

Inspire Team-Wide Engagement Through Clear Expectations

How to Win Your Employees' Hearts by Raising Their Standards

You can't hold someone accountable for something they're unaware of. It's surprising how often leaders actually do this. Before you think you're excluded, stay with me.

When my wife and I bought our first home, we went to Home Depot to buy some plants for our new backyard. While I was perusing, I felt a sharp pain in the back of my leg. I turned around and saw my assailant: a child no more than three years old. He had pushed a shopping cart right into me. His father came running over, mortified, and apologizing. It left a mark and caused my leg to bleed and I couldn't get mad. This kid had likely never learned that slamming shopping carts into other people isn't ok. He wasn't being disobedient or reckless. He was trying a new experience, and unfortunately for me, it wasn't his best moment. But I couldn't feel anger - he had no idea what he was doing.

Your employees aren't much different. They're always on the lookout for cues on what they should be doing. Without voicing your expectations, you shouldn't consider them established. Consequentially, you can't be mad or surprised when they go unmet by your staff. If you haven't thoroughly trained someone, how can you hold them accountable?

What you Permit, You Promote

This is why personal accountability is paramount for effective leadership. You have to level-up your own game before you can ask your staff to make any changes. Your efforts will go nowhere if you're caught holding your employees to a higher standard than yourself. For example, getting to work on time. If you're often late, you're setting the expectation that tardiness is tolerable. Exhibiting poor behavior is promoting poor behavior. As the leader, you may feel like you should be able to roll in whenever. But you never know what your employees have ingrained in them about punctuality. If you don't tell them to prioritize promptness, you cannot fault them for making their own time.

I've lead thousands of people in my career, and unmet expectations is always a theme. Common complaints I hear from leaders about their staff include but are not limited to:

- Using inappropriate language
- Missed deadlines
- Lack of engagement during meetings
- Tending to personal matters while working
- Unprofessional appearances



Balanced IQ

These are all issues stemming from poor communication from the leader. But why state the obvious when it comes to abhorrent behavior? Consider the study guide provided for the Canadian citizenship test. It notes that violations such as spousal abuse and gender-based violence is unacceptable. Canada doesn't take for granted that people will identify these as punishable acts. And what does Canada lose by stating it? Half an inch of space on a PDF? What you have to gain from effective communication will also outweigh what you have to lose.

Leadership to Mentoring

How a leader handles an unmet expectation speaks to the control they hold. A great leader coaches where a struggling leader will punish. A "gotcha" manager is an unsustainable manager. That is begging for a team without loyalty or dedication. If you're only catching people when they're doing something wrong, you're not getting the most or best out of your employees. Help them well before it reaches that point by giving them the instructions they crave.

As a leader, it's up to you to set expectations among your team. From each recruits' first day to an existing employee's tenth year in. It's never too late to turn your wayward staff into a dream team. [In a study by from Florida State University, shows that curated work-goals \(self-assigned or provided\) can increase employee productivity even without monetary incentives.](#) Reaching for a target allows them to be more productive. They'll also come to view you as a driving force for their improvement. In other words, you'll win their hearts and raise their standards all in one go. That's how you go from becoming a Leader to becoming their Mentor.

About the Author:

Hernani Alves is an Amazon best selling author, international speaker, and consultant with over twenty years of business experience as a Sales Executive for a \$3 Billion Company. He's the founder of Balanced IQ, a company that helps leaders build world-class teams focused on getting sustainable results in varying economic climates.

In his book, [Balanced Accountability: Three Leadership Secrets to Win Hearts and Maximize Performance](#), Alves delivers a newfound clarity on the case for accountability and the steps organizations, and individuals need to take to unleash their potential. He reveals the frame work needed to improve accountability in the workplace to win hearts and maximize performance.

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