Attitude – Choosing to Live Above the Line

It is a proven fact 65% percent of businesses don’t make it through their first year, and another 40% of those businesses don’t make it through the next three years. The businesses that survive deliver a good product, have implanted good systems, have good people, have a strong person driving the ship, and most importantly, have the right attitude. They understand success doesn’t just happen. It takes a lot of work and perseverance. The owner understands he/she is responsible for the business and acts accordingly. The business owner that doesn’t survive typically does not take full responsibility for his/her actions, rationalizes failures, and lives in denial.

Each of us is faced with choices every single day, as indicated on the choices line in Graph 1. Each can decide when to sleep, what to wear, what to eat, whether to work, train our staff, be motivated, work as a team, do our best for the company, etc. You get the point. Most every choice we make not only affects us personally, but affects those around us as well. For example, if you eat deep fried foods every day, it will affect how you feel, look, and act. Eventually, it will affect your health and ability to work and play. It may cause severe health problems and possibly end your life earlier than anticipated, thus affecting your friends, coworkers, and family. If an employee chooses not to come to work, it may affect coworkers, customers, his manager, and the overall organization. The same could be said for choosing to look for the negative in others or whether or not to do your best work.

The choices we make have far reaching implications to us and others.

Living below the Line
All of us know someone that blames others for everything wrong in their life. We also know people that make excuses for their lack of responsibility and ability to execute. Many times these same people are living in denial thinking everything is just fine. Those that fall into this category are “living below the line”. Each of us falls below the line at times in our life. The trick is realizing we go nowhere when we fall below the line and then finding our way back to the top. These individuals tend to be angrier and negative towards others. Many times their self-esteem is at risk, as well. They consider themselves “victims” and instead of moving forward, they are pointing fingers at others or rationalizing why they are failing.

Graph 1– Living above or below the Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Victor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victim

Blame
Excuses
Denial
Living above the Line
At the other end of the spectrum are those that live their lives above the line. These individuals tend to believe life is what you make it. They take ownership, accountability and responsibility for everything that happens in their life. If things are going good or bad, they accept responsibility for their actions and make necessary changes to ensure they always stay above the line. These individuals tend to be happier, look for the good in others and always look to turn the negatives into a learning experience. Those above the line are the “victors” who drive and motivate similar behavior in others. Choosing to operate above the line brings about results that have far reaching positive impacts on others, not to mention sets an example and tone for the organization.

Attitude in Others
Not only do we have to consider our own attitude, but bring people to our organization that have the right attitude, as well. Having the right team to serve your customers and operate your business could make or break your organization. Focus selection techniques and interview questions on finding people who live above the line, and have the work ethic and overall personality needed to thrive at your organization. Too often leaders hire on experience only and neglect the importance of attitude and personality.

When attitudes slip in employees (and they will) coach them to stay above the line encouraging them to stay positive, accept responsibility, be accountable, and own up to their challenges. When you hear blame-placing, excuses, and see acts of denial, find positive opportunities to coach employees back on the right track.

Charles Swindoll wrote, “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on my 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. And so it is with you…we are in charge of our attitude.”

Building positive work environments starts with leaders and spreads through the organization. Be the person to set the tone in your organization. Chose to live “above the line” and when you slip into the victim state of blame-placing, excuses, and denial, get back to the top. Take ownership, be accountable and be responsible for your choices. Hire and build teams who do the same. Commit to changing the negative aspects of your life and move to a better place. It’s such a simple principle and explains so many things in our personal and business lives. Live above the line!

By Kameron Thorne and Ken Spencer

Kameron Thorne, Business Coach
Action Coach
(801) 597-5264
KameronThorne@ActionCoach.com
www.ActionCoach.com/KameronThorne

Ken Spencer, SPHR, MHRM, President, and Sr. Human Resources Consultant
HR Service, Inc.
(801) 685-8400
Ken@HRServiceInc.com
www.HRServiceInc.com