

Are Your Expectations Crystal Clear?

As a small business advisor, I frequently work with business owners on expectations. Not only the owner's expectations for their business, but also their expectations for themselves and most especially for their employees, partners and vendors.

Everyone needs to make their expectations crystal clear. The more clarity you have the better. The more often you do this and the sooner you do this the more favorable the outcome of whatever event it pertains to will be.

So let's take it one step at a time.

Expectations for yourself. You may think that this one is easy. Okay, how many of you have clearly thought out and published expectations for yourself? This would include personal business performance and achievement expectations – as in a **written** (personal) business plan. What are your personal goals in business, what are you personally going to learn, personally going to teach, personally going to achieve?

What about your personal performance, core values, ethics, morals and manners – as in a personal code of conduct and a plan for achievement, if you will. And of course this would be written and published, albeit only to yourself.

Michael Masterson – the founder and editor of one most successful electronic newsletters, “Early to Rise” – suggests that you not only have a written core values statement that would include work, personal and individual core values.

But he also suggests that you do an annual five year plan for yourself encompassing Wealth (Financial), Health, Personal-Relationships and personal growth.

You may look at this a merely goal setting, but it also has the additional benefit of making your expectations for your own behavior and achievement crystal clear.

Now how many of you do this?

Next lets examine your **expectations for your business**. Michael Gerber, in his Dreaming Rooms says we all should have a Dream, Vision, Mission and Purpose for our business. Do you have a dream for your business? Have you established a Vision and Mission for your business, how about a purpose for your business?

Additionally what do you want your business to look like in five years? Not only financially (which goes without saying)...

But organizationally – what kind of structure do you desire. How many employees will there be? What level of education will they have? What type of decision participation will they have?

Will your business be a process or systems dependent business? What type of systems do you want? How will they be codified? Will they be on paper? Electronically produced? An Internet service?

How will your business be run? What do you want administration to look like? How will you want finance to be run – what about your cash conversion cycle, what will it look like and be run?

How will your business be guided? Who will lead it? How will it be led? Who will be developing the strategies? How will they be developed? What will your management team look like?

How will your business get business? How will it be marketed? Locally? Regionally? Nationally? Globally? How will it generate sales?

These are just some of the expectations you should have and make known. Have you thought about them at all, much less formally put your thoughts into some coherent manner?

Now let's look at your **expectations of others**.

What about your **expectations for your employees**? Have you made your expectations for your employees crystal clear from the start of their employment? That means did you have a clear job description and expectation agreement for them to read and sign.

Did you have a well written employee manual that laid out in concise language your expectations for their manners, behavior, company dress code, how to call in sick, vacation policy and so on.

Did you have them read the employee manual, job description and expectation agreement? Did you test the employee on them, did you have them sign the documents.

Not only do these documents make your expectations clear, but they will preclude many discussions, disagreements, confrontations in the future. Employees will know from the get-go exactly what they are responsible for, where their work station is, who they report to, how grievances are resolved and so on.

Think of the freedom and ease with which you will be able to manage your staff when your expectations are clearly known to them from the very first second of their employment, better yet, this process would start before they become employees.

Do you give them constructive feedback at least quarterly? Better yet it would be monthly **and** whenever their behavior or conduct deems some corrective action or praise should be given. Corrective action and praise should be given as close to the event (good or bad) as possible to ensure that the facts are fresh in everyone's mind.

Above all you must walk your talk. If you have made your expectations of your employees crystal clear, shouldn't they apply to you also. If you take the position "do as I say, not as I do", this will severely undermine your moral authority and make your efforts worthless.

If you haven't made the expectations clearly known, how will your employees know what is expected of them and perform to those expectations?

Talk the talk and back it up with walking the walk – at all times.

Let's continue to look at your **expectations of others**. What about your **expectations for your vendors and clients**?

Have you made your **expectations for your vendors crystal clear** from the first contact onwards?

This means, did you have the clear and concise specifications in written form for them. Did the specifications include form, fit and function of the item? Did the specifications include your delivery and schedule expectations, did it include the penalties and bonus criteria if any?

When you came to agreement, was the agreement written, did it include all of the above plus the cost and price breaks? Did the agreement include the ramifications for them of nonperformance by them.

Do you have an approved vendor list? Do your vendors clearly and concisely know what they need to do to be approved and do they know what the advantages of being on the approved vendor means to them?

This next one is a bit counter-intuitive – have you made your **expectations crystal clear for your clients**? But let's think about this, unless your expectations are clearly stated, your clients will act any way they want – is that what you want or do desire them to have more specific (and beneficial to you) behaviors?

Do you have clearly stated Terms and Conditions for your clients. In addition to the seemingly unreadable legal T&Cs, do have some thing that is readable and understandable – I know the lawyers will protest this, but your clients will applaud it. Please note I never said to do your own or not to have an attorney review them, but for Pete's sakes have something understandable.



What about your clients comportment either in your establishment, on the phone, email or snail mail? Do you have clear code of conduct for your clients and ramifications for failure to adhere to the prescribed conduct?

If you haven't made all these expectations clearly known, how will your clients know what is expected of them and perform to those expectations?

Kris Sinderholm is the founder of SBS Associates, for more information contact Kris at kris@sbsassociates.biz.