



# Pessimist or Optimist? It's Your Choice

By Thomas Lee

**A**t a CAPPA meeting in Grand Forks, North Dakota, I listened to Vickie Younger talk about radio station WIIFM—what's in it for me—as it relates to our professional development and personal involvement with APPA. I thought about that for a while, and I realized that I have asked myself that for a long time. What's in it for me? What can I get out of all this? Why am I involved with the APPA organization? What have I learned that I can use? What would I tell someone who asks me about APPA?

Whether you are *pessimistic* or *optimistic* about what you think you can gain from APPA meetings, the choice is yours and yours alone. If you go thinking that you'll learn nothing, then you probably won't be disappointed. I promise you that you will neither learn much nor will you achieve any benefit from attending. I know; I've been there.

## FACING PESSIMISM

Pessimism is disastrous and dangerous. It ruins hope and possibilities. If someone is pessimistic, he or she doesn't hope for a better future, and neither do they do something to achieve it. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. The obstacles along the way seem enormous, and the pessimists doubt they can overcome them. At the end, you will just stay where you are without making any progress. People can waste years, even their whole lives, because of pessimism.

Pessimism is something I face every now and then, and I'm sure there are some of you that do too. You are taunted with people you can't please, last-minute requests, more work to do and fewer people and smaller budgets with which to do it. The future can look pretty bad some times. And that's just at work. Throw in your home life and the load can even get heavier. Ever feel like your hard work is ignored and your devotion goes unrewarded? So what can you do?

## OPEN A WIDE EYE

The first thing to remember is that *attitude is everything*. It is your decision to see the glass half full or half empty. May I suggest approaching everything with an optimistic view? I tried it and I like it. Open a wide eye to new choices, listen to new ideas. Ask yourself, "What can APPA do for me?" Let me answer that question. I think APPA can help out a lot.

**Number 1:** find a cause you believe in. APPA is an excellent choice. It offers the opportunity to explore new and emerging technologies using active learning strategies. It has a longstanding tradition of leadership. It can recharge your batteries.

**Number 2:** focus on the possibilities, not the impossibilities. When people focus their minds on the impossibilities, all they see is the enormity of the challenges in their way. Their minds are overwhelmed by difficulties, and they no longer see themselves as winners. APPA, with its wide resources and training

opportunities—such as the APPA annual conference, Drive-In Workshops, and Supervisor's Toolkit—can help anyone overcome any difficulties and provide the tools for improvement. Al Stoverink from Arkansas State University says, "I have found the organization to be a great source of information via the Annual Meeting and Conference. APPA provides the opportunity to gain current information on a wide variety of issues and trends in educational facilities management."

**Number 3:** be part of a team. APPA is a prestigious group that can give you a unique perspective in these challenging times. It can be difficult to face things alone. Most of us can't make it by ourselves. The significance of belonging to APPA is the people you meet and the lessons in life you will learn. I have made many friends in the APPA organization, and I know I can call on them anytime for anything. Just like you, they face enormous difficulties and challenges in their jobs, and the biggest question to be answered is who will help who the most. You yourself can be an inspiration to others, just as some have been to you.

**Number 4:** networking. Dale Carnegie says, "You must have a good time meeting people if you expect them to have a good time meeting you." APPA offers outstanding opportunities to network with your fellow colleagues, such as at the twice-yearly Institute for Facilities Management and the Leadership Academy. To help you focus on the possibilities,

you can listen to people who have the same concerns and problems about issues that you have (or will have). It can inspire you to know that other people can do it despite the challenges they faced.

The trade shows are another great way to learn from others. The business partners offer new products and ideas to solve old problems and to make your job easier and you will form relationships that will last forever. Getting involved by joining a committee is an exceptional way to learn about APPA. You can have lots of fun and at the same time be a part of something that is outstanding.

**Number 5:** open your mind to unexpected ways. Take risks. I am intrigued by the idea of doing something differently (even at the same time finding it hard to change). It's inevitable that someone can and probably will come up with a new way to do something you have been doing for a long time. Open up and listen, strip away all the negative thoughts, and give in to learning something differently. Be open to change. I know it's hard, but give it a try. The solution may come in unpredicted ways that never occurred to you before. Open your mind for such unexpectedness.

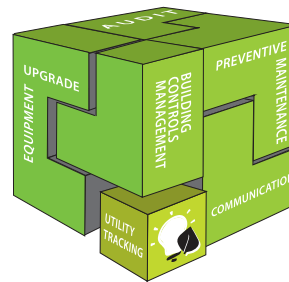
**Number 6:** get rid of negativity. Nothing takes away your optimism faster than negativity. Always try to see the positive side of things and speak about the possibilities. Try to think that there is always a positive side in everything you deal with. It doesn't mean you are denying the reality; you just look at it from a different angle.

**Number 7:** connect to your spiritual power source. Our strength is limited, so you need other sources of power. While your friends can give you some power, a great source of power is spiritual. By praying or meditating or any other way you choose, you connect to a way that can give you strength you need. Count your blessings. Once you realize how valuable you are and how much you have going for you, life is so much easier. You will have the confidence to get the job done.

Which attitude do you choose to embrace? I used to be too pessimistic but have changed over time to choose optimism. Being optimistic is so much more fun and relaxing. Do you choose to step in it or to step over it? I looked for a long time for something to help me and finally realize it was here all along. APPA offers anything and everything to become a success; training, education, networking,

and most of all, friends. Never give up and keep swinging and keep going to the APPA meetings. They are great for learning and a lot of fun as well. ☺

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