



Seeing the World Through Rose-Colored Glasses

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In the world in which we live, we're bombarded almost daily with media reports riddled with scandals about our "heroes" in sports, government, business, and the arts. No wonder we've become jaded.

This unprincipled behavior has tainted our perception of people and colored our view of the world. We've become cautious of people's intent, distrustful of their actions, and worse, suspicious of their motives. These bad actors create cynicism, generate suspicion, and lower the public standard of acceptable behavior.

The consequences of public mistrust are significant. How can we expect our institutions to be effective, our businesses to be competitive, our relationships to blossom, and trust to thrive when we're forced to take our eye off the ball in order to keep looking over our shoulder?

Seeing the Costs of Mistrust More Clearly

When we live and work in a dog-eat-dog environment, we dilute our energies and lower our standards by playing silly games and stooping to child-like antics. Time is wasted playing politics and turning relationships into chess games in an effort to anticipate an "opponent's" next move. Many employees waste valuable time covering their behinds and protecting their turf rather than moving their organization forward. Other people withdraw out of fear of being cheated or let down, resorting to a "what's-in-it-for-me" attitude.

Some "paranoid" institutions set up elaborate bureaucracies that peer over "valued" employees' shoulders and pass up opportunities because if it seems "too good to be true," it probably is. Left unchecked, this type of toxic environment leads to stress, anxiety, and incredible waste. It's like a cancer that attacks and spreads with a vengeance.

But wait. Even though it may seem naïve and possibly unrealistic, the world is full of idealists who work to rise

above the fray and "view the glass as half full." These idealists who view the world through rose-colored glasses believe relationships are built on giving rather than taking. They insist that great companies have as much of an obligation to give back to the world as they do to increase corporate earnings. Included are managers who instill strong values and principles and, consequently, don't have to worry about micromanaging employee behavior. Included also are employees who do the right thing because they care rather than from fear of getting caught.

People wearing rose-colored glasses give of themselves because they believe it's in their best interest and because "what goes around comes around." They believe that win-win relationships are superior to outmaneuvering "adversaries" to gain the upper hand. This includes leaders in both the public and private sectors who do what's right, rather than basing decisions on a vested interest in the outcome. And it includes heroes who understand that true greatness is achievable only if they also serve as a positive role model while making it to the top of their game.

A Rosier Vision for the Future

When we view the world through rose-colored glasses, barriers that once seemed impenetrable transform into exciting opportunities. For example:

- People strive for the common good rather than seeking individual gain.
- Employees spend their time adding value rather than trying to look busy or promoting themselves to look good.
- People are recognized for valued contributions rather than questioned for their motives.
- Challenges are viewed as opportunities waiting for a solution rather than as barriers to success.

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- Business deals once discarded as “too good to be true” now require serious exploration.
- Tough decisions are openly debated as adults, with compromise sought, rather than as children retreating to their corners.
- People feel free to “stick their neck out” without fear of being embarrassed or hurt.
- Constructive feedback is welcomed and defensive attitudes disarmed rather than fingers pointed to score points.
- Relationships are viewed as long-term investments rather than as paths to immediate payoffs. And, if we don’t receive an adequate return we will make it up in karma points. :-)
- Where necessary, colleagues watch your back as well as their own and you are happy to return the favor in kind.

These changes in perspective create an environment that is exciting, fun, and rewarding. Trust, win-win relationships, and a can-do spirit become guiding principles.

Here are additional reasons why it pays to be an idealist:

Everything is achievable. According to the famous W. Clement Stone, “Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve.” A positive outlook, therefore, can have a direct impact on one’s success.

In fact, according to formal psychological research as well as a large amount of casual empiricism by others, there is no doubt that the power of expectation alone can influence the behavior of others. This phenomenon is called the Pygmalion effect. According to *Business Horizons*, studies have shown that the IQ scores of children, especially on verbal and information subjects, can be raised merely by expecting them to do well. A study showed that worker performance increased markedly when the supervisor of these workers was told that his group showed a special potential for their particular job.

Intangibles — vital in the Information Age. In the twentieth century a company measured success by the number of tangible assets (such as property, plant, and equipment) it posted on its balance sheet. In the Information Age, however, intangible assets rule the day. Intangible assets such as trust, creativity, speed, relationships, reputation, loyalty, employee commitment, brand identity, and the ability to adapt to change determine success. Just because intangibles are difficult to measure doesn’t mean they’re less important. Those who have a jaded view of intangible assets will never make the commitment required to reap their full potential.

The “soft” side of business reaches peak importance. In the past, most management theories and approaches espoused a narrow approach to employee motivation — management’s job is to control employee behavior. Great managers, however, know that it’s much more desirable to

engage employee commitment and loyalty through an organization’s beliefs and values. The “soft” side of business — the beliefs, values, and philosophies espoused by management — must take on greater importance. This applies equally to parenting. If you don’t pass your values on to your children, someone else will fill the void.

Win-win relationships. Most people are well intentioned and worthy of your trust. When people are trusted, valued, and respected, everyone wins. They will be more motivated to invest their time, effort, and resources.

In business, when win-win relationships are formed, people work toward a common goal and celebrate mutual success. The byproduct is that maneuvering, game-playing, and posturing to gain the upper hand go by the wayside.

The free lunch. There is an old saying that if an opportunity seems too good to be true, it probably is. This is another way of saying that every exceptional opportunity should be doubted. The alternative is viewing each opportunity at face value and exploring it in a swift and rigorous fashion. It might just be possible!

Create your own karma. It may sound hokey, but when we view the glass as half full, we are more apt to adopt the golden rule — what goes around comes around. People want to be associated with givers rather than takers. And, as a bonus, you’ll sleep better each night.

Keeping Your Eyes on the Prize

Being an optimist doesn’t preclude you from being a realist. Keep your eyes wide open. Be smart about the way that you approach opportunities. Have a contingency plan and then jump in with both feet. Sure, there will be times when you’ll get burned. But if you lose your faith in people, change your outlook on life, or compromise your principles, you will have lost a lot more than an opportunity in the process. Some people who have gotten burned get jaded. They will never experience the success that others achieve with a positive outlook.

The mind is very powerful. A positive mental attitude is both invigorating and rewarding. Positive thinking takes practice and patience. It will affect your thinking, strengthen your relationships, and improve your quality of life. It represents hope, happiness, and success.

So pick up your rose-colored glasses and try them on. What do you have to lose (except a negative attitude)? ●

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