

## BRANSON IS WRONG: YOU CAN TRAIN FOR ATTITUDE



BY PAUL FINDLAY / HR, LEADERSHIP, SMALL BUSINESS / 28 JUL 2017

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Richard Branson is right about many things...but he's wrong about attitude. One of his famous observations was that "you can learn expertise and gain experience but attitude is inherent". In other words, you can't train for attitudes - you hire attitudes.

I believe that view is now defunct. By failing to train for attitude, organisations miss out on an opportunity to improve their people, leaving them underemployed. This not only has a negative effect on the individual, but also means an organisation is not achieving the best when it comes to productivity, their ability to compete and, thus, their bottom line.

How people feel about the world, including those around them, has a greater impact on their quality of life than any other single factor. Much of our happiness is determined by the attitudes and choices we make and adopting a growth mindset helps people to become flexible, positive and motivated.

I've seen distinct changes in people who've undergone training to build a positive attitude. This includes people who initially saw only insurmountable problems but who now offer up solutions; people who used to withdraw and stay home sick after conflict but now work to maintain a positive frame of mind; and people who used to do the bare minimum but are now energised to go the extra mile.

The more someone fosters a growth mindset, the more they will focus on life's possibilities, be motivated to learn and be open to taking on new ideas or challenging beliefs. In turn, their attitude will be stronger, as will their resilience, and they will be happier.

Research by Stanford University Professor Carol Dweck on the growth mindset shows that our intelligence is malleable - we can actually boost our brain's capacity to learn and solve problems.

### 'THE BRIDGE YET TO COME'

She advocates 'the bridge to yet' which recognises that people are on a learning curve. Rather than failing to pass a test, she says they're not there yet. She says rewarding the effort, strategy and process increases confidence and creates sustained learning and perseverance.

A lot of people when given a task will say 'I can't do that' or 'I am not good at that.' They're displaying what Carol Dweck calls a fixed mindset that sees no opportunity for growth. If you just add 'yet,' you are open to the possibilities of learning something.

University of California psychology professor Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky argues that 50% of happiness is from genetics, 10% from differences in life's circumstances, and 40% percent from intentional activities. That theory offers scope to manage your own happiness.

So how do you train for attitude? Cancer charity Camp Quality found the answers in a program developed by its then CEO Simon Rountree to enhance organisational

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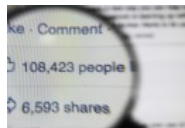
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culture.

Based on global research from the likes of Professors Dweck and Lyubomirsky, the program improved business outcomes by giving people self-management tools to change the way they approach their work and lives..

With respect to attitude, the program identified the following four self-management tools:

### 1. COMPLETE THE CIRCLE

This is really good for procrastinators and people who start a task but get distracted. It's a simple case of whatever you start, you finish – no matter how long the project or task takes. Depending on its complexity, if you need help, you must get buy-in from others to complete the circle.

The point is you never leave anything unfinished. Before they know it, people have 10 unfinished jobs that they're trying to work on. Research shows that human beings are not hard-wired to multi-task. So, complete one task and then focus on the next.

### 2. CVS TO BVS

This is from Michael Hewitt-Gleeson's School of Thinking and his cvs2bvs equation about escaping from your Current View of the Situation (cvs) and searching for a Better View of the Situation (bvs).

Hewitt-Gleeson is the 'father of 10x thinking' i.e. improving a process 10 times over not 10%. It could be that the accounts department has a problem of people not getting their invoices done so they can be sent out on time. Using the cvs2bvs tool, a meeting is called that anyone from the CEO to the receptionist can attend. But they must each bring 10 better views of the current situation and they must have them in writing.

The cvs2bvs equation is about building innovation within your people and your organisation. Innovation only comes about when you've got the right attitude. Anyone with a poor attitude does not contribute to innovation.

### 3. 3SS

This simple tool encourages people to Smile, Say thanks and Set an intention to do something good for somebody else each day. These are the foundation blocks of a good attitude. Research shows that smiling has physiological benefits as it helps release endorphins. Being pessimistic depletes you of happiness but showing gratitude and making choices to do positive things increases happiness; it goes to Sonja Lyubomirsky's 40% of happiness coming from intentional activities.

### 4. POSSIBILITIES

Draw a noughts and crosses game and fill the boxes with numbers 1 to 9. If you were to move the numbers around, how many moves would it take before you ran out of possibilities? Some people think it's a small number; in fact there are more than 320,000 possibilities.

Camp Quality posted the noughts and crosses symbol at every work station as a reminder to people that there are always possibilities. We shouldn't get to the point of thinking there is nothing more we can do. It just means we haven't thought of all the possibilities.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

These are just four ways that you can train for attitude.

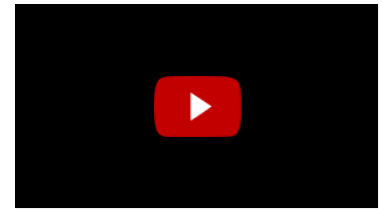
Within most Australian workplaces there are people whose attitude is either good, mediocre or poor. Fortunately, organisational leaders have the ability to influence this.

If you train for attitude, employees are likely to show not only more productivity but also more gratitude. As Richard Branson also says: Train people well enough so they can leave; treat them well enough so they don't want to.

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#### About the author

Paul Findlay is Managing Director of PDT an Australian-owned international professional development training company operating in 10 countries. PDT delivers Camp Quality's ORANGES program to corporate and government workplaces.



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