

Clarify job expectations to drive better performance

You know what you expect from your employees. But do they know what you expect from them?

Sure, you may educate workers in general about the importance of giving 100% effort, putting the customer first and other vague objectives. But these pleasant-sounding goals are tough to measure with precision.

To motivate more forcefully, translate lofty goals into specific, action-oriented expectations that describe daily job activities. You can assess whether your employees are lacking a clear understanding of what you expect of them by asking, "How can we both tell whether what you're doing right now is specifically filling your job expectations?"

Ideally, employees should tell you how their efforts impact the bottom line. Other tips:

- Draft a numbered list of expectations. Make sure they are clear and measurable. Examples include limiting defects to 1 percent of new units or replying to customer e-mail inquiries within 30 minutes.
- Share your written expectation list with employees. Welcome their feedback and refine the list accordingly. Your goal is to remove any ambiguity so that the expectations are simple, reasonable and transparent.
- Dangle rewards for anyone who exceeds expectations by a set amount. This heightens employee accountability. Better yet, it enables the stars to push themselves above the rest of the pack and bask in the resulting glory.