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# Special Feature – March 2011

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Whenever someone found a silver lining, Chester would throw a wet blanket over it. For Chester, Murphy's Law was the one irrefutable law of the universe.

For years, Jake had tried to lead his friend out of the pits of pessimism, but to no avail. No matter how air tight and logical Jake's argument was, Chester could always find a way to dismiss it. Those days, however, were about to come to an end with Jake's new bird dog.

The morning of the big duck hunt dawned with a beautiful clear sky and perfect conditions on the lake. Nevertheless, Chester was not a happy camper. As they rowed out to their favorite spot, Chester grouched the whole way.

Within minutes, a flush of ducks glided into view, the guns fired and two ducks dropped into the water. Grinning from ear to ear, Jake poked Chester and said, "Watch this." Then, turning to the dog, he said, "Toby, go get the ducks." Toby stepped out of the boat, walked across the water, picked up the ducks and walked back to the boat. "There you go, Chester," Jake said, "What do you think about that?"

"Huh," Chester snorted, "Can't swim, can he?"

If you had to liken yourself to one of these two duck hunters, which one's outlook would best describe you? (And no ... Toby is not an option.)

Do your clients look forward to seeing you or is an appointment at your office more dreaded than a root canal? Have you ever overheard your employees whisper the name Ebenezer in reference to your demeanor? Does your family look forward to you coming home at the end of the work day or do they cringe as you walk through the door?

Your attitude really does make a difference. Clement Stone wrote, "There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little

difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.”

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- A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.”

~ *Harry Truman*

I doubt there are many pure optimists or pessimists; most of us fall somewhere on the continuum between the two extremes. However, discovering where you are on that scale can make a huge difference in your daily life experience. If you are unsure (and even if you think you know), it might be in your best interest to take an optimist test. There are number of free online options, grading is instant, and you'll quickly understand why the dog runs under the bed when you come home. If you're still not sure, ask a few close friends or family members to also take the test on your behalf and then compare notes. That will give you a baseline to mark your progress to a better attitude.

I certainly want to be realistic about life, but it is my desire to lean toward optimism. Do I ever get discouraged? Sure. Am I ever a pain in the neck? Ask my wife. I have learned, however, that an optimistic outlook on people, work and life in general tends to make a person more successful. There are exceptions, certainly, but as a general rule the optimist wins the day. Let me explain.

One of the more remarkable women of the 20th century was stricken deaf and blind from a fever when she was 19 months old. If ever someone could have been justifiably pessimistic, it was Helen Keller. And who could have blamed her? She was without the very senses that we consider most desirable.

Trapped in her dark and silent world, she struggled as a child until the teacher, Anne Sullivan, changed her life. As an adult, Helen Keller traveled the world lecturing and sharing the wisdom of her experiences. By anyone's standards, she lived a successful life. Helen once wrote, “No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new heaven to the human spirit.”

Her optimism grew out of her deep faith in God and her hope for the future. If Helen

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patients.

What they discovered is worth taking to heart ... literally. Medical science has known for some time that a positive outlook will help in the healing process, but the Johns Hopkins study discovered that those with a negative attitude are twice as likely to develop heart trouble as those who are positive. Still not convinced? Research also reveals that optimists live up to 19 percent longer than pessimists.

Now, that's what I call success!

What an exciting age we live in. Technological advancements have given us many tools to ease today's work load, tools that only a few years ago were just dreams. These tools don't make life perfect, but they do make it far more positive. Be encouraged about tomorrow; keep your outlook optimistic. And remember, both positive and negative attitudes are contagious. Is yours worth catching?

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