



High performance thinking

“Whether you believe you can or believe you can’t, you’re probably right”
Henry Ford

I recently watched an interview with the Australian rugby captain. Australia had just beaten Ireland to halt a disastrous string of losses. One could possibly have expected the chap to be relieved, pleased or even elated at the timely victory. With a deadpan expression he stated that “winning a test match isn’t easy”. A seemingly innocuous statement that reveals much.

Most planners and advisers agree that a successful practice requires two types of resources – let’s call these “hard” and “soft”. Hard resources include your physical premises, furniture and fixtures, IT hardware, and documentation. Your soft resources are the skill-sets you and your staff possess - your intellectual property. This includes your professional planning knowledge as well as marketing, selling, and general interpersonal skills.

The one soft resource that seems to be off most people’s radar, and which has a significant impact on the performance of your business, is your (and your staff’s) belief system. There is a growing awareness of the importance of a positive and constructive belief system. This is demonstrated in the number of professionals attending personal development courses and hiring business coaches.

What exactly are “beliefs”? Essentially beliefs are a set of rules that govern how we perceive the world. It won’t be news to you that “people see the world through different eyes”.

Because people see the world through different eyes, the actions they take and the consequences of those actions are different. In fact Dr. Shad Helmstetter, a leading authority in the field of personal growth, connected the actions that you and I make every day to our beliefs as follows:

- **Our beliefs create our attitudes.** Thus if I believe that personal risk cover is vital for everyone with a financial dependent, I will be both committed (attitude) and motivated (attitude) to provide this service.
- **Our attitudes create our emotions.** My attitude (committed and motivated) will translate into emotions such as passion, a sense of urgency, a feeling of purpose and a confidence to address people who need my services.
- **Our emotions create our actions.** My emotions (passion and urgency) provide the energy to set business targets, develop referral alliances, engage people with confidence and work with purpose and focus.

Your beliefs therefore determine every action you have made or will make.



Where do beliefs come from? Our beliefs, or internal set of rules, come from our every experience. Our parents, family and friends play a major role in shaping our belief system. So too our religious leaders, the books we read, and the media.

Are your beliefs working for you? From a practice management perspective, what concerns me is working with planners and advisers whose beliefs are not in alignment with their objectives and goals.

For example, I have worked with many advisers to secure alliances with other professionals or centres of influence that are able to provide regular, high-quality referrals. The preferred referrer is usually an accountant. Early on in the piece I am told by the adviser that “accountants don’t trust risk advisors”, or “accountants are very conservative”, or “it’s very difficult to get an alliance with an accountant” and much more.

I’m not suggesting that creating a working relationship with an accountant is a slam dunk that can be pulled off 100% of the time with great ease. As I said earlier, people are different and some accountants have a belief system that will ensure that an alliance relationship with a planner or advisor will take time to establish. The point I wish to make is that these beliefs make the creation of a successful alliance very difficult irrespective of the accountant’s beliefs.

Look at the chain of events a negative belief can create:

- **Belief:** It is very difficult to get an alliance with an accountant
- **Attitude:** I’m going to have to bust my chops to make anything happen
- **Emotion:** Frustration, resignation, it’s all too hard
- **Action:** None, or no follow through after the first few meetings fail to achieve the objective

As a worthwhile exercise, when you have a quiet moment, take a piece of paper and reflect on your beliefs. What do you believe about your business, your family, even your life? Which of these beliefs are empowering, which not? When reading the first line of this paragraph, did your mind throw up a message along the lines “I don’t have a quiet moment!” If it did, this is not a positive belief. By believing that you have no time to think and reflect, you have created a frantic outlook that probably results in a feeling of stress and frantic activity.

Some relevant areas to test your current beliefs would include:

- Do I believe that what I do for my clients is of value to them?
- Do I believe that my clients appreciate and value my services?
- Do I believe that I can enter into more productive and successful referral relationships?
- Do I believe that I can grow my business and achieve my goals?
- Do I believe that what I do has purpose and creates meaning in my life?



There are no right or wrong answers here. Just beliefs that will assist you in achieving what you seek, and beliefs that will hinder and in some cases prevent you from the outcomes you desire.

Can you change your belief system? I know you can, I've done it myself. Changing beliefs that are holding you back and not contributing to your goals can be changed. The desire for many of us to do just this has spawned the multi-billion dollar personal development industry with seminars, books, websites and other media to carry the message. Can you do this on your own? That depends on your desire, discipline and commitment. Many go the seminar route and more and more people are working with business and life coaches.

When I heard Australia's rugby captain say that winning a test match is not easy, it became very clear why the rugby union team is experiencing such poor results. When, after a win, our captain says that the boys are playing well, we had a plan and stuck to it, we've worked hard on our fitness and it shows, and we really wanted to win; we'll know that both belief and goals are back in alignment.

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