

# **WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE?:**

Getting in the Mood to Work

# CREDITS

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# INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive job market, employers say that attitude is the most important factor in their hiring process. Yet many of today's young people have difficulty maintaining the kind of attitude that goes over well in the workplace. Now more than ever, young people must be prepared to be competitive not only in order to gain a job, but also as a pre-requisite for *keeping* a job.

WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE? GETTING IN THE MOOD TO WORK seeks to help those entering the work force gain the upper hand by identifying some of the most important attitude issues they will confront. The list of positive attitude skills includes these vital skills:

- creating a good relationship with employers
- punctuality and good attendance
- good work and time management habits
- appreciating the value of one's work
- learning how to receive constructive criticism
- showing a willingness to learn
- exhibiting enthusiasm
- maintaining a good work ethic

In addition to a positive professional attitude, today's employers demand a great deal of productivity from their employees—high-quality work, speedy task-juggling and focused effort are all crucial for a company to be profitable. It is essential that young people realize that it is their attitude in the long run which will affect their performance in all aspects of their professional life.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching the video **WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE? GETTING IN THE MOOD TO WORK** and working on the class activities in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will:

- ⇒ know the importance of being reliable in business
- ⇒ have a clear understanding of the qualities employers seek in job candidates
- ⇒ accept that their employers will judge them by their attitudes as well as by the quality of their work
- ⇒ appreciate how a single employee's attitude can affect many areas of a business
- ⇒ understand that a positive attitude is not only an "external" benefit to the company, but actually gives the employee a better sense of self-esteem
- ⇒ learn a number of important techniques for time management and prioritizing
- ⇒ realize the importance of finding a "mentor" in business
- ⇒ understand the importance of ethics and integrity in the business world

# PROGRAM SUMMARY

As the video begins, Mitch Bardwell tells viewers that it is up to the worker to bring a positive attitude to work. “You can’t always react as you do in other environments,” Bardwell states. For example, if you are upset by a customer or a co-worker, you can’t “take off” for an hour to recover from the encounter.

A positive attitude helps to create a good relationship with employers, as does punctuality and good attendance. When Carlo is late for work, his boss Laura points out that “when you are late, others have to carry your load. It’s not only unfair but it puts them behind in their work.” She tells him clearly to “make your job your priority and be on time.” By exhibiting these qualities, respect is shown for your co-workers, your customers, and for your employer.

Developing good work and time management habits is also a matter of developing the proper attitudes toward work. The worker must understand that all jobs are important and all time is valuable. When Dave sits at his desk playing a video game instead of doing his part of the project, he is ignoring how valuable his time is to the company. “If you sit around and waste an hour,” Bardwell reminds viewers, “you might have just blown twenty-five, thirty, forty or even fifty dollars. That’s how corporate America looks at your time.”

Learning how to handle constructive criticism is another important workplace quality. After being reminded that there is a more efficient way to do the job he is currently doing, Dave becomes upset. But as Dave’s co-worker reminds him, the purpose of Laura’s comment was to “help you do the best job you can.” As Human Resources Manager Laurel Piper puts it, “The difference between being criticized and being given a critique is in the way you receive it.” One must keep an open mind and not become clouded by emotion.

# PROGRAM SUMMARY continued

Many employers feel that one of the greatest attributes a young employee can have is a willingness to learn. The narrator states, “In a fast-paced, highly technical world, there’s little room for those without an open mind.” Workers also need to show enthusiasm for their job.

As Mark Bardwell states, “We can’t all be football stars, artists, photographers. You must find something that you feel comfortable with and then dive into that.” Knowing what we want and doing what we enjoy is the surest foundation for developing the proper attitudes toward work.

Several strategies to improve productivity are also illustrated for the audience. The first is for workers to be goal oriented, writing down their goals and striving towards them. Another is to keep the work area neat and organized so time is not wasted searching for important documents. Planning your priorities for the day is probably the most important time management “tool.” The ability to focus on one task regardless of interruptions is a key skill. Laurel Piper is correct in saying that it is necessary to be able to devote all your concentration on a task. Some other strategies include concentrating on projects that require superior performance, doing the duller tasks in the morning, and scheduling similar tasks together, such as work-related communications.

A good work ethic is also very important in the work place. Laurel Piper defines ethic as “integrity, honesty, dedication, a sense of fair play, and respect.” Mitch Bardwell agrees that a work ethic is more than just knowing what is right and wrong. He defines work ethic as “responsibility to your peers and to your company.”

As the video draws to a close, viewers are reminded again: It is your responsibility to have the proper attitude for work. Good work starts with a good attitude.

# ANSWERS TO REVIEW QUESTIONS

**1. Why should you care about your work attitude?**

New employees must realize that competition is fierce in the business world. It's critical for employers to get the most productivity they can from each employee. Young employees must also realize they can't overreact to criticism or let their emotions get the best of them. Everyone in today's business world is expected to do more with less.

**2. Why is your time so valuable to corporate America? Why is the concept of valuing your time difficult for young people to grasp?**

If you earn \$40,000 per year, most corporations will look at your time in this way: If you waste an hour of your time, you've just thrown away \$20.00. For young people this is a new concept, because in most cases they have never had much value placed on their time.

**3. What are the three most important steps in listening to constructive criticism?**

Listen quietly. Try to listen to the negative as well as the positive aspects of the critique. Do not let your emotions control the outcome. The difference between being criticized and being critiqued is usually in the way we receive it.

**4. Why is it important to seek a career that you enjoy?**

Because it is difficult to be focused, enthusiastic and have a positive attitude for something you really dislike.

**5. How does one find a mentor? What are the benefits of having a mentor?**

Find someone who is good at what they do and ask them how they do it. Then *act on their suggestions and advice*. Someone who is experienced can help you avoid pitfalls and reveal shortcuts to learning that would otherwise be obtained on the job. If you keep an open mind to advice, you can learn more in a shorter time.

**6. What does it mean to be goal oriented?**

When you are goal-oriented, you must structure your time more efficiently. Being goal oriented helps you keep the big picture in focus.

**7. What are the two main components of the process of time management?**

First, establish the goals you want to accomplish. Next, begin to take the steps and actions necessary to achieve them.

# ANSWERS TO REVIEW QUESTIONS

continued

**8. What are the necessary steps in achieving your daily goals?**

(1) Prepare a list of tasks that need to be done. (2) Set aside a few moments each day to schedule each task. (3) Set priorities for each item. (4) Keep track of your daily activities with a daily planner or calendar. (5) Follow through on your activities, checking off each item as it is completed.

**9. To whom does every worker have a responsibility?**

Every worker has responsibility to himself or herself, as well as a responsibility to co-workers, supervisors and to the company as a whole. Also, every worker has a responsibility to the customer or consumer who the company serves.

**10. Developing a good work ethic is crucial for success. Ethics is about:**

(1) Caring about each other and the customers you serve. (2) Your sense of right and wrong. (3) Your integrity. (4) Your responsibility to your co-workers, your company and your customers. (5) Honesty. (6) Dedication. (7) Being fair. (8) Respect for others.

# TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

## for HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE IT? worksheets

Among the student sheets that you will find on the following pages, we have included ten **HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE IT?** sheets (pages 11-29) which you may copy and distribute to students.

These sheets can be used in a variety of ways, depending upon your class time and teaching needs:

*Assign them as homework essays.* Encourage students to be precise in explaining what they would say to their employees, defining the standards which they would expect their employees to uphold, etc.

*Use them to initiate class discussion.* Ask students what steps a supervisor can take to encourage his or her employees to be more productive. Be sure that students respond to these scenarios in ways that coincide with the **ATTITUDE SKILLS** worksheet on page 33.

*Have students write letters to the characters.* These ten worksheets can be assigned in the same manner as the **WRITE A LETTER** student sheets on pages 43-45.

*Use them for role-playing activities.* If you wish to expand upon the **ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS** offered on page 37, you may use these ten sheets as additional scripts for your students to enact in class.

# TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

for various student worksheets

The **WHAT DO YOU THINK?** worksheet on page 31 can be used as an in-class debate or—if you wish—as a homework assignment in which students must give reasons for their point of view.

The **ATTITUDE SKILLS** and **ATTITUDE KILLERS** worksheets should be photocopied and distributed to students. These two sheets provide a quick synopsis of the points illustrated in the video and will be useful in your class discussion as well as during the **ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS** described on page 37.

Two articles (“**How to Stop Sabotaging Yourself Professionally**” and “**Career Services Directors Advise Graduates on First Job Strategies**”) are reprinted on pages 49-51 of this Teacher’s Resource Book. They are provided as useful tools for classroom discussion. Feel free to photocopy and distribute these articles to your class. You may also wish to create a quiz based upon the information in these articles.

The **BEING YOUR OWN BOSS** worksheet on page 47 is an excellent tool to help students realize the importance of having small, realistic, attainable goals. If your class schedule permits, this assignment can be extended into a class project in which your students create their own step-by-step plan for an actual business enterprise.

# STUDENT SHEETS

# REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why should you care about your work attitude?

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2. Why is your time so valuable to corporate America? Why is the concept of valuing your time difficult for young people to grasp?

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3. What are the three most important steps in listening to constructive criticism?

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4. Why is it important to seek a career that you enjoy?

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5. How does one find a mentor? What are the benefits of having a mentor?

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6. What does it mean to be goal oriented?

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7. What are the two main components of the process of time management?

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8. What are the necessary steps in achieving your daily goals?

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9. To whom does every worker have a responsibility?

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10. Developing a good work ethic is crucial for success. Ethics is about:

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# WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Is it your responsibility to inform your boss when a co-worker is abusing the system?

YES	NO
<p>Explain your reasons:</p> <p>✓</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Explain your reasons:</p> <p>✗</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>✓</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>✗</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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# ATTITUDE SKILLS

*These attitudes can help you build a successful career.*

- ⇒ Being punctual
- ⇒ Being honest
- ⇒ Protecting your company from theft
- ⇒ Projecting a professional image which is serious, mature, and appropriate for business
- ⇒ Keeping your temper and emotions in check
- ⇒ Being open-minded and willing to learn or improve your skills
- ⇒ Understanding authority and accepting the need for a chain of command
- ⇒ Admitting when you're wrong or when you've made a mistake
- ⇒ Being solution oriented
- ⇒ Not taking on more work than you can realistically handle
- ⇒ Accepting that constructive criticism is meant to help us improve
- ⇒ Being understanding of others' problems, and tolerant of others' mistakes or shortcomings

# ATTITUDE KILLERS

*These attitudes can relieve you of your job FAST!*

- ⇒ Procrastination
- ⇒ Lying
- ⇒ Stealing
- ⇒ Projecting an unprofessional image which is casual, immature and inappropriate for business
- ⇒ Displaying anger and cynicism
- ⇒ Clinging to your values stubbornly, convinced you are right and everyone else is wrong
- ⇒ Being obsessed with acquiring power
- ⇒ Making excuses
- ⇒ Refusing to negotiate
- ⇒ Imposing a crippling workload on yourself
- ⇒ Seeking revenge through poor performance
- ⇒ Showing intolerance, impatience, apathy, or prejudice towards others

# ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS

Your whole class is employed by a specialty food business called **PITTY PAT'S PANCAKE PALACE**. The business has four separate divisions:

- a 24-hour breakfast restaurant which serves only pancakes
- a gourmet store which stocks rare syrups and pancake mixes
- a mail-order catalog center which takes customers' phone orders
- a warehouse which arranges for speedy shipment of pancake mix

As you conduct your role plays, you can take on different roles at **PITTY PAT'S PANCAKE PALACE**. Feel free to invent characters for each division. Here are some of the people you might choose:

customer  
order processor  
shipping clerk

boss  
cashier  
packaging clerk

waiter  
stock clerk  
phone caller

These role play scenarios can be done in groups of 2 or more. Each group will need a copy of these two worksheets: **ATTITUDE SKILLS** (page 33) and **ATTITUDE KILLERS** (page 35).

1. Choose one of the topics from the **ATTITUDE KILLERS** worksheet—for instance, *Making excuses*.
2. You and your partner(s) should invent a simple scenario that illustrates the qualities of an employee with a negative attitude.
3. Next, reverse the process by role-playing one of the **ATTITUDE SKILLS**.
4. You and your partner(s) should illustrate the qualities of an employee with a positive attitude—for instance, *Admitting when you've made a mistake*.

# LOOKING AT YOURSELF, PART 1

The 100 adjectives listed below describe many common personality traits—both positive and negative ones. Underline all the words that you think generally apply to you. Be honest about yourself.

animated	dutiful	inadequate	outgoing	steady
anxious	dynamic	indecisive	patient	strong
apprehensive	emotional	ineffectual	perceptive	subtle
arrogant	energetic	inflexible	precise	sympathetic
careful	enterprising	influential	prudent	tactful
cautious	excessive	insecure	rash	tactless
changeable	extravagant	intense	rational	tense
charismatic	extroverted	introverted	receptive	thrifty
cheerful	fidgety	irritable	reserved	timid
committed	forceful	lazy	respectful	tolerant
confident	frugal	lethargic	responsible	touchy
decisive	hasty	lively	restless	truthful
demanding	headstrong	logical	rigid	uncompromising
dependable	hesitant	loyal	sensible	unreliable
determined	hostile	mature	sensitive	unsure
devoted	humble	mEEK	shy	vague
diplomatic	immature	modest	silly	wasteful
discreet	impatient	nervous	solid	weak
dishonest	impressionable	obedient	spontaneous	wild
domineering	impulsive	obstinate	stable	willful

When you have underlined at least 20 words, go on to Part Two.

# LOOKING AT YOURSELF, PART 2

If you've been honest in your assessment, the words you underlined in Part One probably represent a mix of your best and worst personality traits. Now is your chance to identify your areas of strength and weakness.

1. Look at the words you underlined in Part One. Place an X through any underlined word which describes a quality that you consider to be a **weakness**. *(If possible, use a different colored pen to circle these words.)*

How many **weaknesses** did you underline? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Now place an X through any underlined word which describes a quality that you consider to be a **strength**. *(If possible, use a different colored pen to circle these words.)*

How many **strengths** did you underline? \_\_\_\_\_

3. In a few sentences, summarize your strengths. *(i.e. Many of my strengths involve a cheerful attitude and good people skills.)*

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4. In a few sentences, summarize your weaknesses. *(i.e. Many of my weaknesses involve being organized and tidy in my work.)*

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5. In the space below, write down at least three goals which will help you improve on your main areas of weakness. Be sure to indicate the steps you will need to take in order to achieve each goal.

GOALS

STEPS

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# BEING YOUR OWN BOSS

You're on the verge of starting your own business: SALSА ULTIMA! Your plan is to create and market a line of salsa products loaded with more chili peppers than any other brand of salsa. You've got a great concept, plenty of ambition, and a loan of \$10,000 to get started. In other words, you're ready to start making money!

But before you take another step, you will need to create a very precise business plan which outlines each goal that your business much achieve. On the chart below, write down your goals. Then write down the steps you will need to fulfill to accomplish each goal.

*Make sure your goals and steps are attainable. Remember, it often takes more than one step to reach a single goal.*

Goal 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Steps to Take to Reach Goal 1

Goal 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Steps to Take to Reach Goal 2

Goal 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Steps to Take to Reach Goal 3

Goal 4: \_\_\_\_\_ Steps to Take to Reach Goal 4

Goal 5: \_\_\_\_\_ Steps to Take to Reach Goal 5

# How to Stop Sabotaging Yourself Professionally

by Loraine O'Connell

You know how some people always seem to be struggling toward some goal they never quite reach? What about those people who actually have achieved the success they dreamed of—whether it be in the workplace or in a relationship—only to foul it up and lose everything. All of these folks may be sabotaging themselves with self-defeating behaviors.

Self-defeating behaviors are observable in every arena of life: sports, politics, romance, and, of course, in business life. We have all known people who ruin their chances for promotion by their own actions. Of course, not every stupid thing we do is self-sabotage. According to Steven Berglas and Roy F. Baumeister, authors of **Understanding the Paradox of Self-Defeating Behavior**, “Actions qualify as self-defeating only if the harm or loss outweighs the pleasure or benefits.”

The question remains: why do we do it? The motivations behind self-defeating behavior are varied. For instance, the person who continually thwarts the career goal he says he wants may not be committed to that goal at all, says Belinda Judge, a licensed mental health counselor in Lake Mary,

Florida. “Perhaps he’s trying to live his life to meet another’s expectations,” she says. Thus, self-sabotage for this person is a passive way of saying No. “Instead of taking a stand, he just undermines himself,” Judge says.

Mr. Berglas and Mr. Baumeister say that, at bottom, most self-saboteurs are obsessed with how others perceive them. “Some of the worst patterns of self-defeat are set in motion by fear of being seen in an unflattering light,” they write. To avoid having that unflattering light shed on them, self-saboteurs resort to one or more of the following behaviors:

## MISGUIDED PERSISTENCE

Let’s face it: Some of the brainstorms we come up with at work stink. But self-saboteurs won’t give up. “We may persist against our better judgment simply to avoid being called quitters,” the psychologists write. The refusal to give up is even more pronounced if self-saboteurs were cautioned beforehand that their choices would come to no good. Nobody wants to hear “I told you so.”

## SELF-HANDICAPPING

In this approach, the self-saboteur uses an impediment to preserve his own image of competency. One common business impediment, for

example, would be to commit yourself to an immense amount of work within an impossibly tight deadline. Experiments have shown that people with low self-esteem engage in self-handicapping to protect themselves against failure. As Mr. Baumeister and Mr. Berglas write, “By imposing a burden on your own efforts, you can set yourself up to blame any failure on that burden.”

## PROCRASTINATION

By itself, procrastination can be a form of self-handicapping. Indeed, it’s the Number One form of career self-sabotage, according to psychologist Andrew J. DuBrin, author of **Your Own Worst Enemy: How to Overcome Career Self-Sabotage**. Mr. DuBrin notes the most obvious reason for procrastinating: to put off doing uncomfortable, overwhelming or tedious tasks. Another reason—one that any parent will recognize—is to rebel against being controlled, to defy unwanted authority. You may have gotten away with this with Mom, but you won’t last long with the boss with such an attitude. “Procrastination is career suicide in slow motion,” Mr. DuBrin writes.

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# Career Services Directors Advise Graduates on First Job Strategies

by Joyce Laine Kennedy

**DEAR JOYCE:** My son is graduating from college and has the promise of a job. Sometimes we forget that new graduates may not know the “rules of the road” as they begin their adult work life. What are the key pointers to staying employed?

I asked your question to campus career advisers around the country, and here’s what I found.

**Showing commitment.** “The biggest mistake beginners can make is not showing up on time,” warns Andrew W. Ferguson at the University of Richmond, in Virginia. “Constant tardiness, stretching coffee breaks and lunches signals irresponsibility, whereas arriving early suggests you are a conscientious employee.”

“If you’re in a professional career, work until the job gets done, so expect to stay late. Arriving at 8 and leaving at 4 sharp every day gives bosses the impression you are incredibly efficient or things aren’t getting done.”

**Proper dress.** “One of the easiest ways to blend with the corporate environment is to wear the proper attire for your new job,” advises Lee J. Svete at Colgate University in

Hamilton, N.Y. Be prepared to invest a significant amount of money in an appropriate wardrobe. Find out about the company’s dress codes, hair length, and facial hair.

### **Adjusting to new lifestyle.**

Moving from campus to career requires major adjustments, which may include relocation to a new city, negotiating leases, buying cars, and budgeting finances, for instance, says Michelle Ohayon at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. “Staying out late and then not being productive at the office can be a fast track to the unemployment line,” says Ms. Ohayon.

Keep personal telephone calls and visitors to a bare minimum. Bringing personal problems into the office is another common pitfall. Doing so, says Ms. Ohayon, shows a lack of maturity and professionalism.

### **Meet deadlines, ask questions.**

New professionals should understand the importance of meeting deadlines, says Dale F. Austin of Hope College in Holland, Mich. “Employers don’t pay for excuses. They want productivity and results, not a song and dance about why you can’t get something done,” he says.

“Sometimes when you are new and young, there is a sense that if you ask questions you may be seen as less competent,” Mr. Austin says. “Not asking questions can lead to major problems.”

**Paying dues.** “Promotions, raises and added responsibility takes time,” says H. Richard Hess at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pa. “Patience is a big issue because organizational structures have become flat,” he explains. “There aren’t a lot of corporate ladders to climb anymore, so modify your expectations.”

Most entry-level positions also have their share of grunt work that is critical to the daily operation of businesses. It may not be on your job description but you’ll be expected to do it.

### **Practice communication skills.**

Effective communication skills are important to getting a job and they are critical to keeping a job, cautions Willard Smith at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. “Good writing and speaking skills are one of the top qualifications for success. Poor communication skills do not reflect favorably on a new professional interested in establishing credibility.”

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ing News*

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