

# What's your FQ?

by Robert M. Gignac

I was standing at the podium arranging my notes, advancing through my PowerPoint slides, my usual pre-presentation ritual. I stopped when 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 the fifth slide in my session entitled, "Leadership & Commitment = Success".

I was in Indianapolis, Indiana presenting at a conference of information technology professionals, a group I had presented to on several occasions with great success. On this morning, I came to the sudden realization that this breakout session would not be as successful. Was it me? No, it was them. Or rather, the lack of them. Nobody showed up for my 10:00 a.m. session. The room host who had been looking uncomfortably at her watch, slowly walked up the aisle toward me. "I'm sorry, I don't know what to say. Here's your speaker's gift, I guess it's not a total loss." With that, she left me alone in a room set up to handle 100 people. Just my PowerPoint slides and me.

"Attitude, not your aptitude." The slide hit home. It would have been easy for me to get an attitude at that moment. Didn't they know about the 10-hour drive I made yesterday to be here? Didn't they know that I customized my slides to fit their con-

ference theme? Didn't they know I created 75 copies of my presentation material for them to take away? How could they not be here to listen to me?

"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 in the business world. As an entrepreneur, I would like to add another acronym into the mix: FQ. What is FQ? Failure Quotient. Your ability to handle adversity, disappointment, and the inevitable 'no's' you will hear as you build and develop your business.

EQ and IQ are important, they allow us to bring our personality and intellect to our products and services, but FQ is what determines the winners in the entrepreneurial game. How many times can you hear 'no' before you quit? It was a surprise to me that not everyone I talk to wants to hire me to speak to their organization. Can you handle 5, 10, 15, 25, 50 'no's' in a row? Getting even a single 'no' is hard and tests your FQ. Most of us face this test daily.

I went through a period two years 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.

Since my session at the conference was obviously a complete failure, it would have been easy to just pack up and leave. Instead, I took the time to walk through my presentation, mentally rehearsing the key points, looking out at the empty seats as if they were full of eager attendees.

At 10:28, a head poked through the door at the back of the room, "Are you Robert?" I confirmed that I was, and he told me he had wanted to be in my session, but had a pressing need to be in another. He asked if I would mind giving him a personal one-on-one since he was the only person there. Think about the FQ—what do you think I did? In the 20 minutes I had before the next speaker was due, I presented the material as if there were 100 people in the room. We took our conversation out into the hallway when we had to vacate, and I finally asked him the all-important question, "Is this a message that your organization needs to hear?"

The answer I wanted to hear didn't come that day standing in the hallway. It did arrive three weeks later during a follow-up phone call. This was after an initial 'maybe' in the hallway, followed by a 'no' via e-mail, followed by two more 'maybes' on the phone. Later this summer, I will be delivering a session on leadership at their organization's annual sales conference. I would have never received this opportunity had I just packed up and left.

My point? Work on developing your FQ, your ability to respond to 'no's', 'maybes', and business disappointments. I know that after this recent experience, my personal FQ is certainly larger. **SBCM**

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