



Are you a Forward Thinker?

Forward thinkers are collaborative leaders in business, not-for-profit, government, and the education sectors. They realize the benefits of working together. They are visionaries and have an art for implementing results. Their success comes from realizing small changes in compassion, acceptability, responsibility, and empathy can have immediate impact not only on their company's bottom line but, more importantly, on the people that make up their systems.

If you have any of the any of the above-mentioned forward thinking characteristics, read on to see how you can begin implementing the forward-thinking philosophy in to your daily work practice. If you said, "Gee, I don't have any of those characteristics," but you see the value of using them to go further in your company, I also ask you to read on. Remember, the soft skills are the hard skills to learn and, more importantly, to use every day.

The intent of this article is to show you the power of self-directed change and how it can impact the larger system. As you begin each workweek, think about these characteristics and see the impact that they have on your life and the lives of those with whom you work.

The characteristics of collaboration, visioning, and implementation are at the core of forward thinking. Without collaboration, the visions we create rarely get implemented. Implementation is what drives market growth, a rise in profits, and a heightened level of moral in our teams. These characteristics support the four characteristics which allow for faster and more passionate work to occur.

Compassion

Compassion is the human quality to understand what another person wants and to do something about it.

Many times, we don't realize that the work we are doing is usually for someone else. The financial statement, sales report, or product sample are usually not for ourselves, but actually are for someone else, be it a client, boss, or peer. If we make small changes in our perception of how we fulfill the work we do for others, our outlook towards our task will change, resulting in a more positive work experience – better quality work done faster.

Within the word compassion is buried the word "passion." When we do things we are passionate about,

it shows. People can not just see it but they can feel it. Quite often when we are passionate about our work, we go that extra mile to ensure that the project is not just done right but also with a little extra. No task is too large when we have passion for it.

Acceptability

Acceptability is adequately satisfying a need, requirement, or standard. Forward thinkers accept the "what is." They strive to understand what they cannot change and work towards those things that they can change. They also value the resources and talents of others in the process of transformation. When you accept "what is," you are aware of that which is created by the whole and know how to work with the larger system to effect change. When forward thinkers make small changes in their levels of tolerance, they see the benefits of the diverse environment around them. That diversity undoubtedly creates strategies to challenge competition, break into new markets, and create new products. Most importantly, however, it is the understanding that differences do matter and can make a difference.

Responsibility

If accountability relates to the tasks that we own, then responsibility connects to our behaviors. Responsibility is defined as being able to make moral or rational decisions about one's own behavior and therefore be answerable for that behavior. Do we ever stop to think about the decisions that we make every day? Thousands of them are made out of instinct and without question. As forward thinkers, we are conscious of the implications that these behaviors could have on the larger system and aware of the possibilities that can emerge by making small changes in our own behavior.

Empathy

As forward thinkers, we constantly collaborate with others and identify with and understand another's situation, feelings, and motives. We realize that investing in those around us makes them feel valued and respected. With respect come trust and the desire to put forth the effort needed to make change happen. Again, small changes toward a more empathetic style allow you to construct a plan of action with your teammates that will not only drive business, but that also will build relationships that inspire a passion to succeed.

Eric Lutzo earned his Masters of Business Administration from Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. Eric is the founder of Forward Thought, a coaching and leadership development practice. (www.forwardthought.net)

Email: Eric@ForwardThought.net