



Observations

OBSERVATIONS 01-27: ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING!

Everything can be taken from man but one thing, the last of human freedoms - to choose one's own attitude in any set of circumstances.

- Victor Frankl, psychologist and death camp survivor

BLAME NOBODY. EXPECT NOTHING. DO SOMETHING.

- Bill Parcells, NFL Super Bowl coach

The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.

- Michelangelo

Okay ... I know it's hackneyed. But it still bears repeating. That is, we [me!] all need constant reminding:

ATTITUDE IS [almost] EVERYTHING!

ATTITUDE IS A PERSONAL CHOICE!

I was ...

... in Hartford the other night. Dealt with two folks. Call them ... Night ... and Day. One -- Night -- was the reception-desk person at the relatively pricey hotel where I was staying. She was not rude. She was not unhelpful. It was just that she ... didn't connect. Gave me no sense that I was other than a worm. That's harsh. But you know what I mean. Right? I wasn't there for her in any way, shape, or form.

Then I went to a restaurant next door. Not distinguished. But the waiter was! He/Day wasn't intrusive. Didn't tell me his life's story. But he was there. Connected. For the moments he was at my table, I perceptibly mattered to him. Again: You know what I mean. Right?

[It recalled a story a friend told me about a 15-minute interview with a very famous, very harried captain of industry. "The amazing thing, Tom," he said, "was that for those 15 minutes I was the center of his universe; you would have thought he had nothing on his mind but paying attention to me."]

It all got me thinking about training ... and the age old issue of attitude. There's an old saw: Hire for attitude, train for skill. Old saw. Yes. Sharp saw: ABSO-POSITIVELY-LUTELY.

Training wouldn't do "Night" a damn bit of good ... in my opinion. Oddly, training would be a boon to "Day." "Day" doesn't need training. But the motivated ones - including Michael Jordan - are always thirsty for new tricks of the trade.

Randy Johnson is perhaps major league baseball's most overpowering pitcher. And a consummate pro. He doesn't dog it. Ever. Yet a couple of years ago he was in a funk about his hapless team, the Seattle Mariners. At mid-season, he had an uninspiring record of 9 wins and 10 losses, with a high (for him) runs allowed per game average of 4.23. Then Johnson got his wish and was traded to the highly competitive Houston Astros. Same guy. Same arm. During the rest of the season, Johnson won 12 games, lost but one, and had a spectacular "earned run average" of 1.28. Message: SAME GUY. SAME ARM. SAME SKILLS. DIFFERENT ATTITUDE.

Years ago, I was doing some fund raising. Wasn't very good at it. Always felt I was intruding on the potential donor. Then I came across a simple article, by the head of fund raising at Notre Dame. He said the key was understanding that you were doing the potential donor a great favor ... giving her/him the chance to be part of something they could look back with pride on in 10 or even 25 years. That message really clicked with me. You could rightfully call it an epiphany. I didn't become a tiger overnight, but I did improve my "batting average" markedly. The difference? ATTITUDE. I felt good about myself as I made the calls!

Which brings me to management. As I thought about Day ... and Night ... I came to a new conclusion about the manager's job. As boss, per my new formulation: MY ONLY GOAL IS TO HELP YOU DECIDE WHAT TO MAKE OF YOURSELF ... TO HELP YOU CHOOSE WHAT

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ATTITUDE YOU WILL BRING TO THE DAY'S TASK. If you choose to be Night, there is nothing I can do for you. [Except lament hiring you.] If you choose to be Day ... there is no rock I will not overturn to try and abet your passionate cause ... be it housekeeping, waiting or computer programming.

Which, finally, brings me to leadership. The idea of "brand" is hot as a smoking pistol these days. Problem: "Branding" is not a "marketing" issue. It is an attitude issue. That is, "brand outside" (what the marketplace experiences of us) is a function of "brand inside" (the state of our unit/company's soul). In his new and original book, *Corporate Religion*, Jesper Kunde writes: "Only with a strong spirit at its foundation can a company achieve strong market position."

Amen!

My "to do" list, then:

RECRUIT FOR ATTITUDE!

HELP YOU CHOOSE WHAT ATTITUDE YOU'LL EXPRESS AT WORK TODAY!

SHOW "NIGHTS" THE EXIT. POSTHASTE.

DO MY UTMOST TO CREATE A SPIRITED - SOULFUL? - WORKPLACE!

It's attitude, baby!

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