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A good attitude goes far

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A good attitude goes far

OK, I admit it: I'm a pretty huge fan of pageants.

I participated in pageants for years, and even won a crown. Although I don't catch every national pageant aired on television these days, I still see the value of pageants.

One of the endearing parts is naming Miss Congeniality. She's the participant who most everyone loves. Her peers choose her because she's "the most congenial, charismatic and inspirational participant," to borrow the Miss USA pageant criteria.

I wish we would broaden the arenas where the award is granted, providing Mr. and Miss Congeniality awards in our newsrooms.

Pageant lover or not, congeniality is something we could all use more of in our lives and in our workplaces. Having a pleasant disposition and being friendly and sociable are key ingredients to having a winning attitude.

A winning attitude — not aptitude — determines altitude. Attitude determines everything.

If you have a positive attitude, you'll make the best of every assignment, have good relationships with people you encounter and see the value of the work you provide to those we serve. Developing a winning attitude is critical to not only your career success, but your enjoyment of life.

You could be one of the greatest talents in your newsroom, but if you have a lousy attitude, you may not go as far as you'd expect. A negative attitude will cause you to grumble about assignments, even the pretty good ones. Your superior talent may take you far, but colleagues celebrate your departure — and not because they're happy for you.

A lousy attitude is not a forever sentence. Here are some tips to help you turn your attitude around.

Tip 1:

Assess your attitude. Spend some quiet time alone or become aware of your thoughts and words. Consider how you view the world. Can you see the positive in any situation or most situations? Do you believe that most people are out to take advantage of you, of others, of the system? Do you have hope about the future — your life, the economy, politics, whatever? Or is your picture displayed next to a saying similar to this: What can go wrong will definitely go wrong and BIG! What's going right is only temporary.

Tip 2:

Find out what others think about your attitude. This tip may be necessary only if you're not

honest when assessing your attitude. Simply ask a few you trust, "on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the greatest attitude in the world, where would you rank me?" A pessimist who gives you a 12 or the optimist who gives you a 2 could spell trouble for your attitude.

Tip 3:

Develop a 'can-do' attitude. A can-do attitude increases your energy and positive thoughts about the task at hand. "I can do whatever I need to do to complete this project" is an affirmation that gives you fuel while you pursue your goal. Repeating an affirmation such as this aloud and several times will have positive results.

Tip 4:

Surround yourself with positive thinkers. The people surrounding you can affect how you view the world. Here's a simple test: Do you feel better or worse after you've encountered the person? If you feel worse, then limit your contact with that person.

Tip 5:

Stop complaints. Complaining can spiral you into the world of negativity. Complaints have their place. At a recent event, some people were complaining about the disorganization, and when someone tried to counter the complaint, they dismissed the counter, repeated their complaint or found another one. I really like this guidance: If your complaint cannot affect change, then do not open your mouth.

Tip 6:

Think positive and then practice. Choose to think about the positive things in life and work. If a negative thought pops into your head, recognize it and then replace it with a more positive thought. This takes practice, so keep practicing until you become a pro at being positive.

Tip 7:

Simply smile, or even laugh. Go to a bathroom mirror, look at yourself and crack a smile. Now hold it for 30 seconds or even a minute. During this time don't critique your skin or the features on your face; just smile. The silliness of it all causes you to feel better or even begin to laugh. If you need something more hilarious than your face, I suggest catching an episode of "America's Funniest Videos" or listening to a comedian's CD.

Newsrooms probably won't adopt the Mr. or Miss Congeniality Award, but you can still vie for the title and, in the quest for the crown, make life more enjoyable for you and those around you. ♦