

## The Secret to Solving Employee Attitude Problems

Board members can meddle in your operations, customers can scream bloody murder into your phone about rates, but it seems it's the employee attitude problems that are what stick in your guts when you drive home at night. The nasty brush-offs to requests for help; the relentless fault-finding of co-workers' every move; and the reactions to your instructions that sound like you're demanding acts of martyrdom. Those are the people who seem committed to thwarting your every effort to build a pleasant, productive workplace. Isn't there *something* you can do about them?

Yes, there is. But it starts by remembering what I believe is among the most fundamental rules of people management:

You can't manage attitude.

Read that again: You can't manage attitude.

Sustained, meaningful changes in people's "attitude" are the results of sincere religious conversions, years of psychotherapy, or brain surgery. You're not good at any of those.

But you don't have to be, because a "good attitude" is not a part of anyone's job. Where in your problem child's job description does it say, "must be happy?" Nowhere. Do you have a "good attitude" about board member micromanagement, or raving-mad customers? That's absurd, because your attitude in these matters is irrelevant to your success at dealing with them. It's true for you, and it's true for your employees – including your problem children.

It's not the goings-on in employees' minds that are your problem (or your business). What's bothering you are the lack of cooperation, the hypercriticism of coworkers, and the difficult responses to your every instruction.

These are behaviors. Behaviors you can manage.

You have no right to expect employees to like each other, or to like you. What you have every right to expect, and should insist upon, is that employees exhibit courteous, professional behavior to one another and to members of the public. Work with your "attitude problems" on those terms, and you'll stand your best chance to build that positive work environment you're trying to provide.

You can't read minds, so stop trying. And remember: There's only one attitude you can manage – your own.