

Changing Attitudes

Conveying your passion and positivity about the product you sell to your customers could create a far-reaching domino effect.

Some people say attitudes can't be modified or changed by others. Instead, they are something that is personal and the change has to come from within. I can fondly (well, vividly, anyway) remember some of the attitude-adjusting discussions my dad and I had as I was growing up, especially when he didn't necessarily agree with my point of view or some of the decisions I made or was considering making. He had an innate ability to get me to see another approach or to challenge the direction of my thought processes.

My three children have been the beneficiaries of some of my attitude-adjustment discussions over the years that helped formulate their activities, directions and approaches to life experiences. At least some of it must have stuck, because they are all successful, well-grounded, well-rounded and productive young adults who are prepared to share their experience with their kids when they have them. (What goes around comes around!)

These educational sessions weren't so much berating me or my kids for things we were doing wrong (most of the time, anyway) but more an opportunity to expand our thought processes and a challenge to look beyond our own limited, experience-based perspectives to view things or situations in a different light or from a different angle. Sometimes, we get caught in a rut that limits our ability to see the big picture or the long-term impact of our actions and thoughts, and we need some outside influence to help adapt our attitudes and perspectives for the better.

Sometimes we develop tunnel vision that limits our perspective and potential. It's not due to a conscious effort to shut out the rest of the world and the opportunities; instead, it's because we all tend to get so consumed by our day-to-day lives and activities that it's tough to break out of our daily routines.

Eye of the Tiger

We've all seen them: individuals who have great skills or knowledge but fail to reach their potential because "they have a lousy attitude." Yet some people with more limited skills succeed because they have a positive attitude or approach to their jobs or lives. It's rare for people with great skills also to have a great attitude, but when the two are combined, the results are awesome!

One individual who personifies this is Tiger Woods. He has great skills as a golfer, and he reinvents himself and improves his game mechanics on a regular basis. There are other golfers who

have equally good mechanics but aren't nearly as successful on the pro tour.

What sets Tiger apart is his attitude, how he approaches and plays the game. Clearly, Tiger Woods has outstanding golfing skills and mechanics, but he credits his own success to his attitude, the way he thinks and the way he approaches the game. One of his tour sponsors is Accenture, a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, and they've built a whole ad campaign around Tiger's unique point of differentiation. Two of the campaign's tag lines that communicate the "Tiger advantage" are, "Aptitude: 50%, Attitude: 50%" and "Seeing the Parts: 30%, Seeing the Big Picture: 70%."

In past columns, I've talked about the need to harness our passion for what we do and the products we're blessed to work with, and the opportunity to communicate this to our customers. While I think most of us see the opportunity and potential in this goal when we read and think about it, when we get back in the trenches the next day, the everyday demands of our jobs clouds our ability to execute it. The understanding and desire are still there, but for many reasons, it drops down on our priority list, and it just doesn't happen.



By Stan Pohmer

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Gabriel Becerra, president and CEO of Golden Flowers, a cut flower importer in Miami that sells product through the traditional retail-florist channel, has a unique perspective on what he does for a living. When asked what he sells, he responds, "I sell smiles" or "I sell emotions," while most other importers would simply say, "I sell flowers."

Yes, at the end of the day, Becerra still sells flowers, but his approach and attitude changes the way his company operates and how his customers perceive him, especially when compared with other flower importers.

At a meeting I attended with Becerra in January, we were discussing the need for marketing and promotion to help increase consumption, ♦

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something our industry has talked about for years, but for a lot of reasons — lack of funding, divisive and competing retail channels, fragmentation of our industry — we've never been able to make this happen. One point he made still sticks in my mind. He said that with promotion, we'd have to change the buying

behaviors and attitudes of 300 million people, a tremendous opportunity but a daunting marketing challenge. But then he pointed out that the floral industry is made up of roughly 300,000 people. Wouldn't it be easier to change their attitudes and empower them to help change the perspectives of those 300 mil-

lion consumers by sharing our passion and positive attitudes about our industry? A positive attitude doesn't cost a lot to build or create, but the results can be powerful and far reaching!

Starting with his own company, Becerra began changing attitudes, first by personal example, then by

discussing the potential and finally by making it part of his company culture and corporate DNA. To make this attitude visible, he asked his employees to wear a button he designed that says, "Helping People Express Feelings With Flowers."

Some of his team thought this was a bit on the hokey side at first, but as people outside the company started to ask what the button's message meant, they had to explain the power that flowers have — the emotional and psychological benefits of giving, receiving and just being around them — and started to become more enthusiastic, inspired and energized. They started realizing and communicating their passion.

Thankfully, Gabriel has a new passion: championing this attitude-changing initiative to the entire industry. He's created a website, www.expressfeelingswithflowers.com, to help communicate this concept to the flower industry and is preaching his gospel everywhere he goes.

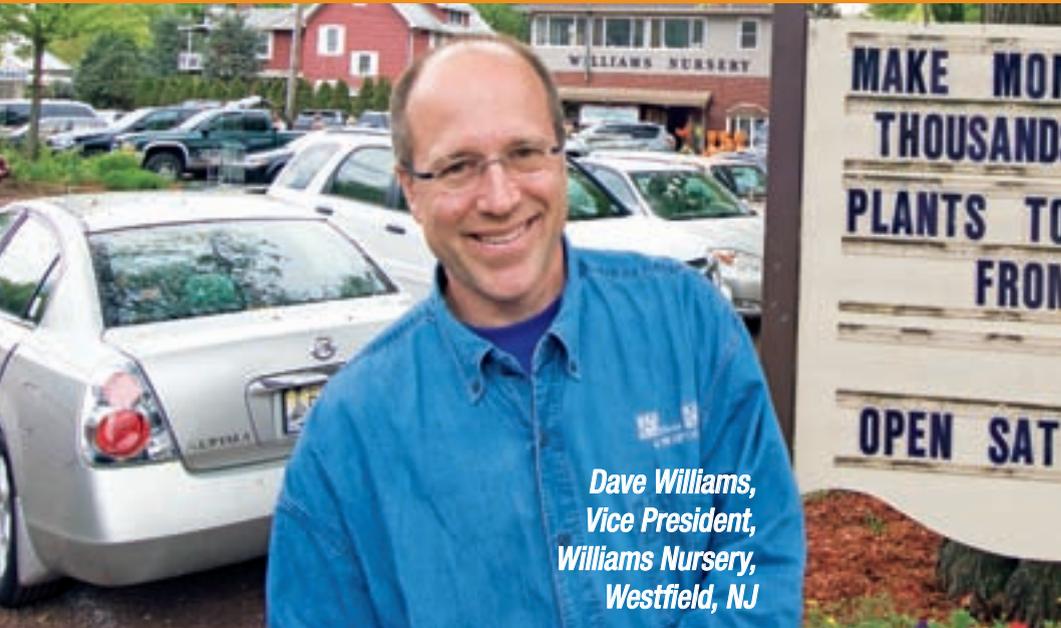
Maybe his emotional message doesn't translate to trees and shrubs or annuals, or to some mass-market operators at the consumer level. But his core message crosses all categories and venues. It's up to you to determine what your attitude-changing message should be for your company, product or sector, but harnessing the power of this concept has the power to be industry changing and, if our positive attitudes are communicated to the consumer through our one-on-one interactions, their attitudes about our products can change for the better, too.

Changing attitudes: This could be the start of something big...

Stan Pohmer is president of Pohmer Consulting Group in Minnetonka, Minn. He can be reached at spohmer@pohmer-consulting.com or (952) 545-7943.

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