

11 Ways to Lose Your Family, Friends, and Job

by *Betsy Barbieux*

It's February -- the time of year to show appreciation to those around you. Friends and family will send cards, flowers, and candy or make telephone calls to those who are special to them. Neighbors will stop by for friendly visits. You'll take a little longer at lunch to catch up on the news from your friends. Appreciation is the attitude of the month. What a perfect time for random acts of kindness. This month just feels good.

Suddenly your eyes pop open and you feel that sleepy smile fading away with the dream. Reality sets in as your foggy mind wakes up. You're the manager of a condominium association. What could you have possibly been dreaming? Your mailbox is not full of cards nor is your desk covered with flowers and candy. A friendly neighbor? A random act of kindness? And you've never had a long lunch - ever! The only notes you receive are complaints and the phone calls are from the self-appointed resident who is overseeing the concrete restoration project.

But wait, do YOU send cards, flowers, and candy or make telephone calls to those who are special to you? No? Well, it's been said you receive what you give. But paradoxically, if you give in order to receive, you won't receive. You must give with the right attitude and motive.

Attitude and motive are two very powerful qualities. In fact, Carol Kleiman writes "attitude . . . the word is emerging as a key factor in career advancement." She differentiates between a positive attitude, "She has an excellent attitude and deserves a promotion," and a negative one. "He has an attitude problem, and I'd love to get rid of him."

A positive attitude is hopeful, grateful, authentic, and satisfied. A negative attitude is selfish, stingy, manipulating, and lonely. It could cost you a raise or promotion; it could cost you your health, and it could even cost you your job.

So what is a negative attitude? Here are 11 examples. Any combination of these will be the best way to lose your family, friends, employees, or job.

1. I cannot let others be wrong without attempting to correct them.
2. I condemn others and often wish them punished.
3. I do my own thinking and make my own decisions.
4. I exaggerate and lie to maintain my self-image.
5. I belittle my own talents, possessions, and achievements.
6. I habitually deny, alibi, justify, or rationalize my mistakes and defeats.
7. I am critical and belittling of others.
8. I am prejudiced toward racial, ethnic, or religious groups.
9. I blame others for my handicaps, problems, and mistakes.

10. I take disagreements personally and feel put down and rejected.

11. I boast about myself, my possessions, and achievements.

If you find yourself without friends or a job, you might trade your negative attitude for a positive one.

Equally important is motive. It's "why you do what you do." Motives can be genuine or selfish. Genuine motive is defined as doing the right thing for the right reason. Be aware, it is possible to do the right thing for the wrong reason. Motives have to be genuine and expect nothing in return. For instance, giving praise to an employee can come from a pure motive or it can come from a selfish one. Genuine praise for work well done is authentic when it comes from a grateful attitude. It is well received when the praise is specific. Praise will not be received well when it is given selfishly. Your employees will feel just like the little boy who said to his mother after she "praised" him, "you're just telling me I did a good job because you want me to do more." Bingo. The little boy "read" his mom's real motive even though she did not state it.

The by-products of genuine motive are rapport and empathy. Rapport says "we have something in common, you can trust me, I'm on your side." It makes the other person feel part of the team in resolving issues at hand. Rapport looks for win-win solutions for both parties whenever possible. Use tones, words, and concepts that are similar to the other person to establish rapport, but don't mimic accents or gestures. Avoid any "industry specific" words the other person doesn't understand. Be sensitive to their level of vocabulary. Rapport should put you in synch with the other person.

Empathy is not the same as sympathy. Sympathy is feeling sorrow or pity for the pain or distress of another person. Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand another person's feelings or difficulties because you have experienced similar ones. Empathy validates another's feelings. Validating is not the same as condoning. Validating is not the same as agreeing, pardoning, or excusing. Empathy puts to words the feelings of another. Empathy does not say to another "You should not feel that way. Get over it. Move on." Those words may need to come later in the conversation, but not at the beginning when empathy is needed.

When the confused, embarrassed, and frustrated resident yells about the rules violation letter he received, the empathetic receptionist will respond, "Mr. Smith, I can tell you are very frustrated. Yes, sir, I understand that you are embarrassed. I would be too." It's very possible that having someone validate his embarrassment will be enough. He'll voluntarily comply and no further action will be taken against him.

Managers who report they enjoy their work at their communities appear to have learned to take control of their attitudes, examine their motives, establish rapport, and practice empathetic listening. They like their residents and are well liked in return. They receive compliments instead of complaints and have been at their properties for decades.

This month, they'll likely receive telephone calls, flowers, or lunch out just to say "thank you, you're special."

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