

Sick Crows, Your Attitude, and Being on the Winning Team

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Over the past week I have been witnessing something extremely unusual in my backyard.

There is a crow outside, who appears to be ill – he's not doing well at all. The crow appears to be infected with West Nile Virus. He wanders around appearing drunk, frequently falling over. He stands in one place most of the time. The interesting thing about this crow, however, is that all around him, there are a multitude of other crows cackling and cawing at him, almost as if they are supporting him – cheering him on. So many crows perched high up in the trees are making noise all day long, looking down upon him.

Anytime I go outside, the crows go crazy and warn their sick friend that I am around. They fly close to me overhead if I walk near the crow. My family and I have been doing what we can to help, offering him water and so forth. However, the crow appears to be too out of it even to drink water.

The crow spent his first several days wandering around the garden. More recently, he has taken up residence on some wooden steps. When humans are not around, groups of crows congregate around this particular crow keeping him company. All of the steps near the crow are completely covered in bird droppings.

Having never seen animals act like this, I am absolutely astonished by how supportive these other crows have been. Typically when an animal is dying, other surrounding animals leave it to die. However, here the crow has a huge audience of supporters cheering for him, hoping he will get better. These crows are really showing a ton of solidarity for this cause.

Most people do not want to be part of a losing situation. Being part of a losing situation makes us extremely uncomfortable and vulnerable, and it is something that we want to avoid altogether. In fact, this is almost a law of the world: Most people, animals, and others will do what they can to avoid a losing situation. That is what makes the situation with this crow so remarkable.

I spent a lot of time visiting relatives and others in hospitals growing up. Hospitals to me are about the most depressing places on earth. There are people who have lost their mind. Other people are writhing in pain. Some people are dying. The food is horrible. The surfaces are so hard, often cold. Most of the people are very impersonal. There is a lot not to like about hospitals.

I remember sitting in the hospital once with one of our old family friends when he had come to visit a very sick relative of ours. He was in his 40s at the time and had spent his life in a "hard charging" way having all sorts of adventures and mishaps. He drank a lot and used drugs. He had slept around a lot. He wore leather and rode around on a Harley Davidson motorcycle. He had inherited a lot of money and did not need to work.

But when we saw him that day, within a few moments of entering the hospital it appeared that everything had changed with him. I saw his entire face frown, his body slump, and he broke out into a sweat. I am not sure if it was that he was confronting his own mortality at the moment, or what it was. What I do know, however, was that the sight of the hospital made him physically ill. He excused himself and went to the bathroom where he must have thrown up.

We had walked through the corridors on the way to visit my relative, and the doors to all the individual patient rooms were open. Our friend had looked in each room and each room seemed to hold something that was more disheartening than the last. A man on a lung machine. Someone in another room who looked over 120 years old. Someone in another room who was bandaged from head to toe.

This friend visited my relative for only a few minutes, just enough time to turn down some warm apple juice that was offered to him by an orderly. This person had been close to our family, and specifically this relative, for his entire life. But after that hospital visit, he just dropped off the face of the earth. He did not even attend the funeral a few years later.

"I haven't been in a hospital in 20 years!" I remember him exclaiming as we had walked through the automatic doors of the hospital entrance, with a smile still on his face.

But then, within a matter of moments, suddenly he was confronted with his own mortality, with losing, and with death. And he simply could not bear it.

None of us want to be associated with the losing side.

When I was growing up, my best friend lived with his grandmother, who had gotten multiple sclerosis at a young age, and eventually was confined to bed. When I used to visit my friend, his grandmother loved to sit and talk for hours on end. She was a nice woman and I would often sit and chat with her. However, I am ashamed to admit that sitting with her for long periods of time often made me uncomfortable. Looking back I think it was mostly because I was afraid of being sick myself. You might call me a horrible person, but I often feel uneasy when I am speaking with people who are sick and dying, because it reminds me that I too will not be around forever.

I also feel uncomfortable when spending time with people who are losing and doing horribly. For example, on the school playground when kids would pick each other for teammates, the children who are picked last are 99 out of 100 times not the most popular kids. The kids who are bad at sports also typically experience a spillover effect, wherein they also become unpopular with the other kids, due to their lack of athletic ability. The other kids do not want to associate with *losers*.

I think this is something in our genetic makeup, which helps us with survival. If we associate with people who are losing we are likely to lose as well. We want to stay on the side of the people who are winning. We know that being around winners is most likely to make us a winner as well.

If a man wants to attract the most desirable mate, he does not say to himself: "I am going to fail at everything I do, be

unemployed, and lose at everything. I am also going to let my body go and get really depressed."

No. Generally, the man will do what he can to better himself and be as attractive as possible, as powerful and happy as possible, and as wealthy as possible. The goal is to always be, or at least appear to be on the winning side. In order to impress a woman, a man does not walk up to her and start explaining what a loser he is, and how he fails at everything he tries. Instead, he does the opposite. When you hear about the most desirable people getting married they are generally not marrying the weak, down on their luck, and depressed people out there. They are pairing up with those who appear to be on the winning side.

Did someone ever recommend a bad doctor to you?

"Hey, this guy is horrible and he will really misdiagnose and mess you up. He'll hack you up real bad. You gotta check him out."

Of course no one has ever said this to you. Instead, the doctors you get recommended are usually people who are "the best in their field" and the top of this or that. Every time someone has recommended a doctor to me they have told me how the doctor won this or that award – i.e., the doctor is on the winning side.

In the practice of law, no one ever recommends attorneys to others with a recommendation like:

"You need to use this guy. He lost the case for me and has lost his last several cases. Almost all of his former clients are in jail!"

We simply do not receive these sorts of recommendations from people. Instead we hear about the attorney who wins all of his cases – the best in town.

If a sports team is losing and doing horribly, its attendance will sag and go down. Some will go to watch the games, but far fewer people want to go watch a losing team than a winning team. We want to associate with winners.

In school growing up, and out in the adult world, you never see a group of happy people standing around talking to someone who is depressed and complaining. Instead, the person they are attracted to is the one who is positive in nature, smiling, and excited about the world. This is the person who attracts friends and followers.

Advertisers do not hire as spokespeople the athletes who have lost more than they have won; they hire the people who win and are constantly exuding excitement about what they are doing.

And this brings me to you: Everyone wants to associate with winners and hire winners, and everyone runs like hell from losers. The smartest employers out there typically hire based on attitude. The best people I have hired in my life have not had the best educations, the best families, or even the best experience: They had the best attitude. A great attitude is the most important possible quality you can possess, and there is nothing more important to an employer.

With very limited exceptions, almost any skill can be taught on the job. You could learn to fly, and land a 747 airplane with 500 passengers on it in a week, with no previous flight experience if you needed to. A surgeon could teach you how to remove a gall bladder in a week. A lawyer could show you how to write a brief in a week or so. Almost every skill is teachable but the one thing that is not teachable is your attitude. A winning attitude is what people want to associate with, and it will attract others to you.

I remember several years ago after I had been practicing law for a few years, I went out on some interviews. In virtually every instance where I was less than 100% enthusiastic about practicing law, my previous job, and law firm experience in general, I did not get the job. All it took was me offering up a couple of things I did not like or that rubbed me the wrong way. By contrast, in virtually every instance where I was 100% enthusiastic about practicing law and working in a [law firm](#), I got the job.

You see, law firms like people who they can associate with the word 'positive.'

One of the strangest things about law firms is that if someone has been laid off from their previous position they have an extraordinarily difficult time getting hired by law firms of the same prestige level again. The reason? Because the next law firm who interviews them knows that the law firm *did not lay everyone off* and wonders why the law firm decided to lay this person off and not others. The implication becomes, almost immediately, that this particular person was not on the winning team. Law firms do not want to hire losers.

I have noticed throughout the years that when people have been fired from their previous job, or if they left a law firm under bad circumstances, they will almost never get hired by another law firm if they talk about this in the interview. Instead, the smart ones bat around the subject, or make it sound as if they did not do anything wrong, and they somehow make everything seem as if they are on the "winning side." Then they end up [getting the job](#). But a top firm will not hire a lawyer who dwells on the negative, even for an instant.

Neither would you. Smart employers simply do not want any sour grapes when they are interviewing people. Negative people will almost always bring that negativity with them and infect those around them. This is just how it works.

As someone in the working world, your attitude is crucial for your success because this is largely what employers buy. If employers buy bad attitudes then they are going to hurt their organization. If employers buy good attitudes then they are going to help their organization. The right attitude is crucial for success.

If you have a good attitude then everything will fall into place. You need to look like you are on the winning team and constantly show yourself to be a winner—even if times are tough. People do not want to hire losers or people with bad attitudes.

THE LESSON

Adopting a positive attitude will always bring you closer to success, as nobody wants to be associated with a losing side. Everyone wants to associate with and hire winners, and avoids losers. Nothing is more important than maintaining a positive attitude, as many employers hire people based primarily on attitude; with the right attitude, everything else will fall into place. You must look like you are on the winning team, even if times are tough; nobody wants to hire a loser.

Read More About Why Your Attitude is Just as Important as the Quality of Your Work:

- [Your attitude is hugely important. If you have not read it, you should read the essay "A Message to Garcia and Your Career"](#)
- [Are You a Critic](#)
- [See Your Job and the World from the Bright Side and Not the Dark Side](#)

