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Seven Expectations for Achieving Excellence

1 Build Relationships

Person-to-person relationships are essential for people to successfully get work done in any type of organization. Relationships connect managers to direct reports and peers to peers, and everything depends on trust. Relationships encourage cooperation between people who work together. That mutual commitment provides not only work but emotional support.

1) Describe your relationships with your peers and direct reports. Are relationships in the workplace good or bad? Are relationships helpful or a hindrance? Why? Are *close* relationships with your peers or direct reports a good thing? Why or why not?
2) What do those whose opinions matter most to you believe about building relationships with peers or direct reports? How have these people's opinions influenced your perspective on building relationships with your direct reports or peers? How do others in positions like yours use relationships as a part of how they manage others?
3) What factors do you believe exist will either facilitate or hinder building closer relationships with your peers or direct reports? How much control do you think you have over deciding whether you should build relationships? Building relationships, even if you want to, is not always easy, so how determined are you to keep trying, especially if things don't work out the first time?
4) Given how you have answered the previous questions, describe your overall readiness to build relationships. Use this description to guide your interactions with your peers or manage your direct reports. Make it a goal to build stronger or different relationships with your peers or direct reports. Include "how" in the description of that goal: frequency or circumstance related to building relationships.

Always Builds Trust With Others

The degree to which others trust you has less to do with your integrity and more to do with their past experiences. They trust you based on their interpretation of your behavior. What they have seen elsewhere or before can distort what they see in you.

Gets Work Done With Others

Collaboration is essential to solving most problems, effectively exploring options and achieving more sustainable results. Collaboration increases the awareness and participation of others who then start to feel that they are a more integral and valued part of whatever is going on. Without collaboration, a team is just a word, and a potential resource multiplier is wasted.

Gets People to Support One Another

Relationships are vital to a person's willingness to provide support to another. The offering and receiving support, person to person, encourages a group of individuals to become a team. Knowing that support is available can increase a person's confidence in taking a risk or trying something new. Knowing support is there if needed encourages hard work, not dependency.

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2 Develop People

People need to feel that they are developing and becoming more effective at what they do. Everyone — coworkers and managers — can contribute to another person's development. Letting someone know how they are doing at their job is essential feedback. Encouragement, advice and finding new challenges inspires them to improve. Drawing attention to and building on another person's strengths establishes the best path for development. When it comes to developing people, everyone has a role to play.

1) How much of your success as a manager is based on helping your direct reports develop and increase their effectiveness? What, if anything, is equally or more important to your success as a manager? What have you done recently that shows you value helping your direct reports develop?
2) How important is it to the organization's success that you invest time and effort into helping your direct reports develop and become more effective? What has the organization done or not done that leads you to this conclusion?
3) Based on what you have heard or seen, describe the level of importance you think other managers put on developing their direct reports.
4) Recall a time when you helped a direct report become more effective. Did you focus on developing or improving this report's current areas of success, or did you try to help them improve at something they have never done well? What were the results?
5) How confident are you that you can make a difference in a direct report's development? What can you control, and how have you done so? What can't you control? For those things you can't control, what is your next best course of action?
6) What can you do better to develop others?

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Provides Meaningful Feedback to Me

People depend on feedback in practically everything they do, in every aspect of their life. Without it, they cannot gauge their behavior, and so they can't get better or know if they are getting worse. Accepting, valuing and using feedback depends on who is giving the feedback and their intent and the way they deliver it. Feedback is more than describing what a person did and their ability to do it. Great feedback depends on knowing the objective or purpose of the action or behavior. Meaningful feedback means that not only can the person clearly remember the event or behavior brought, but they also understand the consequences of that behavior.

Encourages the Development of Colleagues

Development means becoming more effective at something. Development can range from improving a manual skill to learning how to think or problem solve. Development doesn't just happen; it involves readiness, learning, experiences and practice, persistence, and very often requires another person to encourage it. Regardless of a manager's natural ability to develop people, direct reports often look to their manager to help them on their road to success.

Helps Me Use My Strengths More Effectively

People are a combination of strengths and weaknesses. Many people think strengths and weaknesses exist on a common line, with weaknesses at one end and strengths at the other. With this view in mind, they set a goal or create an expectation to get better by moving weaknesses closer to the strengths end of that continuum. But strengths and weaknesses are not on that common line. In fact, that line doesn't exist. Strengths and weaknesses each play a different role in people's lives. When it comes to achieving success, developing strengths plays a vital role.

But what role do weaknesses play? Unaided, people can't fly or conduct complex statistical modeling. Both examples reveal a weakness that has inspired people to build airplanes and design supercomputers by using their intellect strength. Weaknesses remind people that they have strengths and encourages them to use their strengths in new and more inspired ways. For managers, like others, this can be confusing, so it is beneficial to remember to focus on strengths, especially when development is the objective.

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3 Lead Change

"Everything changes, and nothing stands still," and, generally, it is better to run toward the future than be left behind. Leading change is not just a manager's job. Change affects everyone, which means everyone can contribute to it. Being open rather than closed to change means looking ahead and visualizing how to do things better. To lead change, you must take the initiative, which your people need to actively support. To sustain the advancements you make through change, people need to help others adapt to new objectives and work toward the future.

Always Anticipates Where to Make Improvements

Leading change depends on how clearly a manager sees forward while being fully aware of how well things are working in the present. There are underlying assumptions made that need to at least be open to question: Is it expected that external conditions will remain the same, resulting in a high level of predictability, or is there reason to believe that the best improvements are not based on what is but rather are focused on what might change? How the manager determines that could influence the future relevance of any improvements.

Initiates and Supports Necessary Changes

Whether management takes the first steps or shows support for what is already underway, both direct reports and others in the organization often look to managers to make change happen. Not all managers are initiators, nor will every manager fully agree with the changes. The latter can lead to the manager making positive forward movement or not. But either way, the role of the manager is essential to initiating and supporting change.

Helps Others Adapt to Changing Objectives

As changes occur, it is easy to predict excitement. While people may accept the changes overall, it is what individuals experience indirectly that can create challenges. People are far more likely to be at their best when they know what is expected of them at work. It is the manager's job to help their direct reports adapt to changing expectations.

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4 Inspire Others

Attaining excellence depends on inspiration. Positive encouragement increases a sense of purpose that improves and sustains the effort. Regardless of the role, it is important to recognize good work. Praising good work increases self-confidence and optimism. Inspiring others in this way also builds enthusiasm for future accomplishments.

1) As a manager, describe your role as a motivator. What is your role in inspiring those around you?
2) What differences do you think motivating and inspiring your direct reports makes in their performance and attitude?
    a) If you believe motivation and inspiration make a difference, think of some examples of when these things influenced someone.
    b) If you believe motivation and inspiration do not make a difference, what does?
3) How important is recognition, motivation and inspiration in your organization? How do managers in your organization typically recognize, motivate and inspire others? How does this compare with your own beliefs on the matter?
4) What interferes with recognizing others for their accomplishments?
5) How much control or influence do you have over your direct reports' sense of meaningfulness they find in their work?
6) Do you ever feel pressure to be more effective as a motivator? If so, where does that pressure come from?

Gives Me Recognition for Good Work

While people typically do not reject recognition, it does not make giving it simple. The form and frequency of recognition and even the purpose and circumstance will vary by person.

Provides Me With a Good Vision for What I Can Achieve

A manager plays a crucial role in clearly communicating what the future looks like for their direct reports. A manager inspires others when they create a vision for what individuals can achieve, helping people see where they fit and how they can participate.

Builds Enthusiasm for the Future

Even if people can see the future, they might not fully engage in it. Maybe they don't see clearly enough that it is their future or that it is accessible to them. Therefore, the manager's opinion of the future matters because it sets the tone and helps people see that the future is truly something to get excited about.

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5 Think Critically

Every job benefits from thoughtfulness and better decision-making. It is often essential to think critically about the outcomes before taking action. Evaluating what is occurring and anticipating what could happen can improve the result of any action. There should be a good reason for everything, and explaining the reasons why you made a decision helps others understand the bigger picture.

1) Think about some recent decisions you made or times when a direct report or peer shared a problem or a plan with you. Whatever may have happened, they needed direction or help solving the issue. What information did you consider or questions did you ask to get a better understanding of the issue before you responded to them?
2) When solving a problem or responding to a person's issue, do you analyze the issue first and then answer? Or do you quickly respond so that you and the other person can move on?
3) How do people in your organization make decisions? Do they take the time to analyze information first and then make decisions? Or do they rely on policies to direct judgment, encouraging people to respond quickly?
4) When it comes to analyzing a situation and deciding how you will respond to it, what do you confidently believe you have control over?
5) What is your opinion on having to think critically before you make a decision? Why?

Always Evaluates the Facts and Likely Consequences of Decisions

In today's fast-paced, always available world, there is often the expectation to make decisions quickly. And others may see making time to examine an issue first before acting as a barrier to quick decision-making. And yet expectations change: At first people want a quick answer, but then they expect accurate conclusions that they can depend on, and one does not always lead to the other.

Makes Well-Thought-Out Decisions

Several conditions can threaten the soundness of any decision: lack of time, social pressures, incomplete information and even a desire to appear confident when one's not. A well-thought-out decision depends on you managing different conditions.

Clearly and Succinctly Explains Why Decisions Are Made

People need clear directions to do their job with confidence. But they also expect you to tell them how and why you made a decision. Clearly and succinctly explaining why you make decisions increases their understanding of your decisions, communicates your regard for their intelligence and helps them feel that you consider them during the process. Even if they don't agree, they can better understand the decision.

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6 Communicate Clearly

Communication is essential to every role in an organization. Beyond sharing information, generating ideas and conveying purpose, communicating connects people and helps them collaborate. Keeping each other informed is important for everyone. Letting others know that their opinions matter and encouraging them to share concerns and ideas brings new thought into the organization.

1) How important is communicating with your direct reports? What effect have you had on them or differences have you made in their roles because of your communication with them?
2) Think about some of your best and worst moments as a communicator. Why were these your best and worst moments?
3) Describe what "normal" communication is in your organization. Based on what you have observed or experienced, how do others around you view communication in your organization?
4) How much control do you believe you have over communication? What do you feel you have the most and least amount of control over?
5) In what ways do you think other people's behavior has influenced or shaped your attitude toward communicating with your direct reports?
6) What social or role influences do you think affect what or how you communicate?
7) How much control do you think you have over what and how you communicate with your direct reports?

Keeps Me Informed About What I Need to Know

How much people think they need to know directly influences their job performance, attitude toward their work and sense of self-worth.

Is Open to People's Opinions

Being heard is different from hearing. Sometimes this means others have had the chance to share important information with you. Often, listening to other people's opinions is fundamentally affirming to them and helps them feel that their opinion matters, which means they matter as a person. Generalizations about you as a manager might come down to how much a direct report decides you listen to them.

Encourages Me to Share Ideas, Questions and Concerns

Being open to what others have to say is important. But that alone can exist as a more passive receptiveness. Others might not recognize the opportunity all by themselves or, if aware, they still might need coaxing to take that opportunity. By encouraging others to speak up, share thoughts or voice concerns, you send the message that you really do want to learn what others have to say.

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7 Create Accountability

While the range of accountability varies, there is no job where irresponsibility is without consequence. Delivering on expectations is essential to successful performance. Expectations create opportunities and establish goals. Holding people accountable for expectations helps them monitor their behaviors and follow through. Setting clear expectations helps everyone. Holding people accountable encourages their best effort.

1) How do you view accountabilities? What does it mean to you when someone meets their set accountabilities? What is your first reaction to someone failing to meet an accountability?
2) How do people typically view accountabilities in your organization? Are they assumed but hardly spoken about? What happens when people meet or do not meet an accountability? Do people explicitly state and closely and consistently monitor accountabilities at your organization?
3) What do you think most contributes to your belief that a person can meet an accountability?
4) Describe your opinion about accountabilities. What or who in your life has helped shape this opinion?
5) How does your organization's views of accountabilities influence your response to accountabilities or what you expect of others to meet their accountabilities?
6) What do you need to control to meet an accountability? How much control do you feel you have over this situation?
7) Are you currently accountable for things that matter to you? Are there additional accountabilities you seek? What is enabling you in either case, and what is getting in the way?

Sets Clear Expectations

Even the most motivated of us benefit from clear expectations. These define our focus and guide our priorities and behavior.

Holds Everyone Responsible for Exceptional Performance

Great things happen because people go beyond acceptable levels of performance and achieve the exceptional. Not everyone can be exceptional, but few people consistently try.

Never Fails to Deliver Their Best Every Time

It is one thing to set high expectations for your direct reports and hold them accountable for achieving them, but it is another to hold yourself accountable for always delivering your best every time. If you succeed at delivering your best every time, you provide your direct reports a great model of success. If not, you provide the basis for a rationalization.

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