



The Career College Information Source

Improving Admissions Performance by Focusing on APPS – Part 4 of 4

By Dr. Jean Norris, Managing Partner, Norton \Norris, Inc.

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We saved the best for last...or at least the competency rated the highest for achieving success in an ever-changing sales environment – **ATTITUDE** (Connor, 2003)! Through our experiences and observations, we develop attitudes about people, issues, objects or events. These attitudes influence our beliefs and even our behaviors to a large extent (Smith & Mackie, 2007).

Perhaps you have heard the saying, “Attitude is Everything,” and this holds true when examining the four key competencies for admissions success. Parts 1 – 3 of this series have shown Connor’s rankings of importance for these competencies to be:

- Product Knowledge – 10 percent
- Sales Skills – 15 percent
- People Skills – 25 percent

And what is left? The final weight of 50 percent is attributed to the **Attitude** competency. Let us explore a bit more about what makes this element so important and how to further develop your attitude for success!

What makes attitude so important

For an admission professional, a healthy attitude is key when dealing with students and colleagues. Consider that someone can be so proficient in product knowledge that they can even recite the catalog; they have an uncanny ability to build rapport and connect with all types of people; and are experts at presentation and obstacle resolution and yet they can still make the choice to not use any of these talents. Attitude really comes down to having a strong belief in the importance of serving students, as well as *making the choice* to develop and use skills consistently to the best of one’s ability with each and every interaction.

According to a recent *Harvard Business Review* survey (Bonchek & France, 2014), the role of the

professional sales person has dramatically shifted due to technology. When prospective students can find most of the information (along with consumer opinions) they need online, the balance of power between customers and companies has surely shifted.

This message is reiterated by Dennett and Roy (Scientific American, 2015), as they dissect organizational behavior in a world where the consumer is king. What this means is the most significant point of difference between your school and the one down the street is often the experience the prospective student has with an individual. Consumers expect a response that is “on their terms (and) intelligible, honest and conversational.” (Dennett, D. & Roy, D.)

Born with it or a choice?

Enter a college admissions office and you are likely to find at least one admission professional who is always upbeat, high energy and outgoing. Although this outward example of a positive attitude seems like the key to success, the attitude being referred to here is more about internal awareness and choice than external cheerleading. Even a more reserved individual can harness a healthy attitude and adapt to their audience since not everyone prefers or relates to extreme exuberance.

Behaviors are learned; so a positive, healthy attitude is not programmed at birth. This means that it can be changed. One’s attitude is a result of their viewpoint and actions. In other words, when something negative happens, does someone buckle under the fear, or does their desire to win erase the fear? Another way to view this is to consider if someone is smiling because they feel happy, or are they happy because they choose to smile?

Developing a positive attitude

So how does one harness the power of positive thinking? It begins with developing a strong self-

awareness. In the world of training, we are often faced with professionals who have strong beliefs in how admissions and student interviews should be conducted. The methods they learned have proven to work for decades and their experience has taught them that change is scary. This “block” can be a huge obstacle in helping individuals improve their skills to adapt to marketplace changes.

For those with differing beliefs, it is important to remember that attitudes are shaped and can change over time from conditioning, social influence and observations (Hockenbury, 2007). Developing a greater self-awareness of how you do things and the impact of what you do is a start. It is not that anyone wants to force a certain way of thinking upon another; it is simply helping others realize what they do and the choice they have to do things differently for another (usually more desirable) outcome.

One of my dear mentors, Randy S. Proto, left us with his favorite saying after his passing in 2013. It was a quote by Dr. Seuss that taught me the power of reframing.

“Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.” Dr. Seuss

Attitude is indeed about how we view the world

around us and ourselves. It is the choice we make in those moments when we become self-aware of a negative situation and either succumb to it, or neutralize it and turn it into a positive.

Final thoughts

You may have heard the story of psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl. As a prisoner in Nazi Germany he suffered some of the most unspeakable conditions any human should ever have to endure and yet he made a choice to not let his circumstance define him. In his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (2006), he wrote

"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."

Admission professionals have long been the caretaker and voice of the student. Those who have been most successful seek to reinvent and challenge themselves and most of all, are very self-aware. They know when they are doing well without anyone else telling them. And they make choices every day to be the difference for someone else.

May you find the gift of self-awareness; the



DR. JEAN NORRIS began her educational pursuit in a 10-month medical assisting diploma program. In the 26 years since, she has served in the role of admissions rep, dean of admissions, faculty member, dean of admissions, vice president of marketing, vice president of enrollment, and vice president of organizational development. Currently Jean is a managing

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Jean is the developer of **EnrollMatch®**, a comprehensive admissions training program offering proven results to balance compliance and performance. **EnrollMatch®** is the **FIRST and ONLY** admissions training program legally endorsed for alignment with accreditation and admissions related standards.

Dr. Norris has served as faculty at Robert Morris University,

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Jean also serves on the Executive Board of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) Illinois. In 2012, Jean and her son, Mike, authored and published an awarding winning book entitled, “No Sugar Added – Straight Talk From Those Living With Diabetes” with all proceeds to benefit the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) in their search for a cure.

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**power of choice and the courage to engage in
your life and your work with students.**

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