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CASE STUDY

Attitude is the Foundation of Your Success: *Write Your Own Case Study*

— Professor M.S. Rao, Ph.D., Hyderabad, India

Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to outline lessons on life, learning, and leadership to become a successful professional, entrepreneur, and leader. It unveils that attitude is the foundation of your success and elaborates with examples and illustrations. It explains employability, entrepreneurship, networking, soft skills, and hard skills. It explains the companies including Kodak, Nokia, and Blockbuster that failed to reinvent with changing times and technologies. It unveils the importance of technology and advises to learn, unlearn, and relearn. It illustrates the examples of companies including Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple. It implores you to achieve success with integrity. It reminds you that everything is possible in the world when you have an idea and a fire in your belly. It concludes to write your own case study to leave your leadership legacy.

Introduction

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

— Victor Frankl

In the 20th century, an extraordinary amount of research was done to find out what made people successful. It was revealed that it was the individual’s attitude that made him or her successful. Attitude is the main characteristic that is necessary for attaining success everywhere. It outsmarts intelligence, experience, abilities, skills, and capabilities. During the employment interview, the recruiters look for attitudes in the candidates. There is a slogan in HR circles, “Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill.”

Attitude is how people view individuals, events, circumstances, and situations. A positive attitude is the ability to remain upbeat despite encountering challenges. It is to accept the realities and remain positive and confident without getting provoked or irritated. A positive attitude increases your self-awareness and helps you understand what is under your control and what is not under your control. You accept the external circumstances that are beyond your control and learn to live with them with heightened optimism. It breaks barriers and builds bridges. It promotes fraternity – brotherhood *and* sisterhood. You empathize with others and build compassion to excel as a compassionate leader.

Positive Attitude versus Negative Attitude

“When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.”

— Helen Keller

Individuals with a positive attitude think that everything happens for a reason and all that happens is for good whereas individuals with a negative attitude think that it is the end of the road when things don't fall into place. Individuals with a positive attitude explore and extract opportunities from threats whereas individuals with a negative attitude explore and extract threats from opportunities. Individuals with a positive attitude look at the rising sun whereas individuals with a negative attitude look at the setting sun. Individuals with a positive attitude look at the silver lining over the dark cloud whereas individuals with a negative attitude look at the dark cloud. Individuals with a positive attitude are part of the solutions, not the problems, whereas individuals with a negative attitude are part of the problems, not the solutions. In a nutshell, individuals with a positive attitude are optimistic with a growth mindset whereas individuals with a negative attitude are pessimistic with a fixed mindset.

Individuals with a positive attitude are confident, optimistic, tolerant, flexible, adaptable, responsible, reliable, and humble. In contrast, individuals with a negative attitude are envious, pessimistic, feel inferior to others, and often spread hatred. The individuals with a neutral attitude are disconnected, detached, indifferent, and unemotional. When characterizing Roman leaders, Julius Caesar might be best described as having a positive attitude; Caligula, a negative attitude; and Nero, a neutral attitude.

Attitude with Examples and Illustrations

**"The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."
—John Milton**

Two mischievous students with a parrot teased the Wiseman. One of the students asked, "Wiseman, Wiseman, can you tell me if the parrot in my folded hands is dead or alive?" They thought if the Wiseman said that the parrot was alive, they would kill the parrot and prove the Wiseman wrong. If the Wiseman said that the parrot was dead, they decided to keep it alive and prove the Wiseman wrong. The Wiseman understood their intentions and replied, "It is in your hands whether you want to keep the parrot alive or dead." Your life is in your hands whether you want to become successful or fail.

Attitude is your ability to appreciate even your enemies when they do better than you. Winston Churchill once remarked, "Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference." Some of the leaders including Hitler and Mussolini destroyed the world with their negative attitudes and ambitions. The difference between Obama and Osama is the only attitude that made the former a hero while the latter a villain.

Attitude matters more in the current volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world. It is essential on campus within corporate environments as the negative attitude often kills productivity and performance in the workplace and further produces compromised students from educational institutions. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the importance of inculcating a positive attitude in individuals.

There is often a thin line that separates positive and negative attitudes. When individuals cross that thin line, they can become successful leaders. When you look at Obama and Osama, they were well-known leaders, but Obama had a positive attitude while Osama had a negative attitude. Undoubtedly, both were intelligent, but the former had a positive attitude while the latter had a negative attitude. When examining Winston Churchill and

Adolph Hitler, both were intelligent leaders and great orators. The former had a positive attitude while the latter had a negative attitude. It is obvious from these examples the importance of attitude over intelligence and eloquence.

Tools and Techniques to Improve Your Attitude

“The greatest discovery of any generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude.” — William James

Here are some tips to improve your attitude. Be positive. Visualize success. Set your goals as they remove negative thoughts from your mind and replace them with positive thoughts. Additionally, you are engaged constructively to lead your life with purpose and meaning. Surround yourself with positive and healthy people. Read good books. Learn, unlearn, and relearn. Learn from your failures. Pursue your passions and hobbies to engage your mind creatively. Acquire healthy habits. Do meditation, or yoga, or hit the gym regularly. Eat the right and healthy food. Stop complaining, criticizing, and condemning others. Be a giver, not a taker. Come out of your comfort zone and stretch yourself. Become a volunteer. Join nonprofits to serve others. Work for a cause, not for applause. Express your gratitude every day.

Improve Your Attitude with 5Es

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.” — Helen Keller

Attitude is the foundation of your success. It is essential to excel as a leader. The lion is the king of the jungle not because of its strength, but because of its attitude. The eagle is the leader among all birds not because of its size, but because of its attitude. You can improve your attitude with the 5Es — Education, Experience, Environment, Empathy, and Ethics. Emphasize the right education, experience, healthy environment, empathy, and ethics. Surround yourself with healthy friends and inspiring books. No matter where you come from, you can improve your attitude by emphasizing 5Es.

Life leadership is the ability to lead your life with purpose and meaning. It is to balance your personal, professional, and social life. The following are selected valuable lessons on life, learning, and leadership to pursue to become a successful professional and leader.

Enhance Your Employability

There is no permanent employment in the world. There is only permanent employability in the world. The days of permanent employment are gone. When students graduate from their educational institutions, they think that they have completed their education. Real education starts in the corporate world. What educational institutions offer them are paper qualifications. They acquire real qualifications through practical learning in the workplace.

Previously, there had been an emphasis on lifetime employment but presently there is an emphasis on employability. Japanese management believes in lifetime employment whereas American management believes in productivity and performance. Japanese management emphasizes people-orientation whereas American management emphasizes task-orientation. There is job security in Japanese management whereas there is no job security in American management. So, you must acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities

regularly to enhance your employability. Conventionally, employers shortlist employees. Unconventionally, employees shortlist employers. When you enhance your employability skills, there will be a significant demand for you and you will be able to shortlist your employers.

Build Your Network

One of the secrets of acquiring monetary wealth or staying wealthy is to pursue education in eminent educational institutions. The network in the eminent educational institutions helps you acquire employment offers and other opportunities. It is not *what* you know but *who* you know that matters when life when viewed in this manner. It helps fast-track your career. Educational institutions encourage alumni networking because they help enhance the brand image of the educational institutions. When educational institutions thrive, the interests of the alumni are protected. It is a win-win for both educational institutions and alumni.

Blend Hard and Soft Skills

“Mostly overlooked, soft skills play a large part in actually keeping one’s job. While people are hired for their hard skills like knowledge, oftentimes people get fired for their lack of soft skills, including their emotional intelligence.” —Professor M. S. Rao

Most people mistake soft skills for people skills. Soft skills are the skills and abilities related to your personality, attitude, and behavior. They are different from hard skills. Hard skills are your domain skills which are also known as technical competence. Soft skills help communicate with others pleasingly and politely in a polished language. They help deliver hard skills effectively. People are hired for hard skills but are fired due to a lack of soft skills. Hence, understand the importance of soft and hard skills and blend them effectively to achieve professional success. There was a famous story about Tom Watson, the founder of IBM. One of his subordinates had made a horrendous mistake that had cost the company ten million dollars. When he was called into Watson’s office, he said, “I suppose you want my resignation.” Watson looked at him and said, “Are you kidding? We just spent ten million dollars educating you.” Watson demonstrated soft skills successfully.

Learn, Unlearn, and Relearn

“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.” — Alvin Toffler

Companies including Kodak, Nokia, and Blockbuster have vanished from the market because they failed to reinvent as per the changing times and technologies. Currently, companies including Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple are ruling globally. If these companies fail to unlearn and relearn, they will vanish from the market. It is predicted that the most successful companies in the market presently may not exist after 10 years due to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIR).

Learn Lessons from Failures

Failure is considered a stigma in society. Failures teach many valuable lessons. A.P.J Abdul Kalam was rejected for the post of officer in the Indian Air Force. Subsequently, he chose the path of becoming a scientist. He encountered several failures as a scientist. But he

never gave up. He persisted, learned lessons, moved on with valuable takeaways, and ultimately became the President of India, the supreme commander of the Indian Armed Forces. If he were recruited as an officer, he would have become Air Chief Marshall in the Indian Air Force. But he became the President of India. Therefore, everything happens for a reason, and all that happens is for good. So, don't take rejections and failures personally. Develop a positive perspective on life.

Explore Entrepreneurship

There are plenty of opportunities for Gen Y and Gen Z to become entrepreneurs globally. Airbnb doesn't own hotels, Uber doesn't own vehicles, Facebook doesn't own content, and Amazon doesn't own inventory. Yet they succeeded because of their ideas and risk-taking. Technology is both a threat and an opportunity. It all depends on how you view it. Therefore, convert threats into opportunities and leverage technology to start enterprises and provide employment opportunities for others.

Everything is possible in the world when you have an idea and a fire in your belly. An idea can change the world. If you work hard consistently and persistently in your passionate area you will achieve success in your life. Remember, it is often the last key in the bunch that will open your lock. So, never give up. Above all, achieve success with integrity.

Write Your Own Case Study

“If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading or do things worth the writing.” – Benjamin Franklin

Most people don't live their lives fully because they don't have the vision and clarity about their goals. Successful people have a vision and realistic goals and work hard to accomplish them. They are the rarest people who have a vision and work hard on their passions to excel as international legends and leave everlasting legacies. When you want to lead your life with purpose and meaning and aspire to be remembered beyond your lifetime, you must write your own case study to create your destiny.

Create Your Own Destiny

“You are the creator of your destiny.” – Swami Vivekanand

We have no control over everything that happens in our lives. But we can make things happen with passion, vision, mission, and execution. So, don't settle for less. You deserve more than you desire. Dream big. Work hard and smart to accomplish your goals. Remember that you have only one life. Therefore, live your life fully.

Don't give your pen to others to write your case study. Hold the pen in your hands and write your own case study to inspire others. To conclude, write your own case study instead of writing others' case studies. Create your own destiny instead of others' creating your destiny to leave your leadership legacy.

“If someone asks me a question, ‘What is it you see when you look out the window that is visible but not yet seen by others,’ I will answer, ‘I see a world filled with people with a huge potential lying untapped. If I can identify their strengths and inspire them to unlock their potential, I feel that I have made a difference in the world.’”

– Professor M.S. Rao

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About the Author

Professor M.S. Rao, Ph.D.

Professor M.S. Rao is the Father of “Soft Leadership” and the Founder of MSR Leadership Consultants, India. He is an International Leadership Guru with forty years of experience and the author of fifty books including the award-winning *See the Light in You* URL: <https://www.amazon.com/See-Light-You-Spiritual-Mindfulness/dp/1949003132>. He is a C-Suite advisor and global keynote speaker and brings a strategic eye and long-range vision given his multifaceted professional experience in military affairs, teaching, training, research, consultancy, and philosophy. He is passionate about serving and making a difference in the lives of others and is a regular contributor to *Entrepreneur Magazine*. He trains a new generation of leaders through leadership education and publications and his vision is to mold one million students into world leaders by 2030. He has the vision to share his knowledge freely with one billion people globally and advocates gender equality globally (#HeForShe). He was ranked #1 Thought Leader and Influencer in HR globally by Thinkers360 (see <https://www.thinkers360.com/top-50-global-thought-leaders-and-influencers-on-hr-september-2020/>). He invests his time authoring books and blogging on the topics of executive education, learning, and leadership. Most of his work is available free of charge on his four blogs and can be reached at msrlctr@gmail.com.

