

Big Mistake

1

Not Being on Your A-Game



"The door to success is sticking."



“Yesterday’s home runs don’t win today’s games.”

—Babe Ruth

What difference does one degree make? If you’re hot when it’s 95 degrees, you’ll still be hot when it’s 96 degrees. Water is extremely hot at 211 degrees, but at 212 degrees it boils. Boiling water creates steam, which is strong enough to power a train. That one degree changes the game. Imagine what it would take for you to change your game.

Thought and planning are the keys to making a difference in your communication style and approach. You have an opportunity either to make a difference or to be the same as everyone else. Is it worth it to think things through a little more? One degree more? Or is the status quo easier?

Being on your A-game is a mind-set. It’s an overall positive attitude toward the differences you want to make in your own life and in others’ lives. Think about it: If every time there was a conflict and you took a step back to be solution-driven, wouldn’t you be a difference maker? Wouldn’t it make life easier for you and for others around you?

You Said What?

You may recognize this scenario. The plane is delayed and someone—maybe you—is not going to make his or her connection. Not only is the flight delayed, but it is also overbooked and the passenger has lost his seat. He is yelling and screaming at the airline representative. The representative looks back and says with a short and rude tone, “There is nothing I can do. Please have a seat.” The passenger is furious, and the fight is just beginning.

On the other hand, if either the passenger or the airline representative had been on their A-game, the situation would have had a completely different sound and feel. Interestingly enough, the outcome may not change, but the chances are about 80 percent that either the representative would want to help or the passenger would calm down because of a composed, empathetic, and professional conversation with the representative.

Having a positive attitude doesn't mean walking around with a big smile on your face all day every day. It means taking a breath when something goes wrong. It means looking at worst-case scenarios and thinking about the solution rather than focusing on the problem and who caused that problem. It means being open and present, not closed to what is going on around you. It also means knowing that you can't control everything. Ultimately it means controlling your reactions.

The bottom line is that people do not want to be around negative people. They don't want to work with people they cannot communicate with in a positive way.

According to a study conducted by the Carnegie Institute of Technology, 15 percent of the reason you get a job, keep a job, and move ahead in that job is determined by your technical skills and knowledge—regardless of your profession—and 85 percent

is determined by your people skills and people knowledge, including your enthusiasm, smile, tone of voice, personal responsibility, and moral and ethical excellence.

The outcome of our communication is driven by our ability to get along.

There are best practices throughout this book—we challenge you to always use them. If you do, the outcome of your interactions will change. We've tested these practices ourselves, we've observed the communications of others, and we've interviewed thousands of people about what they believe are the keys to effective communication. When we handle things while being on our A-game, we always have a positive outcome.

Best Practices

- Monitor your tone.
- Try to understand where the other person is coming from.
- Listen to others.
- Be prepared.
- Set simple goals for your interactions with others.
- Focus on things that make a difference.
- Try to offer help to others.
- Stay calm.
- Plan out hypothetical worst-case scenarios.

Ask Yourself These Crucial Questions

- Have I seen an outcome turn from negative to positive based on the way I handled the situation?
- Am I affected by someone else's negative attitude? Have I communicated differently because of that negative attitude? How has that affected my A-game?

You Said What?

- Have I ever lost a job or a promotion when I thought my skills were a perfect fit? What am I not seeing?

Take the time to think about the outcome you are trying to achieve and always be on your A-game by following best practices.