

By Dr Victor S.L. Tan

**I remember a few years ago, when I was delivering a talk to a room packed with chief executive officers from different countries in Asia, I posed a simple but powerful question: What kind of work attitudes would you like your staff to have?**

**While the answers regarding the desired work attitudes may be put in different ways, most of the responses can be grouped into five categories which I believe comprised the attitude of success in the workplace.**

#### 'It is possible' attitude

1

In the midst of facing a great challenge, where many become negative, it is always encouraging to hear an employee exert that it is possible to solve the problem.

Such people believe that anything is possible if one has the mindset, the will and persistence to pursue the goal till it is achieved. This kind of employee subscribes to the philosophy of "whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve". They simply start by doing what's needed, then they do what's possible, and next they attempt what was thought impossible. With their effort, perseverance and grit, they soon overcome the odds — stretching themselves from impossible to "I'm possible"

#### 'I am responsible' attitude

2

Many employees are trapped by circumstances, excuses and blame. They become victims due to their attitude of not taking responsibility. However, the moment one takes full responsibility towards a situation, one escapes the clutch of being a victim. As the saying goes, "life is 10 per cent what happens to you and 90 per cent how you respond to what happens". When an employee accepts the personal responsibility of his circumstances, he increases the power to change them and takes a step closer to becoming a winner.

#### 'Taking initiative' attitude

3

There is one thing that most leaders value highly about their subordinates — doing the right thing at the right time without being told. There are many employees who are too dependent on instructions to do things. Worse, some need to be monitored and pressured into doing things. Chief executive officers need employees who are independent in their thinking and who take initiative to do things and create productive change.

Employees should heed United States President Barack Obama's words: "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek".

#### 'Do whatever it takes' attitude

4

One CEO confided in me that he gets very upset each time his staff tells him he will try his best to get something done. He pointed out that trying at something comes across as lacking in self-belief and commitment. When he selects a leader to do something of significance, he does not want them to try to do. He wants them to do whatever it takes to achieve success. That's the kind of passion and determination he wants his top leaders to go about their work. An employee who would do whatever it takes to succeed is certainly a rare breed in organisations, and is certainly greatly sought after.

#### The solution-driven attitude

5

In truth, in the workplace and marketplace, all of us are paid to solve problems. Bosses are always on the lookout for employees who possess the right attitude towards a problem. Good employees diagnose the problem, ascertain the root causes and seek out possible solutions. They then weigh the pros and cons and select a practical and cost effective solution and implement it. The solution-driven employee is one who has the courage and perseverance to continue to seek solutions to complex or challenging problems.

In essence work attitudes arise from the thinking, beliefs and feelings of the employees about various aspects of work and the workplace. According to a Gallup study, negativity in the workplace cost the US economy between US\$250 billion to US\$300 billion a year. The best education, skills and talent is not a substitute for good work attitude. It is time leaders in organisations spend time moulding the work attitude of their staff to improve their organisation's performance. "Attitude," said Winston Churchill: "is a little thing that makes a big difference." Companies can make a big difference in their performance if they start inculcating the five most desired attitudes of employees.

# THE ATTITUDES OF SUCCESS AT WORK

