

WHY THE 4-WAY TEST? (Background for participants.)

The 4-Way Test consists of four short questions, 24 words, which can make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. It reads:

Of the things we think, say or do:

Is it the TRUTH?

Is it FAIR to all concerned?

Will it build GOOD WILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?

Will it be BENEFICIAL to ALL concerned?

The 4-Way Test encourages us to examine our patterns of choosing, evaluating, and acting. It is an objective guide which we can use in deciding how best to respond in a given situation.

There is a great difference between winning success and being a success. Many people have the first without the second. Just as important as winning the respect of others, is to enjoy self-respect.

The 4-Way Test helps us as we go about choosing and acquiring our desired prizes, to keep our inner eye open to what we are becoming, not just the prizes we strive to acquire. These four questions can stimulate meaningful, growth-inspiring answers for the person who will test his or thoughts, words and actions by them.

The test does not provide answers in itself, but encourages creative and effective solutions in problem-solving situations. “You sow a thought, you reap an act. You sow an act, you reap a habit. You sow a habit, you reap a character. You sow a character, you reap a destiny.” But it all starts with how we think.

The 4-Way Test carries us out beyond the self into the lives and concerns of other people. It deals with human relationships. We may be making remarkable progress technologically, but we still get bogged down at times in this area of human relationships. It is a critical problem when we consider that even with all our computers, etc., nothing can be accomplished in this world, except through people—ourselves and others working, playing, communicating with each other. The 4-Way Test recognizes that the welfare of each individual is linked with the welfare of us all. Used, it can create an attitude and atmosphere in which people can better relate, share and implement ideas.

That the 4-Way Test does work when applied in people’s lives has been proven all over the world. Today, the 4-Way Test is translated into the language of more than a hundred countries. It sits on desks of more than 500,000 business and professional leaders in America alone; it is on the walls of schools, libraries, factories and business offices around the world.

This international chain reaction began in 1932 when Herbert J. Taylor, author of the Test, was President of the Club Aluminum Products Company. The Test was adopted by the company as a succinct code of business ethics, that everyone in the company could memorize and apply in their relationships with co-workers, suppliers, customers and the public. It became the basis of all decisions both large and small within the company.

Advertising was measured against the Test and superlatives like “best” or “finest” which could not be proven were replaced by factual descriptions of the product. Adverse comments against competitors were removed from advertising and sales literature. Such practices as overstocking dealers were dropped by the sales force. The newly won confidence of dealers and customers resulted in improved business volume and a dramatic upswing in sales and profits. The Test is credited with pulling the company out of bankruptcy in the midst of the Depression and with revolutionizing personnel, advertising and sales policies.

In the 1940's the Test was adopted by Rotary International and became a vital part of their Vocational Services programs. Serving as President of Rotary International from 1954 to 1955, Mr. Taylor promoted the use of the 4-Way Test around the world.

In fact, Japan has led the world in practical uses of the 4-Way Test. The town of Noji, Japan, was the first to introduce 4-Way Test posters into high school classrooms. The late industrialist, Masakazu Kobayashi, who aided materially in his nation's economic reconstruction and helped reintroduce Rotary in Japan following World War II, found the 4-Way Test a positive influence in business negotiations in the U.S.A. shortly after the war ended. He feared that some of the war's animosities might lurk heavily in the shadows of business negotiations. In addition there were the language and cultural barriers to overcome. He was head of a large hosiery manufacturing firm and when meeting with U. S. businessmen passed a printed leaflet of the 4-Way Test among them. “This is a guide I have learned through Rotary and I find that by adhering to it I always do right. It is in this spirit that I meet with you.” Negotiations progressed rapidly and cordially, the results proving satisfactory to all.

One of the first U.S. cities to build a major community-wide 4-Way Test campaign was Daytona Beach, Florida. For a city whose economy relied greatly on good will toward others, its residents were sadly lacking in good will among themselves. By late 1955, the President of the Daytona Beach Chamber of Commerce was faced with a difficult situation. There were about 400 motels in the area and they were all constantly fighting among each other, refusing to cooperate. The Chamber, with the help of several concerned community leaders, adopted a 4-Way Test area-wide campaign.

Billboards, posters, radio, TV and full-page newspaper advertisements on the 4-Way Test were used prominently to initiate the campaign. The 4-Way Test was introduced into and adopted by schools. Businesses were encouraged to adopt and use the Test.

Soon after the campaign was initiated, several of the motel operators who had adopted the 4-Way Test called a meeting of some 100 motel owners to discuss their problems in terms of the 4-Way Test. They decided to form a clearinghouse to pass on to one another those tourists whose needs they could not satisfy. Interest in the plan created a new attitude. Competition would now mean providing better service, not thwarting the attempts of others to make a profit.

Not all of the owners and operators were gung-ho about the plan, but as they tried it, they found it worked. As one doubter stated, “In the past when a prospective customer decided he wanted different accommodations, I didn't care if he had to sleep on the beach. Now I turn such people over to the clearinghouse, and when I make the call, I'm invariably told of

somebody who's looking for exactly what I've got to offer. There's a give-and-take in applying the 4-Way Test that I never knew could exist in the business world."

Other examples of the 4-Way Test at work began to appear in Daytona Beach. Personnel directors discovered that employee conflicts could be solved if the people concerned would discuss them in terms of the Test's 4 questions. Invariably the conflict was solved and—most importantly, without hard feelings. By the end of 1956, traffic accidents, often the result of thoughtless driving, were down 5½%, traffic injuries were down by 20% and juvenile delinquency had decreased by 50%.

Following Daytona's lead, other cities have adopted the community-wide 4-Way Test campaign plan. Among them are Oshkosh, Wisconsin; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Dallas, Texas.

Oshkosh citizens point out several statistics as positive evidence of their program's effectiveness. In 1968, 272 juveniles were referred to the court; by 1969 this had plunged to 166—a 39% decrease. Fire losses fell to less than 20% of their 1968 totals—the second lowest fire loss in 32 years. Notable in Pittsburgh was the 4-Way Test's use as the basis for steel wage negotiations. It was written into the Teamster's labor contract.

Dallas, Texas, initiated its first campaign in 1968 which ran over a three year period. Among its many projects, it established the "Four Way Test Place," a special park in downtown Dallas. As a result of the campaign, overall crime statistics showed a 10% drop between 1970 and 1971. Larceny was down 21%, aggravated assault, 18% and auto thefts decreased by 12%. One Dallas supermarket manager displayed the Test questions over his cash registers. Talking about the results he states, "We had a swift and dramatic drop in the number of bad checks cashed in our store."

The 4-Way Test has inspired safe driving programs, fire prevention campaigns, crime reduction activities and labor negotiations. Other cities to have initiated 4-Way Test campaigns include Long Beach, California; Dunn, North Carolina; Columbus, Ohio; Grosse Point, Michigan; Baltimore, Maryland; and Memphis, Tennessee.

In business, civic life, and at home, the 4-Way Test dramatically speaks its practicality. It helps us to think beyond our immediate desires, to consider the consequences of our actions and not focus on what is merely expedient. The 4-Way Test acts as a lubricant that smoothes personal relations by basing them on truth and consideration for others.

The key to the success of the 4-Way Test is its USE. NOW! Try it and see for yourself.

(The above article on the 4-Way Test appeared in the Rotarian Magazine and was obtained from the Cleveland District. Speech Contest entrants may find it helpful in preparing their speeches and applying these words in their own way to their own lives, their experiences, the world they live in, particular issues, personal interests, or relationships with other people particularly in their own age group. Speeches should be no less than 5 minutes in length nor more than 7 minutes or the speaker will be disqualified.)