



2. GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Chris Lacey suggests how the interaction with your customers can be maximized.

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In the previous article (*Library Document 1002 – October GCM*) I discussed the area of “First impressions” based on personal experiences. In this follow up, I am looking at the most important elements to achieve those good first impressions - that is, you and your staff, then how the interaction with the customers can be maximized.

In order for this to be successful we must understand that we all have expectations, you of your staff and yourself, your staff in you as their manager and most importantly the customer, in their feel good experience.

a) Your customer’s expectations

We are all customers of some organization at some time and probably have suffered a bad experience so know how that feels - that almost impossible wait to be answered when ringing a telephone call centre, the lack of a greeting when you walk into a shop, the disappointment of buying something that doesn’t work. A basic principle has to be “how would I like to be treated?” and use that as your first stepping stone to providing a level of customer satisfaction which goes the extra mile. Maybe we need to look beyond the initial interaction discussed in the previous article. Have you thought just how high those expectations are and whether your team is capable of fulfilling them?

Are these expectations viewed as unrealistic or opportunities to create the right feeling? The neighbour who complains about their Sunday mornings being disturbed, the member who wants to know why we can’t have temporary greens in winter, the visitor who wants a better deal, these customers feel that this is the most important problem to them at that moment.

How we respond can be the difference between gaining a friendly neighbour, an ally within the Club or even a new member and making enemies who, long term, could cause irreparable harm to the business.

Visitors and members have a right to expect the best and we have to ensure that’s what they get.

I recently read of a club who had the insight to actually ask what their customers wanted using web response and a written survey. The results were, not surprisingly, varied. However above all else, everybody rated good, friendly and efficient service to be their number one requirement.

How often do you take the time to talk to your customers, whether it's your members or visitors, and listen to what they say?

You might be pleasantly surprised or made painfully aware of their perceived shortcomings in your staff's performance.

b) Your staff's expectations

Believe it or not your staff actually look up to you for leadership, guidance, recognition and when necessary praise or censure.

All too often we assume that they are either happy, content or just getting on with their job because they have to. Have regular meetings and encourage your staff to express their feelings and listen to their suggestions, cultivate the principle of openness and ensure that they feel comfortable with you. The results can be amazing and often make your life easier and the business run better.

There are many articles telling you how to manage, how to maximize your staff, how to create that important first impression and no doubt at some time or another most of us have read them, or attended courses. The bad old days of shouting have gone along with "do as I say not as I do". Or have they?

Hopefully in the case of 90% of managers this is correct. As for the other 10% then they probably wonder why they can't keep staff. Successful management is not just in training your staff but in understanding how all the pieces fit together.

I find it hard to understand how seldom I hear managers say "Well done" to a member of their staff, how seldom some take the time to remember a person's name, If it's that difficult, cheat! Issue name badges, but use their given names.

Your staff are also entitled to the opportunity to work in an encouraging, yet challenging environment having been given the right tools to perform their tasks to the maximum of their abilities. Have you thought how a simple thing of taking your cleaner to a store to choose the best broom for the job might produce a happier work colleague, it worked!

They want to feel that, in you, they have a manager who truly cares about the staff, not just about themselves or in making a profit at the expense of all else.

c) Your expectations

You are probably wondering why I have left you, the manager, owner or director of the business to last. Some managers may well feel that they are the most important person in the business and indispensable. I am reminded of a quote from Charles De Gaulle, "the cemeteries of the world are full of indispensable people".

You are right to expect the best, not just from your staff but also yourself, or else why be in the position at all? It would be very sad if you didn't look forward to the working day, after all it

accounts for a large degree of your time awake but just remember, it's not the hours that you do, it's what you do during those hours. Make every one count.

Be honest when you set your goals, have a plan of action in place, be self critical and don't be afraid to be honest. Nobody is perfect but with the right preparation, a coherent plan and a desire to see it through the rewards could be immense, not just financial but also emotional.

- ☛ What are your expectations of your staff?
- ☛ Are they realistic?
- ☛ Have you communicated them to the staff?
- ☛ What methods do you use to communicate?
- ☛ Is the right training in place?
- ☛ Do you have a perceived chain of command/responsibility?
- ☛ Are your staff comfortable with their position in the hierarchy?

Ask yourself these questions on a regular basis, act on them and you will reap the benefits.

You deserve to get good results. Don't feel that you have to do everything yourself. It's a sure way to a short and often terminal career. As the proverb says "Take some time to smell the roses" and enjoy the benefits of your labours.

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