

Dealing with Attitudes Professionally

By Dr. Ben S. Graham, Jr.

Chairman

The Ben Graham Corporation

© Copyright 2005, The Ben Graham Corporation. All rights reserved.

[Permission is granted to post, print and distribute this document in its original PDF format.](#)

This session addresses a variety of attitudes that plague efforts at process improvement including resistance to change, credit and blame, underestimating and overestimating abilities based on status, etc. It explains, in understandable terms, how to channel the energy tied up in ineffective attitudes into cooperation.

The strength of this session is in the explanation of why attitudes get the way they do and how to change the work situation to promote functional attitudes. Specifically, it describes common attitude patterns, dos and don'ts for dealing with attitudes, and strategies for building cooperation.

Common Attitude Patterns

Attitudes are complex. There are many subtle variations and apparent contradictions. There is so much variation that no two people are alike. In fact, as circumstances change, no one person remains the same. However, there are fundamental consistencies that underlie attitudes. These consistencies can be understood. They help us to see the purposes that attitudes serve, to understand how they develop and most importantly, they give us an idea of what we can do to improve attitudes and get people cooperating effectively.

There are three basic types of attitudes found within every person and dispersed throughout every organization. Organizations are most effective when one of these attitudes predominates. Then people are on the same wavelength, cooperating naturally and needing little encouragement to embrace constructive change.

The three sets of attitudes have three different foci, self, others and reality. The attitudes that produce greatness in individuals and magnificent accomplishments in organizations focus on reality.

Each set of attitudes is appropriate for addressing a different situation. These situations are fundamental and create different sets of needs. The needs generate values, which, in turn, generate the attitudes and govern the behaviors that address those needs.

Self-Focused Attitudes

Every person begins life helpless and dominated by basic self-needs associated with security, comfort, food, sleep, warmth, etc. They cannot survive without help and the fact that mankind survives attests to the loving care that infants receive.

The behaviors and attitudes of the infants focus on self. While these attitudes can be thought of as selfish, they serve useful, in fact vital purposes beginning with survival. Then as children grow up it is natural for them to learn how to take care of basic self-needs for themselves. They become increasingly self-reliant. The more easily they are able to tend to these needs the less they have to pay attention to them. However, throughout life, self-needs never go away.

Even in the healthiest adults self-needs lie close beneath the surface ready to reassert themselves when a situation demands. When they are discomforted or threatened, healthy adults respond with values, behaviors and attitudes that attend to those needs.

Other-Focused Attitudes (Social)

Normal, healthy children also develop attitudes and behaviors that reflect caring for others. This begins at home with important others such as their parents, siblings, playmates, grandparents, etc. Some of this grows in response to the caring that is lavished on them. Some of it is taught, "Share with your brother!" – "Be nice!"

The social values of children deal with caring, sharing, fair play, etc. Of course, some children develop these values far more than others. Then with puberty social values come on with a rush. Bursting sexuality combines with an overwhelming need for acceptance as a grown up. The family has difficulty filling these needs because their caring and support keep the teen-agers feeling like dependent children. On the other hand, the support of teen-age peers fills this need for acceptance beautifully.

Friends of their own age are very important. They share simplistic understandings while repeatedly seeking reassurance and confirmation. This shows up in speech patterns such as, "You Know?" interspersed sometimes several times in one sentence. And, although their knowledge is superficial they convince themselves that it is profound, much wiser than the worn out thinking of those stuffy old people.

With adolescence the social-needs are dominated by the need to be accepted as adults. The flip side of acceptance is rejection and anguish. Acceptance requires that they satisfy standards of older people. But those standards are much more difficult than those of their peers so young people generally give much more attention to the standards and acceptance of their peers (even though those standards are riddled with superficial fantasies and the acceptance is clearly not that of adult society.)

However, for most healthy young adults, while the acceptance of their peer group will provide a camaraderie that will always seem special, time rolls on and they find themselves moving into truly adult activities including full time paid employment. As they seek employment they face the realistic challenge of being hired. This requires meeting standards not of their peers but of the hiring organization, standards set by older people, their predecessors.

While these standards are reasonable and easy to meet in the eyes of those who set them, they are often seen as noxious and unfair by the younger entrants. And, rather than appreciating that they have a lot to learn, there is a tendency for them to convince themselves that they know better.

Self-righteousness plays a major role. They tend towards impatience and finding fault with authority figures in general. They reinforce their faultfinding with high ideals, always at least a little higher than the performances of the elders they are criticizing. There is a good deal of "tit for tat" in these ideals. Frustrated by the standards that they are required to meet, they come up with standards that show how poorly their predecessors are doing. And, they can set them as high as they want because they are not the ones measuring up. These ideals are standards for the older people who are currently responsible. Assisting them with this fault finding are many well meaning groups supporting various social causes, aided by media exposing political chicanery, the sins of industry, the rape of the environment, abuse of minorities, etc., etc..

While these self-righteous and fault finding attitudes and behaviors are sometimes exasperating to parents, teachers, employers and many other adults, they do serve useful purposes. They help to bind strong friendships among the young people and the high ideals occasionally survive as motivation for outstanding performances as some of these young people become reality-focused adults.

Reality-Focused Attitudes

With the inevitability of time itself, adolescence ends and with it most young adults find themselves performing in adult society. They complete their schooling, get jobs, move out of their parent's homes, open bank accounts, buy cars, marry, have children and find themselves in the position of the adults they were recently criticizing. But it is different now.

Some of the criticism that they recently directed at adults, particularly their parents, fades. In fact, they are often surprised at how their parents have improved. This is typical of the transition. Most young people continue to feel that the self-righteous, idealistic attitudes they held during adolescence were justified. Their social attitudes tend to persist. But, they also develop new values based on the needs of adult life.

Whereas their first needs were met by their parents and their adolescent needs were met by their peers, they must meet these new needs themselves. The challenges of adult life push people in the direction of accepting responsibility for themselves. The more completely they accept responsibility for themselves, the more they find themselves interested in facts. They find themselves learning in order to get things done. This is quite different from much of the learning done in school for the social purpose of satisfying parents and teachers.

And, this is the key to reality – the key to mastery – that they put themselves in charge. They acquire skills and knowledge to deal with life's challenges. They acquire skills and knowledge to be able to visualize possibilities and to accomplish them. They acquire skills and knowledge for the pure exhilaration of doing it. They come to appreciate the fathomless depths of knowledge itself. They come to marvel at the wonder of it all.

This is not to please parents but it certainly does. Nor is it to satisfy requirements of teachers or professors who, if they learn of it, will be more than pleased. Nor is it to satisfy certification boards or licensing requirements, or any other form of social acceptance. It is to master.

As people dig into the facts, the more effectively they master those facts the more attractive the digging becomes. This healthy, self-reinforcing process steadily reduces their self-needs as they become increasingly confident of their abilities. It reduces their social-needs as acceptance ceases to be an issue, replaced by recognition and earned respect.

About this time, these masters find themselves in the position of evaluating newcomers. They are likely to remember how frustrated they were when they were in the same boat and how fed up they got with the people they had to satisfy. So they carefully avoid the kinds of things that irritated them. They apply standards that they feel are reasonable and easy to meet. Meanwhile, the newcomers react to these standards with frustration and anger. The difference is in the enormous change that the masters have gone through, while scarcely realizing it. Day by day their knowledge about the work has grown and imperceptibly their attitudes have changed. They have become masters – realists. What seems very simple to them now was beyond their understanding when they were entrants.

It is interesting to note how needs for social acceptance change as people pass through these stages of behavioral growth. At first the acceptance of family is vital. With adolescence, family remains important but is not sufficient. Acceptance of teenage peers becomes critical. With mastery, family and the friends of youth are still important but the most important source of acceptance becomes ones self and a few others who are masters of the same or similar work.

The greater the mastery, the less other people can understand it. The less you know about something, the easier it is to tell all you know. The more you know, the more impossible telling all becomes. With time, masters become aware of privacy, even loneliness. There is also a sense of fulfillment – with well-earned intrinsic self-satisfaction. The opinions of those who don't understand lose significance whether they offer praise or criticism. The people whose praise or criticism matters are limited to those few who are close enough and experienced enough to really know.

A Fourth Pattern (which is a variation of self-focused)

Some people are brought into an organization and never master the work. From the start, they do as little as they can to get by. Once they have demonstrated this a few times, the chance that they will be invited to take on more important challenges declines and disappears. With time they tend to feign disinterest and become cynical of anything that sounds like genuine accomplishment. They look upon people as suckers if they take pride in their accomplishments. They become locked into the first pattern of behaviors, driven predominantly by self-needs.

Unfortunately, this can also happen to people who did master - who accomplished good work and experienced the pride and enthusiasm of accomplishment. As they accumulated accomplishments and self-confidence, the challenge and excitement of repeating the same accomplishments declined. If new challenges had become available, the excitement would likely have returned. Or they might have left the work to find new challenges on another job but mortgages, living expenses, status, etc. can trap people in jobs with no apparent alternatives. When the challenges disappear, the attitudes and behaviors of mastery gradually fade into boredom.

Locked into positions that cease to be stimulating, they tend to regress into self-focused attitudes. Security and comfort once again dominate their thinking. People who recently attacked problems with vigor find themselves using more energy to prove that nothing can be done than it would have taken to fix the problem many times over. They find comfort in privacy and mindless routines that require the bare minimum of energy that their boredom provides.

How these Attitudes Blend in Individuals and Organizations

It would be much too simplistic to think of all small children as completely self-focused, all teen-agers as totally socially focused and all adults as confidently and single-mindedly focused on reality. Young children experience needs for acceptance before they are teens and they also learn some skills that include reality. While many teenagers are heavily focused on the social aspects of becoming an adult, they continue to feel self-needs and they accumulate more skills that include reality. Throughout life needs, values, behaviors and attitudes continue as a blend. It is this blend that we find in

organizational life. And, as we do things that affect this blend, the strength of the organization waxes and wanes.

Still, while acknowledging the complexity of the mix, it is helpful to understand the three major patterns. They help us to understand what is going on, why things go well or poorly and what we can do to improve matters.

The Attitudes of the Workplace

In spite of the fact that they are adults and performing in the workforce, some people are still dominated by self-attitudes. "What's in it for me?" appears to dominate their perception of everything.

Others are still dominated by the social values of adolescence. They hold simplistic views of right and wrong and persist in jumping to superficial conclusions and finding fault. Within the organization their faultfinding tends to focus on managers and people in other departments.

Then there are those who dig into the work and get on with it. They appear to have little concern about rewards and politics and become intensely interested in the work.

How this Blend Equates with Success

The healthier the organization, the higher the percentage of time its people devote to reality and realistic activities. Bureaucracies tend to tie up large amounts of their people's time following procedures mindlessly. This keeps people focused on immature attitudes, doing things to stay out of trouble or to please someone (self or social focus). As a result their accomplishments are weak when compared with organizations that have large amounts of their people's time working realistically, as responsible adults.

Summary of the Three Attitude Patterns

	Self-focused	Other-Focused (Social)	Reality Focused
Attitudes	Defensive progresses into greedy	Self righteous	Objective
Ideals	Limited, for personal gain	Justice, unrealistically high, double standard, critical of authority	Realistic and serving as motivators for action
Needs	Security, comfort and possessions	Acceptance, support from others, camaraderie	Self satisfaction, respect from those who know
Behaviors	Acquiring rewards, scams, beating the system	Judging, scapegoating, praise and blame, politics	Accomplishing results
Use Knowledge	For personal gain	To establish credit and blame	To produce results
Character	Phony	Sincere	Capable
Strength	Simple	Speak out against abuse	Skills
Weakness	Undependable	Divisive, superficial	Private
Views of Others	I'm no worse than anyone else. They are all in it for themselves - everyone.	People fit in two groups, those who care only for themselves and those who care for others.	There are people who get things done and there are others who are primarily interested in who gets what.

Read these columns vertically to get a mental picture of people dominated by each of the three patterns. Read the rows, from left to right to get a mental picture of the way people progress through these patterns. Then remember that people operate with a blend of all of these and it is the proportion that makes the difference.

Specific Problem Attitudes

Don't Make a Wave

It is standard in bureaucratic organizations and societies for people to conform. Prevailing opinions and existing work processes are comfortable. On the other hand, if the waves are being made for political reasons they shouldn't be made. Like most clichés, this is simplistic. When reality is telling us something should be changed we should do it and vice-versa.

It's Not My Responsibility

When things go wrong they need to be fixed. Bureaucratic rules, jurisdiction rights, job descriptions and the like simply should not be allowed to interfere with taking actions that are needed. Masters stick their necks out when reality demands.

If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It

This simplistic attitude implies that we should only improve when we have to. By this standard we would pass by multi-million dollar opportunities. In fact, we would still be using clay tablets if we had gotten that far. There is nothing wrong with fixing something that is working excellently as long as the fix has it working even better. As always, the key is in the reality of the change itself, not in the cliché.

Defensive Records, "CYA"

The more people exert themselves to cover possibilities of failure, the less they are able to focus on doing things right. Immature people tend to feel great need for defenses. The more defenses they create the more goes wrong and the harder it is to spot the flaws. People can get so many defensive records established that it becomes almost impossible to see what is going on. Masters get on with work, confident that they can handle the problems as they arise. *"Not to be suspicious of fraud nor to expect deceit, but to be the first to perceive their presence, that is to be man of the highest caliber."* Confucius

Murphy's Law

The idea that anything that can possibly go wrong will go wrong at the worst time is generally said tongue in cheek and is of little consequence. As long as there are masters at work the things that go wrong are attended to. But, when people are more bent on blaming than fixing, things go wrong and operations stop. Things do go wrong. Everything that can go wrong certainly does not go wrong. If this is used as an excuse rather than a harmless comment, it is symptomatic of bureaucratic excuse making. In organizations of masters almost everything goes right and what doesn't is promptly fixed.

The Squeaky Wheel Gets the Grease

Masters tend to work quietly. People who are less mature tend to make more noise. The attitude of tending to the squeaky wheels catches organizations up in endless rounds of attending to distracting social issues and pursuing superficial ideas. Carried to an extreme, it assures that immature, politicians wind up in the key positions

Clerical Mentality

This is the flip side of the squeaky wheel attitude. Many diligent capable masters stick quietly to their work only to be written off as a detail person. They may in fact be brilliant and highly creative. Organizations that push opportunities down to these people often get magnificent surprises.

Management Will Never Buy It

Sometimes employees are convinced that management would never go along with the things that they are sure would improve the organization. Especially when management is feared, this becomes a comfortable excuse for not bothering to ask. And, of course, they will never buy it if they don't even hear it. This is addressed again later under self-fulfilling prophecies.

Secret Projects

Management is often tempted to keep their plans for improving the company secret. This makes it almost impossible to tap into the details of the current methods, which are known to the operating people but not to management. It also results in superficial solutions although they don't appear to be superficial to management and consultants who are operating from a distance. These superficial solutions tend to be fine with immature employees whose views tend to be superficial as well. And, the immature people often see process change, particularly if it is dramatic, as an opportunity to ride ahead on the coattails of change. Meanwhile, when masters are confronted with mandated changes that have been designed by people who know less about the work than they do, they don't like it. The focus of the changes is invariably more on equipment and technology than on the mission of the organization. This approach is one that promotes superficiality and encourages masters to leave. Goodbye corporate memory.

Preconceived Solutions

There are many variations on this theme. All of them involve jumping to conclusions based on superficial thinking. The less people know, the simpler it seems. What appears obvious and wonderful to people who don't really know the work may be clearly unworkable to those who know it well. Sooner or later reality will be the judge of every installed solution. It is better when we listen to reality before we invest and commit. Masters, who have a firm grip on reality, can do that.

Justification Study

This is another variation of a preconceived solution with an insidious twist. When a commitment to some new system has been made, it is time to get on with it and make it work as best you can. But if there are doubts and someone who has a handle on the facts is asked to check it out, management must be willing to accept a negative finding. If the justification study is nothing more than assembling supporting data to endorse a preconceived solution, it's a game not to be condoned by masters, a ploy to line up someone to take the blame if it fails – who certainly won't get the credit if it succeeds. The word "study" deserves respect. It implies we begin as students ready to learn and prepared to allow reality to tell us how it wants to be.

Reinventing the Wheel

This is a cliché that has cost industry billions in wasted effort on canned solutions. Of course the wheel is a fundamental discovery. So is the alphabet. There are many things that are basic enough that we simply make use of them. But to equate the detailed structure of a procedure with the basic simplicity of the concept of a wheel is inappropriate. When this cliché is used to sell canned processes designed at a considerable distance from the reality of the organization in which they will be used, it is little more than hype. Over and over again this has happened. Managers buy solutions, undercut their masters, and promote younger people. These younger people are excited about equipment, which they know but they know the reality of their business only superficially. Another affront to the corporate memory.

Panaceas

Whether it is an illiterate frontiersman spending a dollar for snake oil or an executive with a post-graduate degree spending millions for an enterprise system doesn't matter. When people buy things that they don't understand they are vulnerable. The more that is promised, the more wary they should be. Invariably the panaceas that claim to hold answers to all of the problems of the organization are superficial. They are also an affront to the masters of the organization. If there is ever any panacea to be had, it is the enthusiastic pride of a cadre of masters in command of the reality of an organization.

Start with a Clean Slate

Clean slate - Tabula Rasa – a mind not yet affected by experience. To ignore the accumulated wisdom of an organization is to imply it is worthless. To knowingly replace this tested wisdom with new processes that are untried is foolhardy and analogous to the message of, "The Lord of the Flies". (A story of civilization lost and a return to savagery.) But it is attractive to those who lack access to the detailed knowledge of the organization. The better alternative is continuous improvement conducted by the masters of the organization.

Also, the Clean Slate approach chucks out the old process without looking at it. This means that a new process replaces the old in its entirety. It is not a question of modifying those portions that are not working well. We abandon that which is excellent as well. Then, if the new process is superficially designed there will very likely be portions that aren't nearly as good as those they replaced.

All or Nothing – Take It or Leave It

The concept of integration of systems has caused some people to adopt an attitude of "take it or leave it". It is as if once a process is designed it will be so completely integrated, with everything depending on everything else, that it must be bought in its entirety. Most people who have had experience in process improvement are well aware that the possibilities for customizing are endless. Excellence requires continuously

improving those things that can be improved. Organizations should not commit to processes that continuously restrict the performance of the people – where their masters know things could be done better but where they can do nothing about it.

The alternative is to manage processes continuously. Maintain a library of charts drawn at the elemental level. Working at the elemental level permits changing as much or as little of a process as is appropriate.

Perfection

Pursuit of perfection sure sounds good. Unfortunately, it focuses on flaw. The return on investment of perfection is terrible. It takes forever, as the benefits get smaller and smaller. Trivial details hold up marvelous opportunities from being realized.

Departmental Rivalries

No matter how well people know their own work, their knowledge of the work in other departments will be less. Superficial assumptions lead to misunderstandings and antagonisms. Sometimes departments find themselves working at cross-purposes. This is not an area where the masters in the departments can help unless they have access to one another. And, that is the way to get past departmental rivalries. Get the best people from the different departments working together on improving processes that involve them all. This work generally leads to knowledge and respect replacing superficial negative assumptions.

Not Invented Here - NIH

This cliché is generally used to criticize organizations for being proud of what they have developed for themselves. Think about that for a moment. Who is doing this criticizing? Why are they doing it? As with most clichés, it is simplistic. Of course, it doesn't matter where an idea comes from. The important thing is how well it works. Ignoring options for improvement simply because they were first thought of by someone else is silly. However, when ideas come from outside they must pass muster with the masters inside to assure that they will work. Since masters focus on reality and are objective NIH is a non-issue. It becomes an issue only if the people are not performing as masters.

Credit and Blame

Immature people operating politically play many games over credit and blame. These games offend the people who know. In an organization that really wants mastery, they will avoid these games. It should be unthinkable to steal credit or duck blame. That is at the heart of responsibility. The best leaders shoulder blame publicly. If they must reprimand they do so privately. And, they distribute credit to those who have earned it publicly.

Getting on the Bandwagon

Jealousy over credit leads some people to be critical of those who join in when it appears that something is going to be successful. Forget it. When a project gains momentum, cherish it. Momentum is a most crucial factor in success.

Resistance to Change

The people who are most bothered by resistance to change are usually those who are trying to accomplish change. The more enthusiastic they are about the changes they are promoting, the more resistance they seem to run into. A lot of that is merely perceptual. They are simply moving faster than the others are prepared to move. If they slowed down to the pace of the others, a lot of the resistance would disappear. Unfortunately, in many cases so would all progress. But, what if they slowed down to the pace of the others and then invited them to become a part of it and share the enthusiasm? That is what teamwork does for effective process improvement projects.

Bootleg Forms

Here again we find an attitude of criticism directed at someone who has taken responsibility. People don't use bootleg forms because there is some perverse pleasure derived from designing and using them. They do it to get the job done. If there is a service that can help them to do it better and easier, it should be welcome. If they have no idea how to avail themselves of that service, that should be addressed. If availing themselves of that service is more difficult than doing it themselves, that should be addressed.

Paralysis of Analysis

Some organizations plan and plan but never seem to be able to execute. It may be lack of resources. It may be lack of mastery. It may be lack of support for the masters who are there. Or it may simply be that they don't know how to execute change. Mastery at doing work does not prepare a person to be a master at changing it. Changing it requires support from many people with a lot of coordination. As a result well thought through improvements deteriorate into 'muddling through' when it comes to implementation. This in turn fosters an attitude of, "Leave it alone. It's working well enough." A far better alternative is to supply the necessary leadership support and in addition provide project management instruction and assistance so that the organization can identify the activities required for implementation and see that they are done.

Savings – Are They Real

A common attitude toward improvement savings is that they aren't real unless they produce dollars. If unnecessary work is eliminated but not enough to discharge an employee, the employee is still being paid; therefore there are no savings. If we are operating with a value system that says people are expenses, there are no savings. But, if we are operating with a value system that says people are resources, there is a definite

savings. We now have a resource available for that amount of time that was previously being wasted. The dollar value of that time is a very real savings.

Police It or Take Pride in It

When a new or improved process is installed there is often frustration that people don't do it the way it was planned. If this is because they have not been informed, the answer is better training. *"To expect performance without proper advisement is ridiculous."* Confucius. However, once the advisement has been properly made, what will assure that it is followed? There are two alternative routes. One is to keep checking up on people and 'police' the process. The other is to encourage the people to be proud of themselves. In an organization of immature people, it is generally felt that the former is necessary and doing so tends to keep the organization immature. Pride as a motivator for performance knocks the socks off of policing.

General Dos and Don'ts for Dealing with Attitudes

DO	DON'T
Treat employees as resources and earn loyalty by maintaining unfaltering commitment to employees.	Treat employees like expenses to get rid of at the first opportunity. Downsize.
Keep the organization healthy and financially sound.	Allow the organization to deteriorate – raiding and pocketing assets.
Give employees the opportunity to make important, needed contributions so that they are valuable to the organization.	Keep employees tied up in mindless routine – fixed in job descriptions with little opportunity for growth.
Let the normal pace of work be relaxed but accomplish much because of skill – Work smarter not harder.	Keep people working under constant pressure or having to fake it – looking busy.
Pay well and expect much.	Routinize the work and pay little.
Make sure operating people own their processes and are responsible for their work.	Treat operating people as users who follow instructions.
Keep attention focused on accomplishments.	Keep attention focused on pay and benefits.
Reward merit and specific accomplishments.	Reward all alike. Promote politically.
Involve operating people in process-study so that they learn how their work fits into the bigger picture.	Leave process-study to staff people who are responsible for the big picture.
Use charts that show how work is actually done documented in plain language.	Keep things ambiguous so that there is always room to maneuver.

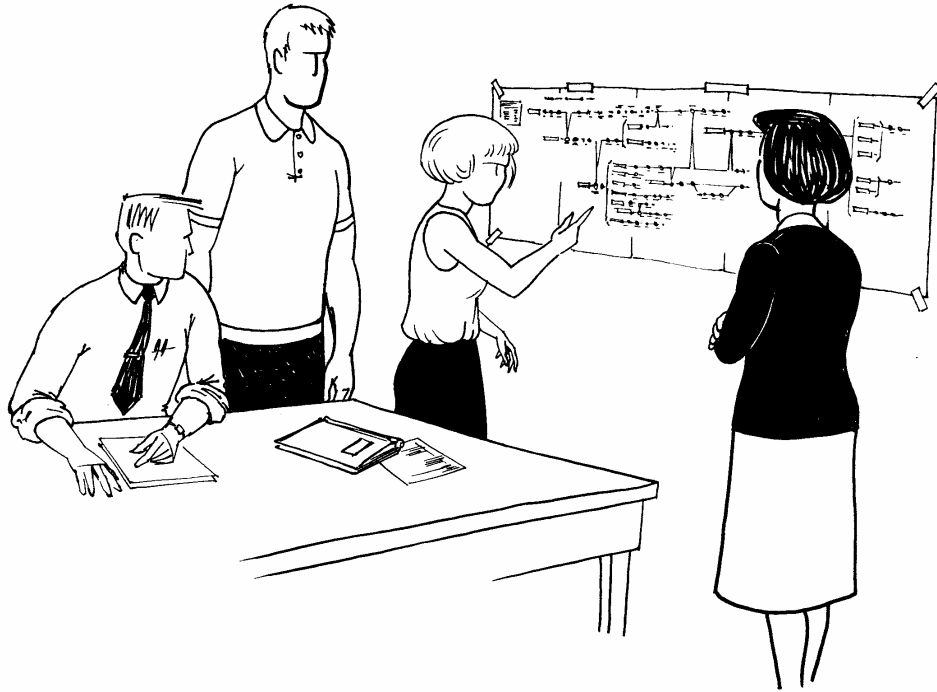
Mix new people with veterans on the job and on improvement teams.	Locate newcomers together in one group and veterans in another.
Focus on the main mission of the organization.	Focus on the appearances.
Be willing to depend on employees to meet new challenges.	Go outside to find impressive people to meet new challenges.
Entertain improvement possibilities from any source but accept only those tested with charts by experienced employees.	Commit the organization to improvements that have prestigious backing and mandate that they be adopted ASAP.
Where two alternatives are otherwise equal always use the simpler.	Where two alternatives are otherwise equal use the more complex.
Put a premium on common sense.	Put a premium on sophisticated and elegant.

Strategies for Building Cooperation

The Self Fulfilling Prophecy

The simplest strategy is to treat everyone as though they are always ready to cooperate to the best of their abilities. Many will try to measure up. Unfortunately, managers often treat people as though they can't be depended upon to cooperate and they don't. Bureaucracies tend to foster a lot of this negative self-fulfilling prophecy. Managers underestimate their people and their people get used to it. Employees distrust their bosses so they don't try to help them. They don't believe their bosses will go along with changes they would like to see made so they don't bother to suggest them and sure enough their bosses don't go along. How could they? Interdepartmental hostilities flourish as groups retaliate for imagined slights. And on and on it goes – negative self-fulfilling prophecies steadily reinforcing themselves.

But, even in the worst bureaucracies people can change. The key is to invite cooperation. Set up situations for cooperation and follow through. Assume that people would prefer to be proud of their efforts and help them to earn that pride. The idea is to replace negative self-fulfilling prophecies with positive.



Process Improvement

One of the finest ways of establishing situations to bring out the best in people is to involve them on process improvement teams. Being a part of a team downplays self-focused attitudes. For people locked into social-focused attitudes, studying the work replaces superficial opinions with facts. Working with people from other work areas lifts the reality-focused masters out of their privacy into a forum where they can effectively share their skills. And, past masters who have regressed into self-focused attitudes generally react to the new challenges with a return to mastery.

Care should be taken when forming a team to have each work area represented by at least one first-string veteran. There can be other team members who are less experienced or old timers whose experience is obsolete. But, the first string veterans set the tone for the group. When this is done effectively, the team members perform as a group of masters during the project regardless of the attitudes they brought to the project. After the project they can return to less mature attitudes if they like, but at least they do it with better processes. However, once they have had a taste of mastery with its accomplishments and pride, some of them would prefer more of the same.

Seek Transparency

Getting facts into the open replaces superficial misinformation with reality. Detailed process charts help to achieve this by showing what is happening step by step. When teams of people from different departments who have different interests review these charts, it sets the stage for win-win solutions. Opportunities for improvement are

chosen based on how well they serve the organization not one group or another. These opportunities become so apparent that realistic changes can actually be made.

Unfortunately, depending on their maturity, people bring many dysfunctional motives to their organizations. By obscuring what is happening, bureaucracy allows ulterior motives to thrive. Ambiguity allows people to twist facts and play self-serving games. As the amount of this behavior increases people know it is happening and know it is condoned. It becomes accepted. However, transparency makes these behaviors more obvious and tends to quash the ulterior motives – to reduce the irresponsible game playing. Self-seeking things that people might readily try to pull off in private are less likely to be proposed in public. Transparency gets more people working together to come up with solutions that meet all of their needs – solutions that they don't mind supporting publicly.

A Fifth Pattern (A blend of reality and social-focus)

While there are many variations on the basic patterns discussed earlier in this article, there is one more specific variation worth noting here. Some people manage their self-needs very well so that they are comfortably secure. They manage their social needs so that they have a strong sense of belonging. They manage their reality needs so that they have a strong sense of fulfillment.

As these people grow bored with repeating their accomplishments, they are able to shift to new challenges directed at higher purposes. They arrive at a pattern of attitudes that combines the high ideals of their socially-focused attitudes with the confidence that grew out of their reality-focused accomplishments.

The exploding technology of today calls for many of these people. These are people who will see to it that education prepares people for the thrill of living and not just a bigger paycheck. They will make sure that social wrongs do not tie up vast quantities of energy in senseless bickering. They will release the energies of a professional society to the benefit of mankind.

Today we live in a society that has more professionals than any other category of employment. Unfortunately, many forces interfere with the development of the responsible attitudes that professionalism requires. Bureaucracy replaces common sense with arbitrary nonsense. Explosions of available information create not wisdom but superficial information fads. And, this frustrates entry into adulthood. People are locked into canned views of the world that model on "The Emperor's New Clothes". Hype abounds. Divisiveness over non-issues turns wonderful people into enemies.

We may have a lot but it is getting a whole lot harder to grow up. The following ten thoughts offer guidelines for professionals in shaping their attitudes, values and behaviors to measure up to the challenge of true professionalism.

Ten Thoughts for a Systems Professional

Reward	It is not wrong to desire wealth and honor but the desire to merit them will always be greater in the true professional
Honesty	You market your knowledge but if you can't be trusted, of what value are your skills.
Politics	A professional who takes sides in organizational politics makes lasting enemies and wary friends.
Rank	Do not confuse high position or title with knowledge. If the chief executive knows more about the filing system than the file clerk, the organization has deep trouble.
Sources	When seeking people as sources of knowledge and ideas, go where the knowledge is. Do not be put off if they are unfriendly. Do not be shy if they are prestigious. Do not pass them by if they are of low rank.
Appearance	Do not place great emphasis on your appearance using it to impress or allowing it to detract. Let your appearance be no more than appropriate while your performance shines.
Skill	Know the tools of your profession so well that they need not occupy your attention. Then you can give proper attention to what you are accomplishing.
Facts	Gather facts at the source. Capture them the same day. Do not lose them by being disorganized or forgetful.
Mood	Do not let your performance depend upon your mood. Learn to control your mood so that you can put yourself into the frame of mind to provide your professional best at any time.
Yourself	You will never affect anything in your life more important or more completely than yourself. If you do not manage yourself well what will you do with your professional responsibilities?

Summary

Understanding the three basic attitude patterns can help individuals to become masters of their chosen fields. These understandings can also help executives to build masterful organizations by providing a climate that invites responsible behavior. They can also guide governments past partisan bickering and into the realm of statesmanship. In all cases the gains come by getting closer to and performing in greater harmony with reality.