Turn around negative attitudes: 8 tips

Neutralizing a negative attitude—within yourself or an employee—takes time and plenty of effort. However, another aspect of turning around negativity lies in the little things you do, which may just be what you say or how you say it, without being a direct "negativity-buster."

1. Acknowledge that negativity exists. That is the first step to working toward changing it. Once you identify it, you can determine the best ways to combat it.

2. Set an example by keeping your communications positive. Don't give employees either a reason or an excuse to act negatively. Try countering negative statements by pointing out a positive. This may spur more positive thinking from others.

3. Expect positive action from employees. Otherwise, they just might complete your self-fulfilling prophecy. So when employees start complaining, get them to take action instead by asking them what they're going to do about it.

4. Give positive recognition often. Feedback should not be mostly critical; accolades are equally important.

5. Watch out for negativity traps. Beware of using labels. When conversation turns to complaints about policy, don't join in. Try pointing out the positives, changing the subject, or turning it into a problem-solving discussion. Staying silent is not a good option—it may signify acceptance of a negative notion.

6. Get direct feedback from employees on how to make the workplace more enjoyable, less tense, etc.

7. Give employees more decision-making power. Employees' negativity may stem from feeling like they have no control over their work or work lives.

8. Assess the situation thoroughly. Challenge and check the "facts" of a negative situation.