

# CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

## Confidence and a Positive Attitude are a Winning Combination



By  
Russ Jones  
and  
Debby Taber



Is success really only a function of great talent and smart monetary investments? At first glance, it might appear that way. But recent studies on the topic of sustained success suggest otherwise. In her book, *Confidence – How Winning Streaks and Losing Streaks Begin and End*, Rosabeth Moss Kanter provides compelling examples from sports teams, the corporate world and world politics that reveal a common set of fundamental principles are at work in the hearts and minds of successful people and organizations.

She provides the example of Continental Airlines, which spent 11 years on a downward spiral that nearly killed the company. Then, in 1994, Gordon Bethune became the CEO and began to orchestrate the company's successful comeback. By 2003, Continental had won numerous awards for customer service and had outperformed its competitors even when, after Sept. 11, no one else could make any money.

On August 14, 2003, when a power surge knocked out the Northeast power grid and cut off electricity to 50 million people, Continental's team went into action, demonstrating its winning culture. When Northwest Airline cancelled 216 flights and American cancelled 141, Continental cancelled only 30 flights. In Newark and Cleveland, crews serviced and loaded aircraft and got flights on their way, all without power. From the company president down to the flight crew, everyone responded calmly and professionally. As Kanter says, "Years of investment in a culture of collaboration, communication, responsibility and initiative produced the confidence that made Continental a winner."

### *A matter of character*

Throughout this book, Kanter points to "character" as the key component of sustained leadership. "Whether innate, nurtured in a secure childhood, faith-based or taught by leaders and their values, character helps people make positive rather than negative choices when confronted with losing, and those positive actions make recovery and return to a winner's path more likely," she writes.

At a personal level, positive attitude is another essential component imbedded in the mind of highly successful people. A suburban Chicago pastor, Andy Morgan, often says, "All of your life and how it turns out, is based on choices you made." Attitude is one of those choices. We have the option to be positive or negative. A positive attitude provides energy to us and to those around us. A negative attitude drains our energy and the energy of those around us. With every event that occurs in our lives, we have the ability to act or react in either a positive or a negative way.

Several years ago Bobbi Anderson, her husband and two children were driving a horse drawn carriage after a parade. The carriage was struck by a drunk driver, killing Anderson's husband and injuring her sons. It was the third DUI for the automobile's driver and he was imprisoned. Two years later, Anderson and the driver of the automobile were conducting Mothers Against Drunk Drivers seminars for high school students in the Denver area. It's an amazing example of taking a tragic situation and using that experience to do something positive for others.

### *Positive attitude reduces stress*

No matter the degree of adversity, when we approach situations as learning experiences with which we will gain knowledge for future use we reduce the stress in our lives. It is our attitude that allows us to benefit from misfortune. As we learn to meet challenges head on, those challenges can be viewed as valuable lessons. And valuable lessons become wonderful opportunities.

When we accept that the challenges of life happen for us and not to us, we grow in wisdom and experience in handling the speed bumps that are present. In the words of author and motivational speaker, Zig Zigler, "It is not your aptitude, but your attitude that determines your altitude."

*Russ Jones is the Partner-in-Charge of First Transitions Inc., a corporate-sponsored career transitions firm. Debby Taber is the Managing Director of First Strategies, an executive coaching and organizational development consulting firm – a subsidiary of First Transitions. They can be reached at (630) 571-3311, (312) 541-0294 or at [rjones@firsttransitions.com](mailto:rjones@firsttransitions.com) or [dtaber@firsttransitions.com](mailto:dtaber@firsttransitions.com), respectively. Readers can also visit [www.firsttransitions.com](http://www.firsttransitions.com).*

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