

ADJUSTING YOUR FAILURE QUOTIENT

“It’s your attitude, not your aptitude that will affect your altitude.”

By ROBERT M. GIGNAC

I was sitting at a desk in non-descript hotel room in Vancouver, B.C., advancing through PowerPoint slides, my usual pre-presentation ritual. I stopped as the words on the screen caught my eye. “It’s your attitude, not your aptitude that will affect your altitude”. I’ve liked the phrase from the first time I heard it, and I was using it as slide number five in my presentation entitled “Lead or be Left Behind”.

In three hours, I’d be presenting at a conference of financial industry professionals, a group I had presented to on several occasions with great success. It’s what you do when you’ve written a Canadian best-seller on personal finance. On this particular morning, I came to the sudden realization that today’s presentation might not be as successful. Was it me? No, it was them. How did I know this? Indulge me in a short digression...

As part of the two day event, there was a small vendor show, a “meet and greet”, and plenty of time to interact with the attendees. After 48 hours in Vancouver, I have to admit I was both disappointed and frustrated. Nobody seemed all that interested in anything I had to say, examples that I offered, client testimonials that I had spent time developing. I was beginning to doubt my own wisdom at coming to the event and spending not only three days of my time, but flights, hotel, meals, after all, this was one of those “this will be great exposure for you!” type of events.

“Attitude, not your Aptitude”. The slide was starting to resonate with me (despite my having used it dozens of times...). It would have been easy for me to get an attitude at that moment. Didn’t they know about the 12 hour day I endured on Sunday to be here? Didn’t they know that I customized my slides to fit their conference theme? How could they not be interested in what I had to say?

“Attitude, not your Aptitude”. Emotion versus Logic. Much has been debated over the issues of EQ

(Emotional Quotient) and IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and the relative importance of each. As a writer I’d like to add another acronym into the mix: FQ. FQ? Failure Quotient. Your ability to handle adversity, disappointment and the inevitable ‘no’s’ you’ll hear as you try to get people interested in your book, your message, your product, your investment strategy and for financial professionals – just in “you” as an advisor.

EQ and IQ are important, they allow us to bring our personality and intellect to our profession, but FQ is what determines the winners. How many times can you hear ‘no’ before you quit? It still surprises me that not everyone I talk to wants to hire me to speak at their industry events and buy large quantities of my book for their attendees. Not kidding! Can you handle 5, 10, 15, 25, 50 ‘no’s’ in a row? Getting even a single ‘no’ feels like a kick in teeth some days and tests your FQ.

I went through a period about 9 months ago when I didn’t get a single ‘no’ for seven consecutive weeks. Seven weeks without a ‘no’! How did I do that? Easy, I didn’t ask anyone for their business. Since I didn’t ask, I couldn’t get a ‘no’. An excellent experiment, but certainly not the brightest way to build one’s business.

That short digression brings us back to Vancouver – it’s 5:00am in that non-descript hotel room where I’m frustrated, preparing to encourage 300+ financial professionals to develop their client relationships, and share ideas on how to build their practice and help their clients attain their goals.

But who was I frustrated with? Certainly not me. I know my target market. I have been at this for a while and people tell me I have an excellent message. I also have a decent track record in this industry for helping both advisors and clients attain their goals. It wasn’t me. Except - well - it was me.

I’m scheduled to take the platform in three hours at 8:00 a.m., the opening speaker on day three of the



conference, and as I paced in my room (now at 5:15am), there was only one word to describe how I felt: annoyed. As is often the case before I present at conferences, I made a phone call to my wife (back in Ontario, 8:15am) for two reasons: 1) just to say “Hi” from the road, and 2) to vent a little.

About three minutes into our conversation, she hit me with the following statement, “What’s with the attitude speaker man?” I tried to explain how frustrated I was feeling about the whole event and my lack of understanding about their indifference to my message. Her response was classic, “It’s not about you, it’s about them, silly.”

And she was absolutely right.

So what that the people I had talked to were not very interested; my job was to find the people who were interested. After all, I had not talked to all 300+ attendees, but I was going to have all of them in the audience in just over two hours from now. More importantly, if I did not make some sort of attitude adjustment, things were going to go from bad to worse.

So, I adjusted my FQ, and took to the platform with a radically different attitude than I had at 5:15 a.m. I was passionate about my message, and I told myself that it was going to reach those that it needed to reach. I spoke to them not using just my head (IQ), but speaking from the heart (EQ) to share my message about helping advisors to help Canadians create better financial futures for themselves and their families.

Your FQ is what will determine your eventual success in the financial industry. How many times can you hear ‘no’ before you quit? After ten years promoting “Rich is a State of Mind”, some days it is still a surprise to me that not everyone I talk to is interested in what I have to say. I suspect that this happens to you as well, and that’s alright—simply go out and find the people who are interested, and give them your best.

By the time I had left the conference seven hours later for my flight home, I had taken orders for more copies of my book than on any day since the book was published. I asked people who were ordering, “What made you decide to order today?” Almost to a person they told me that it was the passion that I delivered my message with that morning.

My point? Work on developing your FQ, your ability to respond to ‘no’s’, ‘maybes’, and business disappointments. Keep the passion about what you do, and remember that it isn’t about you, it’s about them – your clients and prospects. I know that after this recent experience, my FQ has expanded to a new level.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Gignac is a best-selling author and sought-after speaker at financial industry seminars and client events, currently based in Oakville, Ontario. With an entertaining yet direct speaking style, Robert offers a light-hearted look at financial planning with the serious message of personal responsibility. Audiences love his dynamic and engaging presentations which challenge them to see things from a different perspective. Robert has been a student of the financial planning process for almost two decades. His goal is to passionately encourage people to take control of their finances in order to have a “Richly Imagined Future.”

