

## OPPORTUNITY FOCUSED

### What is does it mean to be opportunity focussed?

**Opportunity focus refers to demonstrating an attitude that sees failure, hardship, obstacles and hiccups as opportunities to learn and improve.**

We could say that being solution focussed is about finding ways to manage a situation in order to get to a predetermined goal, while being opportunity focused is about having an openness and willingness to change the destination if new possibilities and innovations present themselves that would result in even better outcomes. Often, during the process of taking steps to reach our goal, even better outcomes to strive for can present themselves; a person with opportunity focus is much more likely to spot these greater potentials.

So being opportunity focussed means having a strong radar for recognising circumstances and natural synergies in any given situation and then being willing to act on these even if it means changing the original plan or strategy.

### Why is it important to be opportunity focussed?

The importance of being opportunity focussed is that it expands the possibilities open in your life. Many adults become skilled at responding to external circumstances in useful, productive ways, however they do not take the next step of being open to previously unimagined opportunities and possibilities.

At the heart of opportunity focus is a positive orientation towards life. With opportunity focus, you are constantly looking for how you can work with circumstances to create the outcomes you desire rather than bemoaning that things are as they are which is a victim mentality, where one is totally subject to external circumstances. The reality is that the victim mentality is itself the problem as it always reads circumstances as being negative and contrary to one's desires.

If you wish to evolve to your highest potential as an adult human being, then cultivating an opportunity focus is one of the keys. With an opportunity focus comes a sense of empowerment and capacity, as well as momentum, to create the life you desire.

Furthermore, someone who is opportunity focussed is very attractive to other people. The positive, 'can do', 'let have a go' attitude; the attitude that says 'just because it hasn't been done before doesn't mean it can't be done' is compelling. People want to be a part of this energy. It is an energy that is innovative, exciting and fulfilling. Bringing an opportunity focus into all your business dealings is like adding fertilizer at just the right moment to the garden; it causes situations to flourish and grow.

## Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of opportunity focus?

Although the following obstacles to being opportunity focussed can arise, all of them, if handled with opportunity focus, can be turned into grist for the mill. One can simply revisit the desired vision work out the next most useful action to take and continue on one's creative journey.

One of the major reasons people slip up in their application of an opportunity focus is that their focus is **over-saturated with considerations of personal opportunity** with not enough time spent considering how their actions will impact others. We tend to like it if something turns out well for us individually; consider then that maybe it is even more pleasurable and satisfying if we are instrumental in getting ourselves the result we want AND helping other parties get what they desire. If a win feels good, then a win-win feels even better!

The error in seeking opportunities only for oneself is that it assumes there is no knock on effect. If one is consistently selfish, however, one will soon find one's business is dying through lack of clients, vendors and associates etc, who have gone elsewhere to search out business relationships that provide more win-win outcomes. Relationships are the foundation of business. Other people's needs matter as well as our own. If one doesn't look after the needs of others, one will soon find a distinct lack of opportunity in one's environment.

This is not to suggest one has to aim for saintliness; all it means is that one needs to acknowledge how the world actually works, i.e. that each action we take has knock on effects, like ripples from a stone thrown in a pond. To be in accord with how the world works, one needs to take this into account, and make the ripples one's sends out useful to those who will be affected by them.

Another reason people slip up with sustaining an opportunity focus is that, having had a taste of how truly creative and innovative it is possible to be, **people can become frightened of the responsibility** that goes with this. There is sometimes a temptation to try to retreat to an earlier stage of adult-hood when there was ignorance about one's creative capacity. Sometimes there is a shout from within saying 'stop the world, I want to get off'. This is natural. We all have days where this voice makes itself heard. We cannot, however, lose awareness of our creative capacity once we have lived it. What we can do though, is to allow ourselves to have 'fallow' periods - fallow means to rest – fields are rested so that they can regenerate. So, in the same way we can let ourselves rest and regenerate ready for the next creative burst. Again, this is the natural order of things; field left fallow for a while, then burst forth with new growth and energy.

Another easy way to slip up in keeping an opportunity focus is when **we allow ourselves to get overexposed to fear and negativity**. Try sitting in front of the news for a few straight hours and you'll then find it hard to maintain your opportunity focus! To be opportunity focussed is not the most common mind set on the planet. There is a lot of support for scarcity beliefs and thoughts e.g. there's not enough time, there's not enough money, the planet's more violent than ever, money doesn't grow on trees (I think a farmer could argue that point!); the point is that these are beliefs that will see evidence in the world that justifies them. To be opportunity focussed requires a shift out of these all to common negative beliefs into allowing the possibility that there are always options, ways forward, solutions and possibilities so far unimagined just waiting to be discovered.

Then there is also the fact that with opportunity focus comes change; being a creative focus it means things happen, things shift, things change – and not always in a predictable way. And **sometimes the fear of change and of the unknown comes up and blocks our creative urges.** The desire to stay with the safe and known way kicks in. The result of this is that we don't move forward, grow, evolve or create the end result that we really desire.

**Finally, there's politics.** This isn't a reference to the governmental sort of politics but to business politics. Many organisations have their way of doing things and to bring an opportunity focus will very likely mean going outside these norms – so resistance may be encountered. And there's also the politics of personality. Often personality gets in the way of principles. Our identities get invested in certain outcomes and other people get invested in conflicting outcomes so we enter into conflict and positions rather than keeping our eye on the ball of mutually beneficial outcomes.

### Evaluate your own level of opportunity focus

- Do you have an internally generated vision, or various internal visions, that you are working towards?

If you do, then you might like to think about and write down what actions you have taken so far to bring this vision to reality and also the next action or actions that you can take to move you towards your vision (or desired outcome).

If you do not have a vision or visions, then you might like to write them down in any one or more of the following business related areas: Vision for Career, Vision for Business, Vision for Finances, Vision for Knowledge and Learning, Vision for Health, Vision for Contribution.

There are also, of course, the more personal areas that we can have visions for such as Family, Partner, Social, Spiritual and so on.

- Think about the last time something negative occurred in your external business world and answer the following questions:
  - What was your initial reaction and did this last or change? If it changed, did it get better or worse and what caused this change?
  - How did you handle the situation – did you make it worse, neutralise it, solve it, or create an opportunity out of it?
  - If the same situation arose again, would you handle it differently? And if so, how would you handle it next time?
- Keep a note, for a two-week period, of any ideas you have in response to external circumstances and keep a note for the same two-week period of ideas you have that bubble up from inside (as opposed to being a response to an external stimulus).

At the end of the two weeks take a look at both lists and what qualitative and quantitative differences you can notice.

If, when you read through the lists, there are ideas that pop out as worth following through on (that you haven't yet actioned), decide on a next step and do it. Or, if you experience

resistance to taking action, ask yourself what that resistance is about and what it would take to remove the resistance.

- How often do you take stock, sit back and review where you are at? Do you revisit your original plans and goals and make sure that as external circumstances are changing you are aware of new opportunities?
- Think of someone you know who has exceptional standards of opportunity focus. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 10, what would you be)?
  - What's one thing you could do to improve how you'd rate yourself?
- Think of someone you know who has acceptable standards of opportunity focus. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 5, what would you be)?
- Think of the least opportunity focussed person you have come across. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 1, what would you be)?]

### Improve your level of opportunity focus

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Decide on one action to take that will move you up one point your self-assessment, of where you sit in being opportunity focussed, in the last section.
- Identify someone you work with who is highly focussed on opportunity and whose energy is infectious in a positive way. Use them as a behaviour model i.e. notice what words they use, how they use language, and what gestures and body language they use. Practice incorporating these elements into your own repertoire and notice the positive effects.
- When discussing plans, strategies, ways forward etc with business associates practice asking the questions:
  - What would be the ideal outcome for each of us/all of us, even if we don't yet know how we can make it happen?
- What might be a first step towards making that happen?
- Watch a typical news interview and notice how often the focus is on what's wrong or has been done wrong, and on criticism. Then imagine you are the interviewer and your job is to elicit opportunities from the situation and from the interviewee – what questions would you ask? What impact do you think this might have on the interviewee and on the watchers/readers/listeners?
- Review your vision/mission statement every morning and commit to keeping your radar on 'high' for recognising opportunities to advance you towards your vision.
- If you are in a situation where someone is complaining about a situation or circumstance, experiment with seeing if you can shift them at least into a solution focus, rather than join

them in complaint. When you find ways that work, make a mental note of them and keep them handy!

- See if you can become a creator of opportunity in addition to spotting opportunity inherent in externally arising circumstances and situations. We can do this by owning and taking responsibility for the impact that our attitudes and beliefs have on our ability to see opportunity when it presents itself.

Someone who habitually thinks 'nothing good ever happens to me' is actually preventing themselves from seeing good things through holding this belief, while someone who habitually thinks 'we never know what's around the corner and it's worth checking it out!' is programming themselves to be ready for and to see opportunities when they arise. So program yourself positively.

## Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of opportunity focus, the following books, courses and consultants may be worth considering. Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources, the list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- On the Creative Orientation: Robert Fritz work – start with his website at: <http://www.robertfritz.com/index.php?content=principles>
- On the Creative Orientation: Book - The Magician's Way by William Whitecloud <http://www.magiciansway.com.au/>
- On Negotiation: Book – The Negotiator's Toolkit by Allan Parker (his negotiation techniques aim at maximisation and creating mutually beneficial outcomes) [http://www.peakpd.com/pub\\_negtoolkit.html](http://www.peakpd.com/pub_negtoolkit.html)
- On Negotiation: DVD – Negotiation by Allan Parker see: [http://www.peakpd.com/dvd\\_negotiation.html/](http://www.peakpd.com/dvd_negotiation.html/)
- Coaching with a focus on increasing your capacity to operate with an opportunity focus

## Author and editor acknowledgement

**High Ideals** would like to acknowledge and thank Claire Stretch for her work on this document. Claire is the PR and Communications Consultant for High Ideals, a solution consultant, business and life coach, trainer, speaker and writer. To find out more about Claire, please visit his profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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