



Expectations in Management

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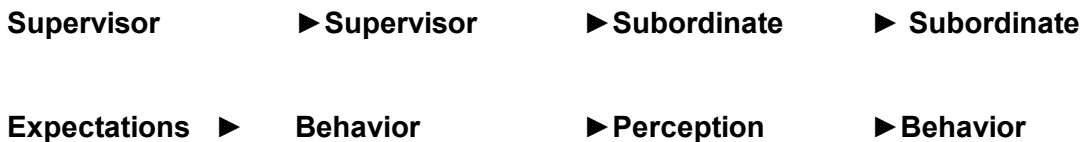
Of the many factors that can influence an individual's performance on the job, one of the least understood is that of managerial expectations. However, strong evidence suggests that a Manager's expectations may be a major factor effecting an Employees performance and development in the workplace.

The powerful influence of expectations on behavior has long been recognized by Physicians, Behavioral Scientists, and more recently, by the world of Business. For example, the medical profession is aware that patients who are unknowingly given a "placebo", (non-medicinal substance), will often report improvement in symptoms. Similarly, test subjects (in the case of psychologists) and students, (in the case of teachers), who believe a particular behavior is expected of them, will, in fact, often demonstrate that behavior, even if it contradicts what a situation may demand.



In the workplace we find that some Supervisors always seem to be able to get the best from their subordinates, while many more seem to get much less that the Employee is capable of achieving. The question is **WHY?**

The answer, in part, is that subordinate behavior is determined, to a great extent, by their "perception" of their environment, in which the Supervisor is of particular significance. The Supervisor's behavior in turn is subtly influenced by what he/she expects of the subordinate. This process can be diagrammed as follows:



If a Supervisor believes (expects) a subordinate will perform poorly, it will be very difficult for him/her to not communicate those expectations. As we have seen previously, the non-verbal communication channels will usually display inconsistencies in spoken and unspoken message. In this way as well the Supervisor often communicates non-verbally even when she / he says nothing.



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One way of looking at the effect of supervisory expectations on behavior is through the 'Four Factor Theory of Expectations'. This theory suggests that the expectation's Supervisors have for Employees will influence four very significant supervisory behaviors:

1. **Climate Setting:** Supervisors tend to set a more supportive, positive climate for those Employees that expect to perform well.
2. **Feedback:** Supervisors tend to give more feedback on performance generally, and positive feedback specifically, to Employees they expect to perform well.
3. **Input:** Supervisors tend to give more work-related information to Employees they expect to perform well.
4. **Output:** Supervisors tend to encourage greater responsiveness to, and involvement in, work-related activities from Employees they expect to perform well.

In considering the way in which expectations influence behavior, it is important to recognize that the undesirable behaviors we have described assume ignorance on the Supervisors part of expectations and their potential effects. If, however, we are aware of our tendency to behave in certain ways when we expect certain things of our individual Employees, we can make conscious decisions to behave in potentially more positive ways.

In the process of setting performance expectations with individual Employees, factors to keep in mind are:

- Expectations must be perceived by the Employee as a realistic and attainable before they can be translated into performance.
- No motivation or response is aroused when the goal is perceived as being virtually certain, or virtually impossible, to attain.
- Indifferent and non-committal treatment, more often than not, communicates low expectations and leads to poor performance.
- The early years in a organization, when individuals can be strongly influenced by supervisory expectations, are critical in determining future performance and career progress.

Remember:

The Supervisor not only shapes the expectations and productivity of his / her subordinates, but also influences their attitudes toward their jobs and themselves.



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