

“Treat employees like partners, and they act like partners.” — Fred A. Allen

THE NINTH PRACTICE: Unify Through “We” Power

The Meaning of Words

Words, and how we interpret their meaning, have a powerful effect on how we feel about our association with a business. From the very beginning, I started to refer to Adams and Adams Building Services as *our* company. Even though I had no other partners in this venture, I felt that the people who worked *with*, not *for*, our company were as much responsible for its success or failure as I was. The idea for our company became a reality due to the belief of our customers, members, suppliers, and friends.

Our Team

When we were a startup company with ten members, I knew that if one member did not show up the rest of us would have to work ten percent harder. If two were out, we cleaned until the wee hours of the morning. Three people missing meant an all-nighter for me. That is when I began to see the *we* not *me* approach. I learned to worship our workforce and treat them like family with courtesy, love, and respect.

This approach started my development of what I call the “We Attitudes,” which is an inclusive feeling and disposition toward business. It embraces the whole team within our vision. It is not focused on the exclusive *I* or *me*, but it includes the whole organization.

I have been using this approach to writing this book. I hope you don’t mind. When I started the final draft, I realized that I sounded like I was lecturing rather than sharing the

Principles and Practices that I also desperately needed to grow our new business. We definitely are going through this together and I hope my “We Attitude” of writing demonstrates that.

As the “We Attitudes” become part of our business culture, other people will start thinking and acting like part of our corporate family. With a change of attitude comes a change of language. It is not *my* job to do it right, but *our* job to do it right. It is not the *company's* equipment, it is *our* equipment. We are not *employees* subordinated to management and supervisors, but *members* of a team. We celebrate together when we get a new customer and share our grief when we lose one.



Adopt A New Language

Why not change the subservient sounding term “employees” to “members” or “associates?” Those who serve our administrative needs are “creative assistants,” rather than “secretaries,” and “janitors” and “cleaners” are truly “cleaning specialists.” Walt Disney Productions calls its staff “cast members,” which continually reminds them they are there to perform for their customers. A positive change of perception occurs when we have a job title of which we are proud. It validates us and puts a positive spin on what we are doing. To some, this might be embellishment, but there is nothing wrong with getting dressed up a little before we go out. More formal is more prestigious. Although we did not have money to spare, we provided uniforms for our cleaning specialists from the very start. They sported sky-blue shirts with the company logo above one pocket, their name above the other, and the American flag on their right shoulder. In our field, a clean, well-designed uniform was a symbol. It gave each individual a sense of identity and pride in what he or she was doing.

Here are some other examples of words and terms that redefine the corporate culture and replace that tired old business paradigm with an enlightened one:

Job	becomes	Function or Work
Subordinate	becomes	Co-worker or Co-creator
Janitor	becomes	Cleaning Specialist
Human Resources	becomes	Member or Associate Services
Business Meeting	becomes	A Vision Quest
Employee Appraisal	becomes	Joint Company/Member Growth and Development Meeting
Problem	becomes	Challenge or AFGO (Another Fine

Growth Opportunity)

Shouldn't, Couldn't, becomes Abolish them

Maybe and But becomes Get rid of them too

Look at the statements on the left and then the ones on the right. Which ones create a positive mental attitude and which one is symptomatic of defeat and shallowness?

They are temps (temporary)	or	They are guest members
Let's get rid of the deadwood	or	Maybe this isn't the right job for them
This project is doomed	or	Let's give this idea a chance
This is hopeless	or	The sun will come out tomorrow
They are a waste	or	How can I help them?
This place is torturing me	or	How can I look at this differently?
I feel trapped	or	This too will pass
I dread going to work	or	I need to change my attitude or my job
Back to the old grind	or	Charge!

Some Examples

See how changing our vocabulary alters the way we feel about a term or function? It is critically important to eliminate the feeling of threat from our communications, while remaining within the legal confines of good business practices. For instance, compare the welcome to new members of Adams and Adams with the greeting from Kash Is King as if this was your first night on the job.

WELCOME TO KASH IS KING FINANCIAL SERVICES

Welcome to **Kash is King**. You have joined one of the fastest growing organizations in the field of financial services. As a new employee you will be trained according to time-proven methods of wealth accumulation. Your rewards will be great by following our formula for achieving financial power and success.

Please keep in mind that the opportunities available at **Kash is King** are limited only by your own efforts. Follow the *Standards of Performance* provided by your supervisor. These are your “marching orders” for excellence.

You are an important part of the continuing growth and profit of this company. You will be rewarded for a job well done based on standards of performance, profit, and *Continuous Quality Improvement*. We invite you to adopt these norms as your objectives.

Remember, at **Kash is King**, you are playing an important role in one of the most successful financial management companies in America. Together we will realize our mission of *Performance, Profit and Service*.

SINCERELY,

Marvin Shallowheart
President

Now here is the way new members are welcome at Adams and Adams Building Services.

WELCOME TO ADAMS AND ADAMS BUILDING SERVICES

Congratulations on your decision to join the best commercial cleaning company in New England. What makes us the best? YOU, our Company Members.

You are now a very important part of a First Class organization. We take pride in our reputation for providing spotless cleaning, excellent service, quality and reliability to our valuable Customers. That reputation was established and is maintained by you, our fine Company Members. Our success, both now and in the future, is in your hands.

We hope you can see the important part you will be playing as a Member of our company. At the same time, we sincerely hope you realize many benefits from your association with **Adams & Adams**. We want to take part in your dreams and visions and join you in your journey to success. We offer many

opportunities for self-development here. If we can assist you in any way, please don't hesitate to ask.

Remember, at **Adams & Adams**, YOU are the company, YOU make it happen. Please join us in "Providing the highest quality professional service through excellence in cleaning."

SINCERELY,

Robert K. Therien
President

(Source: Adams and Adams Building Services Member Policy Handbook. 1999 Edition)

Now, which one gives you the feeling inside that you are about to join a company with a soul? Which one encourages your spirit more?

Old habits are hard to change. Although we create a new language in our company, the old terms and phrases will continue to bleed through. To reinforce the use of our corporate cultural dialect at Adams and Adams Building Services, we developed signs and symbols like the ones you just saw. Transformation of our company language is an evolutionary process just as the steps to realizing *Miracles at Work* will be. Take it one step at a time and enjoy the trip.

Work Safety

The workplace provides a unique opportunity to build fellowship where we are acknowledged and respected for our common beliefs as well as our diversity of ideas and individual genius. This should be a safe place for us to be ourselves, where an attitude of *Oneness* reminds us that our real home is in the heart of God, and leadership comes from a place that gently, but enthusiastically, captures our loyalty and devotion.

Although I am not a television watcher, lately I have become hooked on C-Span and public television in the evening. The documentaries on the Public Broadcasting Station and the great speakers on C-Span provide a terrific learning experience.

One night, General Electric CEO, Jack Walsh, was answering questions for an audience of aspiring entrepreneurs at Fairfield University. His philosophy of getting rid of the lowest performing ten percent of the staff at GE has given him the reputation of being a hard-hearted leader. Even so, throughout the series, he emphasized that the power and strength of a company are held within the potential of its people. Transforming GE into the most powerful company in the world was done, he says, by programs of continual personal improvement, including the intellectual, physical, and ethical advancement of the workforce.

Getting Started

Why not start using the “We Attitudes” as soon as you can? Why not start today by eliminate the *my* or *I* from your organization? Replace them with *we* and *our*. Start right now by including everyone in your organization, and do not forget your vendors and independent contractors in the “We Team.” Next, create a whole new vocabulary to change your corporate cultural language one word, term, or phrase at a time. As you do that, keep in mind that the intent of your inclusiveness is most important. That intention must be genuine not manipulative. To be authentic requires the openness of sharing company plans, data, decisions and profits. Never underestimate the power of a group of appreciated, dedicated, inspired individuals working together. They hold the key to success.

“Employee Know Your Place,” is not part of “We Power.” The “We Attitudes” lead to the sharing of our abundance, which creates more for us to share. *When we think in terms of oneness, rather than separation, our vision is joined and supported by the rest of the business team.*

Now it is time to visit our final Practice, which will vitalize your company and clarify meaning and purpose for your members. Join me in Practice Ten for the beginning, rather than the end of Miracles at Work.

“Each of us needs to believe the organization is ours to create if any shift is to take place in how customers are served, students are taught, patients are healed.”

— Peter Block

*“What lies behind us and what lies before us
are tiny matters compared to
what lies within us.”*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson