

Hi everyone, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to ask a question, is pessimism good for you? Before we dig in, don't forget about Boot Camp. So, we've got Raleigh Boot Camp coming up in April. Get you folks signed up. Contact Charlotte for more information.

Okay, is pessimism good for you? Caveat, first thing, it probably should not be your default setting, especially in construction. I can't imagine ... contractors are the most optimistic people in the world. I mean, they think there's nothing they can't do, nothing they can't accomplish, no problem they can't solve. And largely, they're right. I mean, there really are quite amazing folks. I don't know how you would even be in construction if you weren't a cock-eyed optimist. But there is a place for pessimism, so hear me out here.

Now, first of all, the person that wrote this article on which I'm basing this blog, Elana Spivack from Inverse, I'm not sure if that's a magazine or a website, May of 2023, she said, "Diving headfirst into a half empty glass is not supported by science." Makes sense. Doom and gloom, pessimism, no, no, no, no, no. That's no way to go through life. Healthy pessimism, defensive pessimism, as she calls it, is having lower expectations in the face of uncertainty. It's not a gloomy outlook on life. It pertains to the things that are largely out of our control, so weather, for example. I mean, contractors, some years are terrific, and some years you just can't get jobs out of the ground because the weather is so lousy. That's something out of your control. Being a little bit pessimistic about the weather and building of that pessimism into your schedule, perhaps, maybe that's a way to get ahead of that a little bit.

In business meetings and planning, we know that having opposing viewpoints and differences produces better, more optimal outcomes. We know that. Dennis was a perfect partner for me because I'm such a wild-eyed optimist. And Dennis would say, "What about this?" And we would disagree about a great many things. We were really compatible as partners in that way, in that he pushed me to think differently, and I pushed him to think differently. I needed somebody to temper the optimism, or we would've set goals that we never could have achieved. And thank goodness we actually hit them now.

So, the lesson from this is diversify your teams so that you include differing opinions, viewpoints and thinking styles. So, some thinking styles lend themselves to what could go wrong viewpoints more easily than others. So, John Mayes, our COO, tends to have a different thinking style than I do. And that, again, is a great thing because we balance each other out.

Another lesson coming from this pessimism viewpoint: listen to those people with differing opinions from yours. They can add value. I know it's annoying. You as a leader want to go, go, go and hurry, hurry, hurry and rush, rush, rush and get it done, get it done. But it's worth listening to those people with differing viewpoints and opinions than yours because they can make a lot of sense and add a lot of value. The third thing is seek a healthy balance of viewpoints. So, I guess we've made that point.

And then the fourth thing is avoid complacency. If you've got meetings going on in your organization and it's kind of a bunch of yes people getting together, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes," you really need to work on that balance. You really need people to help bring in different perspectives, different opinions, different viewpoints, different ways of looking at life even, to make sure that you're not going out and doing things in your optimism which would benefit from a drop or two of pessimism in the mix. So, I'd like to hear what you say. What do you think? Is pessimism good for you?

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