

Dealing with the "It's Not My Job" Attitude

I've been asked versions of this question for years, and while the answer could cover a year's worth of blog posts, I have two ideas today that can help you as a leader if you face this challenge. As it turns out, they don't have much to do with "attitude" — even though that is how the question is usually framed.

First — this is really about expectations. What do you expect of people in terms of their work and how they think about it? As a leader, you, almost by definition, think about the work inside of your organization at a global or big picture level. You see the connections between the pieces of work, and so you want people to see their work in the same way. In other words, you want them to see their roles differently, and recognize that there are things that are part of their jobs that they might not have considered in the past. That world view won't change unless you are very clear that that view IS part of their job expectations.

Have you had that type of conversation with people?

Do they know that is what you expect?

Second — expectations in this area specifically will be supported by a clear big picture of the organization and its work. Often, people define their work by their specific job or their department or division. When you help people really see the big picture — how their work impacts others in the organization and/or paying Customers, it makes it easier for people to see things differently.

When people begin to see how their work fits into that bigger picture, it gives their work more meaning, and, when coupled with the expectations conversation, you will likely see a change in *behavior*.

And while we started out talking about attitude, it isn't really about attitude at all — it is really all about behavior. Once you get the expectations and perspective adjusted, you have a chance to change behavior, which is what we really want to change anyway.