

Dealing with Naysayers

By Brownell Landrum

Now you know about the Eight Kinds of Naysayers and their Motivations (see article), you should be better prepared to evaluate the source of their criticisms. But how should you deal with them? The important first step is to see which of the Eight Kinds of Naysayers they are so you can have a better understanding of their motivations.

The second step is to understand how Naysayers can affect you, negatively and positively. The negativity of Naysayers can:

- Instill fear
- Immobilize – stop you from taking action
- Deplete your creativity
- Zap confidence
- Create conscious or subconscious sabotage – their negative energy can actually “curse” you and put a “cloud” over the project.

But there can be an upside if you are strong enough. Strong in your beliefs, convictions and self-confidence. Their criticism can offer you things to consider and help you find ideas for improvement. And, their negativity can even spur you on with increased motivation. “I’ll show them!” will become your mantra.

The second step is to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do they believe in you?
How you answer this question can depend on the nature and length of your history with them. If you have known this person professionally for a long time, their opinion may have more value than someone you’ve known for a short time or only interacted with socially. Perhaps they might believe in your ability in some areas but not others. For example, some people are idea people and some are execution people. They may believe in your ability to come up the idea, but think you need help in a particular area of execution.
- Do they believe in your idea?
If someone does not believe in your idea or concept, you can ask for clarity. What is it about the idea they do not see working?
- How will they react if you don’t heed their advice?
Often we don’t find out until too late how offended people become by not taking their advice. We may need to explain the reason for taking another path (we hired an expert, for example, did a survey and their opinion was in the minority, or perhaps we had to change direction based on other circumstances). Before we allow someone to provide advice we may want to find out how will react if we don’t proceed their way. If there is a risk of a problem, we would be better off if we avoid involving them.
- Can they help with solutions for the challenges or problems they identify?

If someone offers problems, test them to come up with solutions or ideas for overcoming the challenges they foresee. If they can't do this, you might be better off not taking their advice.

- Do they have the appropriate background and experience to be qualified to give advice? Have they worked in a similar business or industry?
- Have you hired experts to guide you and help you make decisions? If you have hired experts and trust their advice, you might be well-advised not to solicit too many opinions of others.

It is okay to tell people you do not want their advice. If someone tries to give their input unsolicited, then you can politely say, “thanks, but I have consulted an expert and am going with their guidance. However, you could help me with leads, contacts, etc...”

In fact, for several of the Eight Kinds of Naysayers, you are probably better off not listening to their criticism. It can take great strength to “fight” the negative energy of Naysayers – energy you need to use to focus on your business.

Here is some advice from me: do not try to get too many people's advice. Decide who you want input from and who you do not. Everyone's a critic, and they all want to give it, but they are not all coming from your best interest. Be selective of the people you share your ideas with, and, if you can, hire experts you trust. There are plenty of positive, encouraging, supportive, helpful and optimistic people in the world: surround yourself with *them*.