking on rewriting that language or simply put, creating a new language.

Leadership is about self discovery or self awareness. To be an effective leader, one has to avoid the temptation of being prone to insisting over issues because this will cause him or her to be stark in his or her own way of thinking. This can also hinder creativity since it does not enhance flexibility and it has a tendency of looking at the world with a limited perspective.

In my estimation, although it is reasonable to consider the impact of attitude on leadership today, I presume that Sheraton should be careful not to regard attitude as a paramount factor in achieving customer satisfaction and in turn increase profitability. It should not be viewed as the foremost solution in achieving effective leadership. From an ironist stand point, I have some continuing doubts about the way Sheraton treats attitude as a final vocabulary in light of the fact that we live in an ever changing world.

Attitude alone can be seen as a statement or sentence in what might be referred to as a leadership vocabulary. It's worth noting that there is a combination of vocabularies that can be mixed with attitude in a bid to yield to customer satisfaction and effective leadership. In my opinion, Sheraton seems to treat attitude as the adequate truth so they went as far as laying down what I consider to be stringent rules. The Sheraton guest satisfaction system gives an impression that once it is adhered to, then customer satisfaction is guaranteed hence in turn leading to profit maximization. However, it should be noted that it is not easy when we turn from individual sentences to vocabularies as wholes.

In my own observation, a closer look at the above rules that have to be observed by the Sheraton staff creates an atmosphere that can hinder creativity on the side of the employees. This is so, because the employee might feel that they have to perform a certain way that is in line with the rules. This will also force them to be more mechanical by wearing a mask before the guests which in turn hinders the creativity that goes along with someone being real while solving a given problem without going to the extremes. I believe that it is possible to re-describe the attitude-rule approach by making it rather flexible for the employees to not following the rules strictly. Following a given criterion tends towards being rational and taking the criteria to be rather the absolute truth. Rules and regulations also may propel the employees towards a hierarchical organizational setting which if not properly handled might lead to bureaucracy in the leadership system. I reckon that bureaucracy in itself can breed delays in the delivery on the required services thereby affecting customer satisfaction.

By this, I'm not advocating against organisations setting up rules and regulations because they are essential guidelines to be followed in order to ensure order otherwise without such, confusion is inevitable in a given environment as people might not assume responsibility for their actions. However, becoming so inclined to employees following strictly a given set of

rules and regulations might only make matters worse by creating more loopholes in the organization instead. There is a tendency of people building an invisible resistance to a system that is so strict on adhering to a given policy. I presume that the more stringent the policy is, the more vulnerable the employees are in breaking that policy. That's why I'm suggesting that finding a balance vital because besides attitude, there are a number of pieces that make up a puzzle as far as progress of an organization is concerned.

A case in point is, much as the employees at the Sheraton were supposed to put up a good self image in all the guest contact areas, there were internal pressures that were mounting due to employees' dissatisfaction. Among other things, most of the Sheraton employees were dissatisfied concerning their remunerations in comparison to other employees in the same branch despite the fact that it was a profitable five star hotel. This indeed was a challenge to the hotel management because it culminated into a strike that literally paralysed the hotel operations which was indeed a tragic drama. Through a romantic approach, the personnel department attempted to calm down the angry employees by promising them a percentage increase in the salary. The management was finally successful in convincing the staff to go back to work but this affected their attitude and hence their productivity.

Handling a discontented customer can be rather tricky in reality. There are some customers that are just complicated even though the staff will go through the above prescribed steps on how to deal with such a person. In my view, treating the customer as always being right and as a king can generate its own shortcomings in that some customers might be pampered by the system so that they walk all over everybody and refuse to take personal responsibility for their actions. I reckon that a balance has to be found in this regard thereby encouraging the employees to be good enough.

I also believe that instead of being so strict with following the above mentioned rules on maintaining a positive attitude by the employees towards the guests, the employees need to be empowered by the management to make some decisions as this will create more confidence and creativity on the side on the employees. It should be noted that bureaucracy in a system may hinder employee empowerment which in turn affects employee creativity and hence stifle customer satisfaction.

According to a research done by Arthur Brief (1998), the emotions expressed by the employees on their jobs are related to those they feel and customers "catch" these expressed feelings. These "caught" feelings in turn can influence the customer perception of quality and satisfaction with service. Therefore, the feelings to be addressed (moods and emotions) speak to the attitudes of employees and customers. In another research by Arthur Brief (1998), it was also revealed that internal feelings exert a major impact on the display of the emotions at the place of work. The research shows that even when people try to hide or fake a particular emotion with their facial expressions, true emotions "leak" through. This leads me to pondering over the fact that at times employees' issues that can have an impetus on their attitudes need to be addressed from their root cause. At times requesting an employee to wear a smile in front of customers can be like wearing a mask and his true colors can "leak out" to the customer. I remember this happening when the employees at the Sheraton went on a strike due to a claim of salary and wage increase. It was only the managers and supervisors who had to serve the guests and indeed the employees' negative attitude could not be hidden any longer from the guests regarding their dissatisfaction where salaries and wages were concerned.



In my own opinion, although customer satisfaction is the primary motive of many organizations—Sheraton inclusive, employees attitudes should not be ignored. Employees need to be shown the importance of developing a positive attitude and the consequences of entertaining a negative attitude.

For instance, I remember on several occasions I had to make my personal judgements in situations where some guests needed cash advances without sticking to the rules and regulations regarding the same. I had been empowered by the director of finance at the hotel to do so and explain to him later. This was referred to as ‘bending the law’ while solving the guest problem which in turn reduces bureaucracy in the organisation.

Johansson and Woodilla (2005) in their book *Irony and organisations*, explain that Identities of the actors are a result of the process of interaction between the actors and their environment. In a way identities can be said to emerge from a continuous process of transformation. Thus identity is a metaphorical concept with regard to individuals: it suggests that people are stable and coherent beings overtime. Ironists are people who are forever distancing themselves from their vocabularies; they cannot take themselves too seriously and see everything as contingent and fragile. Among other things, they see identity this way: their own, other people’s identity and that of the organisations.

With reference to the above explanation and the definition of an ironist, I suggest that the Sheraton leadership team should gradually adopt the ironist approach instead of insisting on the Sheraton guest satisfaction system since it has its own limitations as mentioned earlier. As the employees distinguish their own identity from that of the guests and the hotel without being too strict with the rules and regulations on how to attain customer satisfaction, then a balanced atmosphere will be inevitable hence increasing creativity and productivity.

Moreover, what works effectively for one organization is not necessarily what will work for the other simply because not all organizations are exactly the same. Although benchmarking is essential for competing companies, creativity is necessary for the company that is trying to implement a given concept from its competitor or competitors. It is the manager’s responsibility to find out what management style actually fits a given department and the entire organization as a whole.

## 19. Conclusion

In conclusion, I suppose that attitude has a significant role it can play in today’s organizations and it seems to have a direct impetus on both the private and professional life of an individual. Among other factors, I believe that attitude plays a significant role in effective leadership. Besides employees’ skills and competence, I suppose attitude can help the leadership in an organization to be more effective especially where team work is concerned. Although positive attitude alone cannot guarantee success, negative attitude can have a major influence on one’s failure to reach his or her full potential in any area of life. Much as desiring a positive attitude could be a good start, you have to decide to take action in order for it to be experienced because nothing just happens. After examining the consequences of a negative attitude and the advantages of a positive attitude, I presume that negative attitude is more of a liability that is not worth holding on to. Conversely, I believe that the benefits of cultivating a positive attitude are evident and they are worth the effort. It has actually been challenging to me to find the disadvantages of a positive attitude. Perhaps this could be an area of further research

of the subject. I also believe that my research on the subject will act as a springboard for further research.

Although, you may have all the good intentions towards achieving a given goal in life but until you step out and take action to bring it to fruition, it will not come to pass. As I pointed out earlier, I perceive that attitude alone may be envisaged as a statement or sentence in what might be referred to as a vocabulary. Therefore, in my opinion, there is a combination of vocabularies that can be mixed with attitude in order to attain success in any sphere. In other words, having a positive attitude alone in today's competitive world might not be adequate enough. Among others factors, education, competence, skills, focus and hard work, are vital ingredients to accompany attitude with. Just like spices add taste to food, positive attitude adds taste to life. Remember, it is never too late to start making an attitude adjustment because the bend in a road is not necessarily the end of the road unless you fail to make a turn.

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**Högskolan i Borås** är en modern högskola mitt i city. Vi bedriver utbildningar inom ekonomi och informatik, biblioteks- och informationsvetenskap, mode och textil, beteendevetenskap och lärarutbildning, teknik samt vårdvetenskap.

På **institutionen för data- och affärsvetenskap (IDA)** har vi tagit fasta på studenternas framtida behov. Därför har vi skapat utbildningar där anställningsbarhet är ett nyckelord. Ämnesintegration, helhet och sammanhang är andra viktiga begrepp. På institutionen råder en närhet, såväl mellan studenter och lärare som mellan företag och utbildning.

Våra **ekonomiutbildningar** ger studenterna möjlighet att lära sig mer om olika företag och förvaltningar och hur styrning och organisering av dessa verksamheter sker. De får även lära sig om samhällsutveckling och om organisationers anpassning till omvärlden. De får möjlighet att förbättra sin förmåga att analysera, utveckla och styra verksamheter, oavsett om de vill ägna sig åt revision, administration eller marknadsföring. Bland våra **IT-utbildningar** finns alltid något för dem som vill designa framtidens IT-baserade kommunikationslösningar, som vill analysera behov av och krav på organisationers information för att designa deras innehållsstrukturer, bedriva integrerad IT- och affärsutveckling, utveckla sin förmåga att analysera och designa verksamheter eller inrikta sig mot programmering och utveckling för god IT-användning i företag och organisationer.

**Forskningsverksamheten** vid institutionen är såväl professions- som design- och utvecklingsinriktad. Den övergripande forskningsprofilen för institutionen är handels- och tjänsteutveckling i vilken kunskaper och kompetenser inom såväl informatik som företagsekonomi utgör viktiga grundstenar. Forskningen är välrenommerad och fokuserar på inriktningarna affärsdesign och Co-design. Forskningen är också professionsorienterad, vilket bland annat tar sig uttryck i att forskningen i många fall bedrivs på aktionsforskningsbaserade grunder med företag och offentliga organisationer på lokal, nationell och internationell arena. Forskningens design och professionsinriktning manifesteras också i InnovationLab, som är institutionens och Högskolans enhet för forskningsstödande systemutveckling.



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