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# Simply Practical

March 2005

Volume 5 Issue 3

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## SYMPRAXIS, LLC MAXIMIZING YOUR BOTTOM LINE

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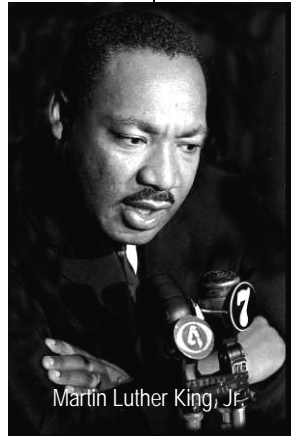
### *Press On*

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; there's nothing more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved, and will always solve, the problems of the human race. — Calvin Coolidge

'Press on' is a powerful and necessary mental attitude. It is the attitude that is found permeating through every successful person and organization.

As a country, we pressed on after 9/11. As a world leader, we knew it was necessary, although it did not change the intensity of the horror, the sadness, or the trauma the events caused. Our country has overcome many obstacles throughout our history. We have accomplished a successful lifestyle by pressing forward through all types of adversity in order to protect the life and the freedoms we enjoy.

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Martin Luther King, Jr.

### *Do you have a 'Press On' attitude?*

### *Formal Leadership*

*This is part two of a five part series on Formal Leadership. Each concept works alone and also complements the other articles in the series. Please contact us if you miss an article.*

### **The Leader As Coach**

Vision alone is not enough. Much like a football team that is playing in the Super Bowl, having a game plan and the desire to win is important.

However, winning depends upon execution. One of your primary roles as a leader is that of coach. Coaches

reinforce the results they believe people are capable of achieving.

One way to develop a winning team is to surround yourself with extraordinary people. Another is to surround yourself with ordinary people who, through your leadership and coaching, achieve extraordinary results. As Sam Walton once said, "...there's absolutely no limit to what plain, ordinary working people can do if they're given the opportunity and the encouragement and the incentive to be their best." As a coach, your role is to help people develop winning attitudes and improve their skills.

A coach helps people see beyond the problems, the limitations, and the "known," to focus on solutions and opportunities which are sometimes found by venturing into the "unknown". If you are going to create a winning team, you must be good at coaching. You must be able to inspire extraordinary performance from ordinary people. Coaching is seeing new possibilities and providing the support and guidance to help people and organizations to achieve new heights.

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### **Inside This Issue**

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1. *Formal Leadership – Part 2 of 5*
3. *One Minute Ideas*
3. *Attitude Adjustment*

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Your role as a coach begins by placing the right people in the right jobs. In every job, there is a basic skill requirement that must be fulfilled. It is important that people either have the skills and attitudes required to do the job when you hire them, and/or you have a development process in place that will ensure the development of those skills. Review progress regularly, explain and demonstrate new requirements or skills.

Coaching, though highly individual has three basic functions:

**The first function of a coach** is getting to know every person as an individual. If you are to coach them to higher levels of performance, you need to know what their skills are, what their level of knowledge is, what their goals are, and what you can do to help them reach their goals. Ask questions, listen, get to know what people value and feel. The classic “five w’s:” who, what, when, where, and why can provide you with a simple formula to gather information, data, and feedback. When appropriate, another question to ask is “how?” Look for opportunities to ask questions that probe.



**The second function of a coach** is developing people and challenging them towards higher levels of achievement. Create a detailed development plan for and with each individual with whom you are directly working. Set goals, both short and long-term. Develop action steps and target dates along the way. Focus on those critical few action steps that are essential for personal and organizational goal achievement. Set regular review meetings and make them a priority. Provide regular feedback on performance, evaluate progress, and review areas in which new goals can be established.



**The third function of a coach** is creating an environment for motivation. A motivating environment helps people become excited about setting and reaching goals. Figure out what inspires people and use this knowledge to create an atmosphere that stimulates high levels of productivity and effective decision making. Get to know what issues are important to each individual.



*Continued on next column –*

Encourage people to talk openly and discuss problems as well as opportunities. Challenge them to go beyond their comfort zone. Help them to have the confidence to stretch themselves.

Coaches also develop a culture in which problems are viewed as opportunities...for solutions, learning, and improvement. Encourage “ownership” and responsibility. If someone is given a problem, whether by a customer, a peer, or a subordinate, they “own” it until they find a solution or personally deliver the individual to the person who has the solution.

Be careful to think and wait before responding to mistakes or problems. “Shooting the messenger” is a major deterrent to open, two-way communications. Take time to analyze data and encourage other to do the same. Focus on the goals and the root cause of the problem.

Ask people to analyze processes which interfere with their performance and/or the performance of the organization. If you are going to hold people accountable, give them an opportunity to have some say in how they do their work. Active participation will provide greater satisfaction and encourage pride in performance and continuous improvement. Look for opportunities to recognize growth and achievement, and be plentiful with praise. Seek to catch people doing the right thing! Positive reinforcement will help to get people to perform beyond their self-imposed limitation.

Your goal as a coach is to make the most of your most valuable resource, your people; and to maximize the skills, abilities, and knowledge of each person in the organization. Inspiring people to higher levels of performance has a lot to do with spirit, creating excitement, commitment, and desire. It is coaching ordinary men and women to extraordinary achievements.

In our next issue we will discuss the **Leader as Mentor**. (*part three*)

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***"Vision is the art of seeing things invisible."***

— Jonathan Swift

*Continued from page one – Press On*

Martin Luther King, like many historical heroes, continued to do what was necessary in order to share the power of his vision, no matter what amount of ignorance or violence stood in his way.

The NASA program exists today because the Kennedy administration had a vision and a goal to put a man on the moon. Many thought that vision was insane; however, in 1969 the vision became a reality. The space program has dealt with a great deal of set backs and has needed to press on after such tragedies as the loss of the space shuttle Challenger and the space shuttle Endeavor.



Dan Jansen, a world champion ice skater, went through his share of bad press, ridicule, and challenges. He failed to accomplish a medal in a speed skating event that everyone, including himself, thought was his event. He pressed on through the necessary training and preparation of two Olympic Games and the death of his sister, to accomplish the elusive goal medal. He also set a world record.

Lance Armstrong, 6-time winner of the Tour De France, accomplished those victories by pressing on through a traumatic diagnosis of testicular cancer that metastasized to his brain. Lance, like so many other cancer patients have after diagnosis, adapted a press on attitude in order to deal with the required treatment and victory over their disease.



All of these examples are of exceptional people with press on attitudes who have achieved amazing results in extreme situations. However, I submit to you that the press on attitude is required in everyday life and business. I believe that every person involved in the above examples always had a press on attitude. However, we saw their true capability because they were faced with adverse, challenging, life, or vision threatening situations.

It is unfortunate that we typically only see the real power of a press on attitude when someone is presented with extreme or adverse circumstances, because press on can also be a preemptive strategy.

Make the commitment now to do what is necessary to be successful. Look at each business issue with which you are challenged as an opportunity for success. Use your talent, experience, and education to your advantage.

***Keep on...press on...the results are worth it!***

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## **Attitude Adjustment**

**A** CEO of a large company recently asked me to give him tips on how he could improve the attitudes of his employees. He said that he was concerned because it seemed like negative attitudes were permeating throughout many of the company's departments.

*Continued on page four – Attitude Adjustment*



# **ONE MINUTE IDEAS**

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### ***Open the Start Menu – Mouse-Free***

If your keyboard doesn't have a "Windows" key on it, you can quickly open the Start Menu without your mouse by pressing "CTRL+Esc". Then, you can use the arrow keys or your mouse to select an option. The Enter key will then open that application.

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### ***Printing a Web Site, Page by Page***

Do you want to print only a certain page of a long web site? In Netscape, select File, Print Preview. Find the page that you wish to print. Select Print from the top menu and specify that page to print in the Print range dialog box (ex. from 2 to 2 in order to print page 2).

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*Continued from page three – Attitude Adjustment*

I told him that if he is noticing those attitudes, so are his customers. Here are the 5 steps I suggested he implement to begin improving employee attitudes:

1. As you hire new employees, focus primarily on their attitudes, not just their skills. Most skills can be taught, attitudes cannot. Pay very careful attention to the demeanor, attitude and enthusiasm of job candidates. If there is even the slightest doubt in your mind about their sincerity – don't hire them.
2. Seriously consider terminating employees who continue to be extremely negative even after they have been given several opportunities to improve their behavior. Attitudes are contagious. No matter how productive an employee is, consistently negative behavior such as criticizing co-workers or the company can take down the morale of an entire work team.
3. The CEO, president or owner needs to reserve two hours per week to visit employees throughout the company and personally meet them and acknowledge their individual efforts. Do not schedule the visits for the same time each week, or they will become predictable and lose their impact. Take time to chat for a few minutes with each of your employees, and be sure to listen to their suggestions. Sincerity is a must!
4. Hold employees, particularly senior managers, accountable for their attitudes and behavior toward their co-workers. Require all managers to attend customer service training programs along with their employees.
5. Thank your employees every chance you get. Hand-written notes, personal comments or phone calls to employees are effective methods for improving internal attitudes. They are also more powerful tools for building loyalty than carefully planned employee recognition programs.

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