

Setting and Managing Workplace Expectations

One of the marks of a great leader is a team that knows what is expected of them and has the tools and resources to accomplish it. To get your team headed in the right direction, here are some tips for setting and managing workplace expectations:

Be Clear.

Specificity is the most important factor in setting manageable expectations. If your team is unclear about what is expected, how they are to accomplish it, or what they are working towards, you will have inconsistent performance. Here are some questions to help you clarify:

1. What specifically are you trying to accomplish? How can it be articulated in amount, gross revenue, or another measurable outcome?
2. When does it need to be accomplished by?
3. How do you know you've reached the goal or objective?
4. What is the outcome of this work?
5. What processes or systems, if any, do you expect to be used?
6. How do you expect team members to be engaged, and/or when should leadership should be consulted?

Listen.

As with any exchange, it is important to listen to your team's input on the clarity you have provided. Is the timeline sufficient, and if not, why not? What feedback do they have concerning the processes to achieve the project or goal? Do they need different or additional resources to achieve what you're asking? Many times, an employee gets stuck in the process by a step that wasn't accounted for or doesn't go as anticipated. If they feel they are unsupported in sharing this concern with leadership they will shut down and progress will be further delayed. Being a good listener is necessary to ensure they have all they need to succeed.

Be flexible.

Along with listening, flexibility is inherent to success. When flexibility is not an option (the client needs a product by a specific, non-negotiable date for example), show flexibility in smaller ways. Offer to bypass unnecessary steps, approve overtime, call in additional help, invest in more resources, etc. When possible, be ready to throw out the old way of doing something and try a new and improved method. Your team's ability to engage in problem-solving, innovate and help make important decisions will increase their buy-in on every project. And with their buy-in, you have a much higher rate of achievement.

Get the right fit.

Leaders often find a frustrated or stalled team when they ask for something outside a proven skill set. For example, it would seem silly to ask a medical billing staff to perform surgery – but the equivalent of this scenario happens regularly. If your team lacks the knowledge or skills to produce a result, they won't.

This, of course, doesn't mean they can't learn. If you're pushing an employee or team to build upon underdeveloped skills, account for their discomfort and small failures as part of the process.

Problems arise when a task or project is given to a person who lacks the ability to accomplish it or doesn't understand that you're asking them to develop a specific skill.

Assess your team for those who think strategically vs. in a detailed manner; those who are concrete thinkers vs. abstract thinkers, etc. Who is great at recognizing their colleagues' accomplishments? Place them in a motivational role. Who plays "devil's advocate" in meetings? Give them the role of risk assessment for the new project.



Communicate, Communicate, Communicate.

Find the ways your team best communicates. If you have extroverts, be willing to verbally process steps and solutions with them. Be willing to communicate in writing with introverts who need additional time to process their ideas. Pay attention to communication that gets acted upon vs. that which doesn't: do you have an employee who does everything you ask verbally but seems to miss email requests? This can indicate an area for communication improvement. Communicate often enough to account for any misunderstandings, even if some information is repetitive.

Tell your team what you're trying to communicate and why. This is one of the easiest and most effective way to avoid communication frustration. For example, if you ask for biweekly updates, let the team know it's a reflection of your need for comfort or progress on this project (rather than a signal that you're micromanaging or don't trust their progress). If you are communicating by email when you usually verbally request information, let them know it is because you are keeping track of all the information you've requested for your project management purposes. In other words, letting your team know the result of the work is important, but letting them know why steps and processes happen the way they do along the way empowers them to be an integral part of the success.

Remember: communication isn't an absolute process. There is no right or wrong; simply what is effective and ineffective based on the individual or team.



And finally, let go.

Let good people do good work. If you've assigned something to someone, let them know when you'll be checking in with them and what you expect to be accomplished... and then let them do their work. Focus on the desired outcome over the process and methods to achieve that outcome. Being overbearing, checking in too frequently, micro-managing tasks, or asking about progress before the agreed upon time causes anxiety for employees. They may begin to think you don't trust them or the quality of their work. It is critical that you let employees know you trust their abilities. If you have to check in or intervene more than usual, explain why. The employee that feels trusted to produce high-quality work will almost always exceed your expectations.

Setting and managing expectations isn't difficult if there is consistent, attentive communication about between team members and leaders. If you set the bar for excellence and clearly articulate how to achieve it, good team members will meet you there!

Get Guidance

PAS offers performance management consultation to address the needs of managers and supervisors in managing their workforce. Just a few areas that PAS offers expertise:

- Unsatisfactory performance
- Anger management
- Drug-free workplace
- Policy violations
- Absenteeism and tardiness
- Workgroup conflict and co-worker relationships
- Erratic, bizarre or threatening behavior
- Threats of violence
- Mistakes, missed deadlines, re-work
- Harassment, intimidation and aggression



Contact PAS

for guidance on building and leading effective teams, employee skill building and professional development, and much more!

(800) 356-0845

<https://www.paseap.com>

pasadmin@paseap.com