



Linda Tennant

The Power of Habits

Recently, while spending time with my 90-year-old mom, I was reminded of the power of habits. It was the night before trash pickup. Wanting to be helpful, I moved the trash cans to the curb. Though appreciating my efforts, my mom expressed concern that the trash containers were placed on the “wrong” side of the driveway. Knowing the trash would be picked up regardless of its location, I assured her it would be okay. My mom became visibly upset and explained how she had been placing the cans on the other side of the driveway for years. Knowing the power of habits and not wanting to upset her further, I moved the cans to the “correct” side of the driveway; making my mom very happy.

Being in the business of helping clients establish new habits of thinking and doing, I later mused about the power of well engrained habits. Much of our success is due to our habits. Once established, habits can be difficult to change. This is good in some cases; not so good in others.

Perhaps this story will inspire you as it did me, to take a look at your own habits and identify any that no longer serve you. Is there one habit you could develop that would increase the success of your business? Take the quick leadership survey below to see where you stand on these habits.

In the past 30 days, have you ...

- Clarified tasks and priorities for team members?
- Given an employee specific, positive feedback?
- Provided “coaching for improvement” feedback to an employee?
- Cross trained a member of your team?

- Shared your organizational values with your team?
- Recognized a team member for living an organizational value?

Steps to Create New Habits:

Create Self-Awareness:

Many times, we aren’t aware that an old habit no longer serves us. For example, many leaders we work with initially are not in the habit of providing positive feedback to employees. They do not feel a need for this kind of recognition themselves and assume the same is true for others. Ask your people if they would like to receive more, less or the same level of positive and/or coaching feedback from you.

Set a Goal:

Identify one habit you would like to create over the next 60 days. Consider the “slight edge” principle: you don’t have to drastically change the way you do things to greatly increase your results. If you set a goal to take just a few minutes daily or weekly to provide feedback to your employees, you would see tremendous benefits. Taking small steps consistently over time is the key to establishing new habits.

Identify Benefits:

What benefits will you and others enjoy when you make this a habit? Would you enjoy increased productivity, customer service, employee commitment, motivation? What would that mean to you personally? What would it mean to your employees? What would it mean to your customers?

Create self-awareness, set a goal, identify benefits, develop and schedule written action steps, track and celebrate progress.

Develop and Schedule Written

Action Steps:

Schedule the new habit on your calendar over the next 30 to 60 days until it is well established. Remind yourself daily of the benefits. Affirm that you are excellent at providing positive feedback and that it is part of your daily routine.

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Set up a simple tracking method for your new habit. Determine the number of times you provide feedback; the number of times the feedback is positive or coaching for improvement. Do you miss giving feedback to key people? Sometimes the tendency is to focus more on employees who are not performing at the desired level; ignoring the ones who are doing a good job. Do you give only one kind of feedback? Try varying the feedback method. If you only give verbal feedback, write a handwritten note to someone recognizing outstanding performance. The note will be a powerful reminder to the employee each time it is read; reinforcing the desired behavior.

Create self-awareness, set a goal, identify benefits, develop and schedule written action steps, track and celebrate progress. Soon the new habit will be yours as well as the benefits. Now, which side of the driveway does that trash can belong on... *SAN*

Linda Tennant is president of Attainment Inc., a franchise of 40-year-old Leadership Management Inc. (LMI). Using a proven Behavior Change Process, Attainment helps leaders improve in the areas of leadership, productivity, communication, teambuilding, coaching and sales. Listen weekly to "Attainment with Attitude" on the John Adam Show, KXAM1310, Tuesdays at 7:40 p.m.