

Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS

“The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way... we cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. ... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.”

From Attitude by Charles Swindoll

Do you ever wonder why some people have unlimited success and happiness in their lives, while others spend much of their time in misery or mediocrity? I do.

As a professional trainer and speaker, I meet a lot of successful individuals. I also work with many people who are

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not experiencing the success they could. My goal as a trainer is to serve both groups.

Like others before me, I have found that attitude makes the biggest difference in our ability to succeed. During the course of marketing my training programs, I discovered a process that can help us take control of our attitude. This book is about the decision-making process all of us experience along the attitude pathways of life. It will help us make good choices, at the appropriate times.

Several years ago, I went to see one of my training customers. As I walked around his business, it amazed me to find that many of his employees had moved on to jobs with other companies. Because employee turnover is common to all companies, I did not pay much attention to this observation at the time. A couple of months later, I noticed the same phenomenon at another organization. This time, my curiosity got the best of me, and I began to conduct some research with people I knew. I asked questions such as, “Why do people change employers and careers so quickly?” and “Why do they change them so often?” Since turnover is an expensive problem for any business, I knew I could help my clients if I discovered methods to reduce the expense.

As I met with more clients, I continued to observe people changing jobs, and I kept asking questions. I spoke with hundreds of people over the months that followed, and I began hearing repetition in their answers. I knew there must be a pattern to the answers, but it was not clear to me at that point.

A couple of years into my research, I faced problems in my own career. It looked as if a job change might be in order for me, too. To prevent making a decision I might later regret, I decided to compare my own situation to those I had been observing. In a sudden flash of insight, I realized that *our attitude cycles in and out of four major phases during*

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our lives. With this observation, I quickly pinpointed my own position in the pattern. My career was not the problem. It was my attitude! Armed with this new insight, I quickly fixed my attitude by making the simple choice the pattern suggested. I stayed with the career I already had and advanced from there. My crisis was over.

As I continued to evaluate my findings, I was surprised to find that the *type* of career is seldom a factor when people decide to make a job change. The educational background of the employee is not important, either. Gender, age, location, nationality, race — none of these factors seem to matter. With this improved understanding, I began paying attention to the choices other people were making. Clearly, successful people were making the same choice I had made, and not only in their careers, but in all aspects of their lives. This choice, and the process that surrounds it, is the subject of this book. I believe that making this choice consistently is what allows SUPER ACHIEVERS to accomplish phenomenal results, in spite of inevitable obstacles and setbacks.

Roughly half of this book is devoted to an understanding of how our attitude cycles in and out of these four major phases (and their associated subphases). The rest deals with practical application, both on the job and in other areas of our lives. While this material is extremely useful in difficult situations, including career moves, *it is really a tool for everyday use.* These concepts apply to *all* areas of our lives. They apply to marriage, school, community affairs, church and synagogue, hobbies and projects, everyday living — even politics. They will help parents understand and communicate with their children. They will help supervisors understand and communicate with their team members. They will help husbands and wives understand each other and improve their relationships, and they can help YOU understand and control your own

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actions.

As part of my training activities, I now present these ideas in a variety of workshop settings. During these encounters, heads nod in agreement as we review the various phases and subphases. Afterwards, people say to me, “You’ve been reading my mail.” or “You were looking right into my mind.” I have found that these concepts hit home for everyone, without exception. The insight they provide is powerful. Indeed, individuals and companies alike have progressed and accelerated after learning these secrets.

Because the workshop format has proven to be so successful for so many, I have chosen to present this material as if you were experiencing your own private workshop. I will be asking you to mentally place yourself in a traditional job setting long enough for me to explain the fundamentals. If you have never held a job, fear not; you will find it easy to follow along. If your chosen profession is raising a family, simply apply these concepts to that occupation. With two toddlers at home and three grown children, I know from personal experience that the job of raising a family is just as challenging as any other.

Before plunging into the workshop, it will be helpful to understand what I mean by a split-second choice.

A long time ago, I was driving a 1966 Corvette to Farmington, New Mexico. The highway was long and lonely, and the sun was going down. I pushed the gas pedal down firmly, releasing 600 mechanical horses under the hood. As the speedometer needle moved forward, I leaned back to relax and let my thoughts drift.

Minutes later, as the car edged over the top of a hill, my reverie snapped. A flock of sheep was standing right in the middle of the highway. I had a split-second decision to make. My options were limited — panic and let fate take its nega-

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tive course, or take control in a positive way.

Thanks to many years of experience drag racing and driving on dirt tracks, I *automatically* chose the positive approach. I engaged a series of hard braking maneuvers, which sent the car looping and spinning a couple of times. When it finally stopped in a big cloud of dust, my pride was wounded, my brakes were smoking and my cardiovascular system was on full alert. Thankfully, the sheep and I were all alive, and my car was still operative. My split-second decision to act in a positive way had saved us all.

Frequently, when dealing with our careers, our relationships and our daily lives, you and I will find a “flock of sheep” on our attitude highway. The obstacle may not appear as suddenly as the sheep did on my trip to Farmington, but we still have a decision to make. Whether we make a snap decision, or take time to analyze the situation, we experience a split-second point in which the decision is made. As you will soon see, *choosing wisely at those split-second points will strongly influence our success in life. Those split-second choices are crucial.*

This book will help you recognize the critical decision points in your life, career, projects and relationships. It will also help you recognize the habitual decision rule you are using at those critical points. When you can “see” those turning points, the paths they offer and the habitual choice you are making, you can consistently follow the path that is best for you. You can develop a habit that will suit you well.

On my trip to Farmington, I made the right choice, thanks to a well-developed habit. When we make the right attitude choice a habit, it is easier to be a champion for ourselves and for others.

Now, get ready, because it’s time to begin reading with EXCITEMENT!

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Chapter 2

The First Phase: EXCITEMENT

“I never did a day’s work in my life. It was all fun.”

Thomas Edison

“If you have a dream, you have everything.”

Robert Schuller

Let’s begin your workshop by setting the scene. Suppose you are a company president, and you have just hired me. Today is my first day on the job.

Over the last few weeks, you and I met for several interviews. During the first interview, you decided *I could do* the job, that *I wanted to do* the job and that *I would fit in* with your organization.

For the second interview, you asked me to bring my wife, Margaret, along. To validate your initial feelings about me, you had us talk with several other people in your company. They all agreed with your conclusion that I would be *perfect* for the job and that Margaret and I were an excellent team.

With this agreement, the stage was set for you and I to

meet again. In this third meeting, we discussed what you wanted me to accomplish in my new position. You talked about how I was the ideal candidate to achieve great things. Together, we talked about goals and how they would be attained: You painted a picture of my job responsibilities and career opportunities, and I painted a picture of my abilities and commitment. When those two pictures snapped together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, we made the decision to team up. You offered me the job, and I accepted. Then we embellished the picture with images of victory, rewards and glory.

EXCITEMENT PHASE

Dream

Initial Commitment

My future appeared brighter than ever. Beaming with a feeling of euphoria, I went home and told Margaret, “This job is *exactly* what I want. It’s the perfect opportunity for me.” I also hastened to explain to anyone else who would listen that I was embarking on a magnificent new career, one filled with great promise.

So here I am, feeling like a surfer who just caught the big wave ... a thousand fans on the beach ... the sun bright ... the water bluer than blue ... the beaches whiter than white. With this on-top-of-the-world feeling and dreams of even better things ahead, I have started my new career with you. These dreams of the future sparkle, and they energize all of my activities. There is an energy inside me that is focused on projects and results. I anticipate nothing but good things. I

The First Phase: *EXCITEMENT*

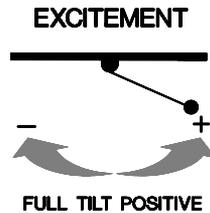
am really **EXCITED** about the opportunity before me.

As I start this first day, I also feel committed to the job. I'm not sure how long my commitment will last, and neither are you, but we both perceive it's deep enough to cultivate a win-win relationship.

My engine is revved up, and I'm ready to roll. I can already see the checkered flag waving me on to a victory lap. Because I am truly **EXCITED**, and because my commitment level is high, any obstacle or complication in the early days of my new career will be easy to handle. I will either leap over, walk around, duck under or just break straight through the difficulty. If things don't happen exactly the way I want them to, I will shrug it off and move on. My attitudinal pendulum is tilted full positive, in a sort of full-speed-ahead position. My enthusiasm level is high, and I am generally very productive.

You may be asking yourself, "Does it really happen this way?" Of course it does. Maybe not always at the level described here, but every time we start a new career, project or relationship, we begin with a positive attitude. Since this phase of our attitude cycle is often accompanied by emotion, enthusiasm and energetic behavior, I have labelled it **EXCITEMENT**. We have a dream in mind, and we make a commitment to the career, project or relationship. *All of these feelings and dreams are very real*, and for a while, everything seems to go our way.

Unfortunately, it is difficult for us to keep our *dreams* in clear focus for the long time periods encompassed by careers, projects and relationships. Maintaining a high level of *commitment* over the long term is equally challenging. The hun-



The First Phase: EXCITEMENT

dreds of people I interviewed told me they can usually sustain commitment for 90 days or so, but after six months, it becomes very difficult. So, unless I am a rare exception, my attitude of EXCITEMENT towards my new job with you will last just three to six months. Then it will begin to diminish. And a second phase will strike.