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# Entrepreneurial Employees

## How to Cultivate an Entrepreneurial Attitude in Your Staff

**H**ave you ever looked at your staff and wondered why some of them continually meet and exceed your expectations? They're always looking for ways to improve themselves and their performance. They seem to be full of great ideas and are enthusiastic about being part of your team. Have you looked at others and wondered why they constantly need direction and seem to perform to the most minimum standards? They lack energy and it feels as if the rest of the team is always pulling them along. The difference between these two types of employees is that the first one has an entrepreneurial attitude - the second, doesn't. Growing small businesses need employees who regularly demonstrate entrepreneurial characteristics and work habits. An employee with an entrepreneurial attitude exhibits positive characteristics that lift the company to a higher level. An employee who doesn't can drag down the other staff and the entire company. Let's look at the key qualities entrepreneurial employees demonstrate.

**They are able to deal with risk** - Entrepreneurial employees are able to make progress towards goals and make decisions even when lacking all the information. They are not afraid to make wrong decisions, and if they do, they learn from them and move on.

**They are results-oriented** - Entrepreneurial employees take ownership to get tasks done. They are "can do" people who demonstrate common sense in decisions and actions. They are able to cut through and resolve problems that often divert or distract others. They are able to see alternatives to every roadblock.

**They display energy in their work-** Entrepreneurial employees have high levels of energy and enthusiasm. They consistently generate output that is higher than expected. They perform effectively with limited supervision, are able to motivate themselves, and are good at establishing priorities. They are not clock-watchers and don't need to be asked to stay late to finish an important job.

**They have a desire to grow continually -**



Entrepreneurial employees are constantly looking for ways to grow. They are willing to accept much higher levels of responsibility than the norm for a specified position. They act as strong role models, and find themselves training and coaching others.

**They are strong team players** - Entrepreneurial employees recognize how their role contributes to the overall effort and success of the organization, accept accountability and ownership for areas of responsibility and expect the same of others.

**They have the ability to multi-task** - Entrepreneurial employees are flexible and able to accept new duties, assignments and responsibilities. They can perform more than one role until duties and functions can be assigned to others. They are also willing to dig in and do menial work tasks that others put off.

**They are improvement-oriented** - Entrepreneurial employees are more than willing to challenge existing procedures and systems in a constructive way. They suggest improvements frequently and encourage others to do the same. They are willing to accept constructive criticism as an opportunity to improve their performance.

Having entrepreneurial employees will raise your level of business success. Imagine if everyone who worked for you was the kind of employee I mentioned earlier - the one who continually exceeds your expectations. Try these strategies to create a business culture that will encourage and develop these attitudes.

1. **Look for an entrepreneurial attitude when hiring.** Ask questions of potential employees that will give you a picture of whether they have the qualities discussed earlier. Anyone can be trained to do a specific task, but someone with an entrepreneurial attitude will continue to surprise you in a positive way with what they can accomplish in your business.
2. **Teach your existing staff what it means to be an entrepreneurial employee.** Take the qualities listed above and let your staff know you want to establish a work environment where those things are demonstrated and rewarded. Have training sessions with your staff to teach them about what each of those qualities means in your specific business.
3. **Reward those who take what you've given them and run with it.** Give incentives for those who do well at exhibiting those characteristics on a regular basis.
4. **Build them into your performance evaluation.** If you truly want to build a company run by entrepreneurial employees, use those qualities as measurable elements of your performance evaluation.
5. **Demonstrate those qualities yourself.** Lead by doing. Make sure your staff sees you as someone who is able to deal with risk, who is improvement-oriented and who is constantly growing, etc.

If you're looking for a positive way to revitalize your staff, use the concept of growing entrepreneurial employees and see where it takes you. Just be prepared to come out of the gate running, because those employees who embrace it will keep you at the top of your game, and you'll see your business grow because of it.

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# Financial Balance for Your Business

I'm a spender; my husband on the other hand is a saver. When we have conflicts, most of the time they're about money. I love to go out to dinner and order appetizers, pre-dinner cocktails, wine with dinner AND dessert, and he prefers to eat just the meal and pull out the

ice cream from our own freezer for dessert. When we need to purchase something new, I go to my favorite store and pick out the one I like best the very day we decide we're going to buy it. He likes to research, and plan, and make sure we're getting the best deal, even if it means we have to wait three weeks. I prefer to have lots of inexpensive items, while he prefers to spend the same amount of money on one really good quality item. I'm way more likely to impulse buy than he is, and when it comes to satisfying an indulgence, I'll always choose to do it right away, while he would choose to wait. Although we've had our share of head-butting over this issue, the truth is, our extremes have brought balance to our relationship. His saving tendencies prevent us from being broke every month, and my impulsive, live-life-for-today predisposition has helped him to enjoy life a little more, and worry a little less. We need each other in order to achieve financial balance in our family.

If we were running a business together, we'd be a great match! I'd be the risk-taker, he'd be the analyst. We'd have the perfect balance of adventurer and realist. Do you have that kind of financial balance in your business? Chances are, you're wired one way or another - you either have a tendency to save money, or a tendency to spend it. Is there balance in how your natural tendencies are reflected in the financial practices of your business? Take a look at how you might evaluate this aspect of your business to determine your financial balance.

**Spenders** - Yeah, you know who you are. Those of you who get excited when a new catalogue comes into the office; who are always looking for the latest, greatest product that you can buy to increase your business efficiency; who are always volunteering to go out and pick up supplies because you never know what you might find while you're shopping; who even get jazzed up about buying office furniture! Your strength is that you are always willing to make an investment in your business. You realize that you need to spend money to make money, and you often are able to see the big picture of how spending money now, will benefit you in the future. Your weakness is that you sometimes spend money on things that aren't necessary right now, diminishing your cash flow because you're not willing to wait. You also have a tendency to lease or borrow rather than wait to pay on large ticket items.

**Check and Balance:** If you're finding you struggle with keeping your cash flow healthy, or just can't figure out why your profit margin is lower than you think it should be, think about whether there is someone within your organization, or a business colleague or mentor, who could work with you to ensure you find balance in your spending; someone who will be your conscience. You wouldn't want to do this every day, but perhaps on a monthly or quarterly basis, you could sit down with this person and pinpoint where your spending could be curbed, and also validate where you are making wise choices. A pair of objective eyes will be able to see things you can't, no matter how many times you stare at your financial statement. When you've spent some time with someone who has strengths in this area, you'll find yourself thinking differently on your own, and making choices that are different from your natural tendency.

**Savers** - You savers are the ones whose greatest delight is when you've figured out a way NOT to spend money! You're happy when you find a way to make the paper stretch farther, or create a way to reuse something so that it doesn't have to be replaced. If you have to spend money, you're more likely to do that at a second-hand store than purchase something new. And you're always prepared to wait until you really need something (or have the money in hand) before you buy it. Your strengths are that you rarely have a cash flow problem, and you know where every nickel has been spent. You're meticulous in how you manage your finances and find ways to stretch your dollar every day. Your weaknesses are that you are somewhat afraid of risk, and are reluctant to spend money even when it's necessary to further your business. You'd rather put up with waiting for your computer to catch up with you because it's so slow, than spend money to purchase the extra RAM that would make you more productive. You're less likely to take risks - even good ones - and that can be detrimental to your business.



**Check and Balance:** You're just as much in need of an outside perspective as the spender, only you'll be stretching the other way. You need help to see where you should be parting with your money, investing in your business in ways that are necessary for long-term growth. You also, could find a colleague, a mentor, or even someone within your business structure that may be more skilled at this than you. Allow them to advise you about where you're doing well, and where you could stretch in terms of your long-term business picture. Once you've done this a few times you, just like the spender, will find yourself looking at things a little differently, and perhaps you will begin to make wiser choices when it comes to investing in your business.

Acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses in regards to the financial balance of your business, and find solutions to counteract your natural bent in ways that will benefit your business. It's all about balance, and it is possible to achieve it, even when your natural tendencies are strong. Find and maintain that balance, and your business will benefit in big ways.

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## Elements of a Dynamic Team

Have you ever been part of a dynamic team experience? Maybe you were part of a sports team where your skills and strengths dynamically contributed to a team energy that was unstoppable. Perhaps it was while sitting on a volunteer board of directors, where everyone had the same level of passion and commitment, and where meetings were energizing and engaging, and your accomplishments together showed the results of that energy. Or, maybe it was working with your cousins Fred and George on planning the best family reunion you've ever had! At some point in our lives most of us have experienced the synergy that happens when teams are functioning in a healthy, energetic and productive way. Is that how you would describe the team in your business? If not, here are some key elements that are necessary for a cohesive and dynamic team. Make it your checklist to see where your team is strong, and where it may need some work.

### COMMUNICATION

Whether it's discussing an idea, working through a conflict, giving (or receiving) instructions, or participating in a project, members of a strong team are responsible for communicating their wants, needs, perspectives, problems, and ideas. Assumptions can kill a team - so always clarify rather than assume. **Team Check:** Is each member of your team taking responsibility to communicate clearly and often with other team members? Are assumptions avoided and is clarification sought regularly?

### EXCELLENCE

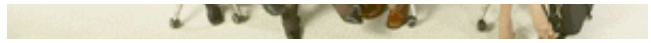
Truly great teams are collectively committed to excellence. In everything they do their goal is to achieve at the highest level. That means, each team member personally strives to achieve at their highest level. On a team, everyone has an impact on everyone else. One person not working at their peak level means that others are being affected. **Team Check:** Is your team committed to excellence? Does each team member seek to excel in his or her own area of expertise, to lift the excellence of the team to a higher level?

### LEADING AND FOLLOWING

There are times on a team when it is necessary to lead, and there are times when it is necessary to follow. It is vital that team members know how to do both well. When a team member leads, they need to understand the collective goal of the project and how to guide those under their leadership to achieve it. When team members are following, they need to do so with integrity and in support of the person who is leading. **Team**



**Check:** Do members of your team know how to be good leaders and good followers? Are you encouraging a culture where everyone is given opportunities to do both?



## **UNDERSTANDING ROLES**

Every team works best when the members of the team have clearly defined and understood roles. Everyone excels at something different. One role isn't necessarily better or more important than any other; all are important to the healthy functioning of the company. **Team Check:** Do your team members value and appreciate their own roles, and the roles that other team members fill? Is it clear that each person has an important function in the business?

## **STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES**

Every team member has strengths and weaknesses. Successful teams are those who, on a regular and consistent basis, enable the members to operate out of their strengths. Each team member should know what their strengths are and how they contribute to company growth. They should also know what their weaknesses are, and endeavour to work on them so that they are not a detriment to your team. **Team Check:** Do your team members know what their strengths and weaknesses are, and how to maximize strengths and work on developing weaknesses? Do you provide tools for your team members to help them assess this aspect of their employment?

## **FUN**

The team that plays together stays together. Although the ultimate purpose of any team is to further the goals of the business, or organization, that is accomplished much more effectively when the team has fun together. Sharing occasional social times, humour and light-heartedness in the workplace, and a freedom for team members to express themselves by having fun are important elements of a synergistic team. **Team Check:** Does your workplace culture allow for fun? Do you model and encourage fun among your team members?

## **COMMON GOAL AND VISION**

A team that has clearly defined goals and vision is infinitely more successful than one that does not. Every team member should have read and understood the company's mission statement and core values. Working together, with everyone on the same page, brings extraordinary results. **Team Check:** Does your team know and understand your mission and core values? How can you make sure everyone in your company has a clearly defined vision and clearly established goals?

## **APPRECIATION**

A team that shows appreciation to each other benefits not only from the growth and success of the business, but also with personal growth. Team members who encourage or show appreciation to other members of their team, inspire them to do the same. Mutual admiration is a high motivator. **Team Check:** Do you foster encouragement and appreciation on your team? Do you lead by example, in encouraging others and expressing your appreciation for what they contribute to your business?

How did you rate on the checklist? Is your team functioning well in all eight areas or are there some places where you can improve? Building a strong, dynamic team takes both effort and investment, but the payoff is fantastic. Imagine a group of people who get up each morning and can't wait to get to work - in your company - every day! Imagine how that kind of commitment and enthusiasm might positively impact your business.

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# **Tips to Improve Your Writing Skills**

Mark Twain wrote, "Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words." Many of us probably wish that were true. In reality, writing can be one of the most difficult things we do in a day. Not all of us feel like writers, but most of us who run small businesses need to be able to write well. Whether writing comes to you naturally, or whether you struggle whenever it comes to composing a sales letter, writing is a part of how we do business. Effective written communication is a cornerstone of business life. If you're the type that seizes up whenever you're confronted with a writing task, follow these tips to improve your writing skills so that it's not such an enormous chore.

### **Practice freefall writing**

Sounds simple right? When you're not good at something, the way you get better is to practice. I told that to my daughter a thousand times when she was taking piano lessons, and although the process was sometimes painful, she did learn to play the piano well, because she practiced. If you struggle with writing, the last thing you probably feel like doing is writing when you don't have to! But that's just what you should do. Do a freefall writing exercise a few times a week. Freefall writing is just letting your pen flow across the page without editing or changing as you go. Write about something interesting that happened during your day. Write about your kids. Write about something you love to do. Write about your dreams and goals for the future. Write about a movie you loved, or a good book you read, and say why you enjoyed it. Write about anything really. The point is not what you write, it's that you write something. This simple act of writing consistently, will help you get used to the flow of ideas, especially if you have a bit of a block about being able to write well. We can actually block the part of our brain that transfers the ideas from our heads onto the page. It comes from fear, and that fear prevents us from writing because we feel it won't come out right, our spelling will be bad, it won't make sense, or our grammar will be all messed up. Freefall writing will help you get over that block, and will allow those thoughts to move freely from brain to page. You may in fact be surprised at how easy this is. Once you've allowed yourself to experience the joy of simply writing - without judgment - you may find the words for your sales letter coming to you much more easily than they have in the past.

### **Journal**

This can be similar to freefall writing, but the subject matter has more to do with your feelings than circumstances. The act of journaling can reduce your stress, help you work out solutions to problems you're facing, set goals, and put words to your dreams and your feelings. Just as with freefall writing, the simple process of writing without editing, frees you up to tap into your creative side and helps minimize your fear of "doing it wrong".

### **Enlist help from someone who's good at what you're not**

So your spelling is atrocious and you never did well in grammar at school. Writing is about more than those things. If you allow yourself to let the words flow from your mind to your pen (or keyboard), get help from someone who is good at tidying it all up and checking your spelling, grammar and punctuation. Just get the gist of what you want to say down on paper, and then ask someone in your office to proofread it. If you aren't so preoccupied with getting the elements wrong, you'll be more likely to get the content right.

### **Have someone else write a first draft**

It's often easier to edit than to write from scratch. If you're really feeling stuck on a writing project, have someone else draft the letter or report for you, and then add your comments and thoughts to it. Having someone else start the process can give you the freedom to jump in with your own ideas, rather than having to face that blank page.



## **Take a course**

If you really want to improve your writing skills, check your local university or community college for continuing education courses in writing. Take a creative writing course, or a business writing course. It will boost your confidence as you learn to navigate the "how to's" or nuts and bolts of writing. You can even take writing courses online or through distance learning. Working on it at your own pace might be just the ticket for you.

## **Read a lot**

One of the best ways to improve your writing is to read what other people write. When you receive a business letter or report that you feel is really well written, read it over and over and analyze what you like about it. Is it clearly laid out? Is the language really simple? Do the words and phrases sound professional? Casual? Read a good book, and take note of what you like about how it's written. This takes some time and effort, but if you can figure out what you like about someone else's writing you can begin trying to incorporate those things into your own.

Try to implement one or two of these tips the next time you're staring at a blank page. Improving your writing skills will improve your business, but it doesn't happen all on its own. Think about the things you are really good at, and reflect on what it took to get good at them. The same applies to writing. Be proactive about growing this skill, and you'll be amazed at the results.

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# **Successful Speaking = Successful Selling**

Most sales people would never think of themselves as public speakers, but in fact, they are. They may not be facing large crowds like public speakers do, but they are communicating a message with their words, to another person or group of people. The principles used by successful public speakers can also benefit salespeople, because the better you are at communicating your message, the more likely you are to make the sale. So even though you may not be Jack Canfield or Steven Covey addressing thousands of people every year, in your own corner of the world, you are communicating your message. Learning how to do that better will not only make you more confident, but will also help you increase your bottom line - and give you a higher sales quarter.

## **Principle #1 - You Can Never Be Too Prepared**

Anyone who is successful at delivering public speeches will tell you how important it is to prepare before you ever set foot on the stage. Public speakers almost always prepare their own material; the exception is politicians who have an army of people to brief them on what they should say and how! Good speakers prepare by researching the city or community in which they will be speaking and become knowledgeable about their audience. They prepare by being aware of what's going on in the world so that they can bring relevant examples and stories into their presentation. They prepare by taking care of themselves physically and emotionally, especially in the days leading up to the speaking date. That kind of preparation allows the speaker to enter a room confident that they will be able to deliver their message, minimizing distractions and the potential for things to go wrong.

As a sales person, the more you prepare before you deliver a presentation, the greater your confidence level will be, and the more likely your prospects or customers will want to make a purchase. Like public speakers, prepare by knowing your audience. Who are they? What's important to them? Why should they listen to you? Prepare by knowing your product or service inside and out - so there's almost no question or objection you can't answer. Prepare by knowing what's going on in your industry so that you can draw on examples and use references about what your competitors are doing. Going into a sales presentation without sufficient preparation is a

surefire way to make your prospective clients or customers lack confidence in you, and lose the sale.

## **Principle #2 - You Can Never Rehearse Too Much**

Having done a fair share of training and public speaking, I can vouch for how important it is to rehearse what you are going to say. The more times you practice, the more entrenched the material becomes in your brain, and the less you have to think about the facts. This allows you to spend more energy on the dynamics of the presentation. Great speakers rehearse their material constantly - many do so in front of a mirror - and always find ways to improve how they're going to deliver their message. Rehearsing helps a speaker realize when a phrase or a word might be cumbersome. It helps them to figure out the timing - whether their speech is too long or too short. It helps them to become comfortable with the words they're using, the stories they're telling, and the flow of the message they're trying to deliver.



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Practice your sales presentation - it's that simple. Stand in front of a mirror and watch your gestures. Are you doing things that are distracting - like jingling keys in your pocket, or saying "um" too much? Do you have trouble maintaining eye contact? Do you wave your arms around or shuffle from foot to foot? Do you have trouble getting the words out because they're too technical, or too awkward? The more you practice, the more confident you'll become, and the more polished your presentation will be.

## **Principle #3 - You Can Never Be Too Genuine**

The best public speakers in the world are the ones that make you feel that every word that comes out of their mouth is 100% authentic. They're the ones whose stories are completely believable. They're the ones who can get you juiced up, or bring you to tears - because you BELIEVE them! They're the ones who infuse their speeches with warm stories and real-life examples so that everyone in the audience can relate to what they're saying. They're the ones that when you meet them on the street, they are exactly the way they came across on the stage. That's called integrity. Those are the speakers who have major impact.

As a sales person, you may already be at a disadvantage because our culture has taught us to mistrust salespeople. You have to work extra hard to earn their trust. That's why it's so important for you to be 100% genuine. If people sense falseness about you - that you are different than what you're portraying on the outside - they'll run quickly in the opposite direction. If you are able to convince them that you're a real person - that you have friends and family just like them; you've had bad sales experiences too; you've experienced successes and failures in life; and you've had doubts when making purchasing decisions too. If you can convey all that, then you will win them over and earn their trust. Don't be afraid to let your clients or customers see the real you. It's much more compelling than any "fake" person you're trying to portray. Authenticity is vital to the sales process.

So, take a lesson from the pros - the ones who talk for a living - and you may just find that your sales success improves. Remember these three principles the next time you walk into a sales presentation or are getting ready to meet a new client. Preparation, practice, and authenticity will make you a better sales professional.

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