

WORK ON YOUR ATTITUDE



What do you think is more important for an employee? Your skill set and experience or your attitude? Michelle Coxsen says she's learned to value a good attitude in staff.

I prefer working with, and supervising, staff that have a great attitude and may need to be taught certain skills over an employee with a great skill set but with a negative attitude. What exactly do I mean by a good attitude?

Firstly, it isn't realistic to expect an employee to be continually positive or happy. Life can become stressful and as much as we want to leave our personal problems outside the workplace, stress can impact our working life. But, to the best of our ability, we should always try to be pleasant and courteous with our supervisors and colleagues. To our clients, we must always provide exceptional service. We are representing our workplace and our clients expect and deserve the best from us.

I define a good attitude as one where you are willing to contribute to the strategic plan of where you work.

First, know what your strategic plan is, and second, contribute to the strategic plan by working hard as a team player. Specifically, you should have a willingness to learn and teach new skills, volunteer to work on projects, contribute thoughts and ideas when requested, and to participate in team meetings. In a nutshell, be an active contributor, not a passive complainer.

Are you unhappy in your current job? If leaving your job isn't realistic, talk to your supervisor. Explain how you feel in a courteous manner. Why is your attitude bad? Are you bored? Are you disappointed you weren't promoted or missed out on a permanent job? Talk to your supervisor about it.

So, how do you develop a good attitude?

SELF AWARENESS

Self awareness isn't a given. You may think you are aware of your personality, of what you want, of the feelings you arouse in others, but that may not be the case. You can take tests online to determine if your self awareness is as attuned as it should be. This is important because problems at work and with your colleagues may be because of how you are interacting with others. Talk to an impartial person. Your family, partner or best friend may be too biased to give you

a clear depiction of how you act with others. Your mentor, teacher, life coach or psychologist can help you.

Starting a journal may help you become better attuned with your feelings and how you react to situations and people. If every single person you interact with in your life is hard to get on with, could the problem be with you and your communication skills or your expectations?

REFLECT ON THE GOOD THINGS IN YOUR LIFE

Being and feeling positive all the time is not realistic. In fact, it can be as draining as being and feeling negative. Try to be realistic. You have a job that pays the bills – be grateful for that! You can make a meaningful contribution – if not at work, then try mentoring a new graduate or volunteering.

Make your life meaningful outside of work too – work on your relationships with your family and friends. Take up a new hobby. Look after yourself physically by exercising and eating well. Join a club to meet new people. Start a gratitude diary.

DON'T GET STUCK IN A RUT

If you are bored at work, talk to your supervisor about starting a new project. Come up with some ideas yourself instead of waiting to be told what to do. If that doesn't work, enrol in some professional development or continue your studies. If money is tight, enrol in a free online course.

Contribute to your profession – write some articles, speak at conferences, start a blog, engage with people you admire on social media.

HANDLE CRITICISM AND FEEDBACK

What if your negative attitude originated because of criticism or bad feedback from your supervisor or colleague? Maybe it wasn't fair – maybe they were having a bad day and went too far or got too personal. Can you discuss the matter in a balanced and reasonable way? They may not be aware they have upset you. To the best of your ability, try to sort out the problem privately. Eleanor Roosevelt said, 'no one can make you feel inferior without your consent.'

Finally, remember you are not a victim and a passive spectator in your life. You can change your attitude if you want to. You may need to ask for help or you may need to do something drastic like change careers or jobs. Your happiness is worth it, and so is everyone else's!

MICHELLE COXSEN AALIA (CP)

Library Technician
TAFE Queensland
michelle.coxsen@tafe.qld.edu.au

Michelle graduated as a librarian in 2013 and has worked in TAFE libraries since 2004. She's passionate about professional development and contributing to the library and information profession, so passionate she once wore her pyjamas to work to support literacy programs for foster children. Michelle blogs with Lee Bess at twonewlibrarians.wordpress.com.