



AUGUST 2023

Women of Witness

TIPS TO BETTER YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

Facts versus Feelings in the New World of Work – Part 1

By Alan Zimmerman

We're living in a time when "feelings" seem to be more important than "facts." And that can be self-defeating, even dangerous.

The "fact" is, there are certain laws of nature or laws of the universe that work certain ways, no matter how you "feel" about them.

For example, you may not like the law of gravity. You may even despise it. But if you step off a ten-story building, you're going down, whether you want to or not.

In a similar sense, along with author Marjorie Brody, I would contend that there are five rules of today's world of work. If you're going to move up, get ahead, achieve your goals, or make a difference, you would be well served to remember these five rules rather than "feel" bad about them.

I would also contend that the champions in life have a good, healthy, effective, appropriate response to those five rules. Read on.

Rule #1: The world is not fair. As a child, I can remember telling my Mom, over and over again, "That's not fair."

She would say, "You're right. The fair only comes to town once a year and this ain't it."

In other words, my situation might not have been fair, but she was trying to teach me that things won't always go my way. Everyone won't always agree with me or treat me the way I think they should.

Her response didn't make me "feel" all that good at the time, but it did teach me the importance of having the right attitude. And that has made a HUGE difference in every part of my life ever since.

When things don't seem fair, the appropriate response is "Choose your attitude." You can choose to be whiny, griping, and feel as bad as you want. Or you can choose a different attitude, seeing yourself as capable, competent, and energetic enough to deal with your situation.

As theologian and best-selling author Dr. Charles Swindoll puts it,

"We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change certain things. Nevertheless, we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day.

I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.”

When you're upset about something not being fair, you certainly have a right to feel badly about that. But choose an attitude and a behavior that serves you well ... that does more than keep you stuck in your yucky feelings.

Rule #2: No one owes you a living. Entitlement is rampant. Too many people think it's someone else's job to take care of them, to keep them employed, or to pay their bills, regardless of their performance or lack of it. But that's not how the world of work works these days.

You might think that your years of service or hard effort should count for something. That “feels” right. And I agree with you. But the “fact” still remains in Rule #1: The world is not fair.

When I was a university professor, I can remember students coming into my office, “feeling” very badly about a poor grade they received on an essay. Typically, they would say, “Dr. Zimmerman, you don't understand. I worked really hard on that essay.” And they probably did.

What they didn't understand is that effort doesn't count. I didn't owe them a better grade because they really tried. The only thing that counts today is performance. It's all about results! Not effort, hard work, good intentions, years of service, or anything else.

So if no one owes you a living, what is the appropriate response to that “fact?” Recognize that job security is your responsibility.

Do your job better than anyone else could. Make yourself as valuable as you can. And remember that you never “arrive,” where you can sit back, rest on your laurels, and take it easy. As I tell my coaching clients, “Success is never owned. It is rented and the rent is due every day.”

Rule #3: Reputation and relationships rule. There's an old saying, “It's not what you know but who you know.”

That doesn't always “feel” right, but that is the “fact” some of the time. But not all of the time. There are some people that can open doors for you, make introductions, and show you the path to greater success.

However, in the final analysis, who you know is not the most important “fact.” It is reputation and relationships that rule which is great news for everyone. It means that even if you don't know the certain people who could pave the way for you, you can do it for yourself by the reputation you have and the relationships you build.

First, your reputation. What's yours? What do people say about you? If you don't know or don't like what you do know, then get to work and do something about it.

It's how I built my professional speaking business, on reputation. It's what got me inducted into The Speaker Hall of Fame and now coming up soon in Washington D.C, The Legends of Speaking. My reputation has always been consistency. I remember one of the big bosses at IBM telling lots of others bosses, "Dr. Zimmerman and his classes are consistent. He never has a bad day or an off class. We never have to worry about hiring him. It's always going to be excellent."

There's lots of talk about brands and branding these days. Well, your reputation is your brand.

Second, relationships rule. In other words, people buy from people they know, like, and trust. But that only happens if you take the time to build relationships with them.

That was reinforced for me again this past week. I was speaking to the Government Finance Officers Association of Missouri and afterwards stopped by to visit a friend in Springfield, Missouri, a friend and colleague in his 80's. He brought me into his organization to conduct a couple of workshops many years ago and we hit it off. So I make the time to visit him whenever I am in his town.

That relationship turned into dozens, if not hundreds of bookings, from other people who happened to be in the audiences he assembled. And it changed the very course of my career.

When I hear people say, "I don't have time to build relationships. I've got work to do." I cringe. I know they're making a costly mistake.

Don't make the same mistake. Don't avoid relationships because you don't "feel" like doing so, because the "fact" still remains that relationships rule. Go out and build relationships now.

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