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Alpha Business Coaching Newsletter

"Setting Greater Expectations"

Dear Small Business Owner:

Every day we see things that weren't really supposed to happen, happen anyway. We wonder if anybody will be held accountable for bad results that keep happening. Even our own situations can seem unbelievably out of control sometimes.

Answer these questions about your situations:

- Do you sometimes wonder why the people you depend on just "don't seem to get it?"
- Are you disappointed with the results that team members deliver?
- Does stuff happen that makes you shake your head and say "How could that possibly have happened?"
- Do you often have to restate to employees what it is you really want?
- Do you sometimes understate what you really need people to do because you don't want to strain the relationship?



If you've had any of these frustrations, it may be because your expectations of people are not clear from the start. Do you know how to motivate others to want to be responsible? Everybody demands accountability but how often do you really see it accepted by others?

Generally, each of us has an accountability style. When we hold others responsible for something, we tend to have a preference for 1 of 2 different ends of a continuum.

One end is "Coerce and Compel" and the other is "Wait and See." On the first end, you generally operate with a command and convince style of management, forcing things to happen. Realize that this style rarely engages the hearts and minds of people to be motivated to complete the job.



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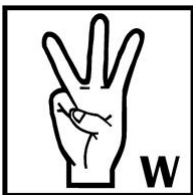
On the other end of the spectrum with "Wait and See," you tend to do the work yourself and don't take enough action to involve others the way you should. Employees never have their roles expanded. Both ends have their pros and cons. It takes a blend of both styles in different situations and with different people. Of course the key is using the right style to get people motivated to get the job done.

Here are 3 steps to holding others accountable in a positive, principled way.

- 1. Don't make a bad assumption.** A common mistake leaders make when others fail to follow through is thinking there is something wrong with employee. This happens because we think we clearly see that they don't care enough or aren't working hard enough to do the job as we expect it to be done. We assume guilt and think punishing people is the only way to change them.



- 2. Make a good assumption.** Start by assuming people are doing their best to fulfill your expectations. This will start you down the positive track by looking for the best behaviors in others. Generally it is true that people do care about doing a good job, they just don't know how or don't understand the task's full implications.
- 3. Ask "How did I let that happen?"** This is a more effective question than "How did that happen?" It shifts the focus from what everyone else didn't do to what you can do as the leader to improve the situation. Behaving this way will produce better results because you are empowering improvement for the next time.



I suggest using the Why, What and When approach when communicating your expectations. Explain Why a task needs to be done in a compelling way that will engage people's minds and hearts. Make the What specific and clear and include boundaries and constraints. Then state the When in concrete terms so everyone knows the deadline.

These tips should help make your expectations be clearer to your team and you'll see results more in-line with your expectations.

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Some material taken from *How Did That Happen?* by R. Connors