

I think that we can all say we have had days when it seems everything goes wrong. My 19 year old daughter Jenni had one of those days last week, and she unwittingly tried to drag both her parents into her bad day with her.

Jenni is a sophomore at the University of Iowa, and went back to school a few days early to get a jump on moving in, look for a job and talk with her academic advisors. Like our older 2 girls, we allowed her to take a car to her 2nd year of college. And that is where the bad day began. In Iowa City, like a lot of college towns, parking is allowed only on one side of the street, and the allowable side changes every day. So unless you are in an approved lot, you have to move your car every day before 8:00. Jenni is NOT a morning person, so that is a potential source for Jenni to have a bad day. But waking up to move the car did not prove to be a problem. The pouring rain did not prove to be a problem.

When Jenni got to the car to move it, the problems began when the car wouldn't start. She was smart enough to take her cell phone with her, and she called me for help. The only reasons I can think of why she called me were because I am a male, awake and her father. However I am over a hundred miles away, and my knowledge of why cars may or may not start is extremely limited. Fortunately she called my wife next, who contacted AAA and worked out a way to have her added to our membership. Now all she had to do was wait for help.

Help was slow in coming and Jenni, remember she is not a morning person, fell asleep in the car. While she was asleep, the Iowa City police came by and gave her a ticket. She called mom and started crying, \$10 is a lot of money to an unemployed college student. When the local AAA representative came to help, Jenni found out that they were not driving a tow truck and the jump start they tried did not work. After another phone call to mom, there was more frustration, more waiting for the tow truck to come, less time to sleep or do her errands.

As owners and managers of small businesses we sometimes have days that start out like Jenni's. Usually these bad days are not the result of our own actions, but those of others around us or equipment that doesn't work like we expect. How we handle these setbacks sets the tone for the rest of our staff. Like it or not, they are watching how we react to adversity. Because of our position of leadership, our staff will react to their adverse situations much in the same manner we handle ours.

Christian minister Charles Swindoll may have one of the best quotes about attitude; "We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude ...I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you ...we are in charge of our attitudes." Attitude is infectious. A positive attitude can make a potentially bad day better in the same way that a negative attitude can ruin a potentially great day.

After much waiting and distress, Jenni finally got her car towed to a dealership for repair. Her attitude improved when she saw the car being towed away. The Iowa City police department had been contacted and early indications are that the ticket might be wiped away. What could have been a potentially bad day for at least 3 people ended up not as bad as it could have been.

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, president of First National Bank, Ankeny. *You can view past columns at www.fnbanes.com, under the "small business today" button on the right side of the screen.*