

Change your Results by Changing Your Expectations

By John Madden

Our expectations get us into a lot of trouble and often cause a lot of stress. We expect our customers to always come back; we expect our boss to behave in a certain way; we expect the company we work for to take care of us; and we expect coworkers to be team players.

And when our expectations aren't met, life is not good. Bad feelings, conflict, and unrest, are common symptoms. And, our business and our customers suffer.

Could it be that many of our expectations are misguided? Some well-founded expectations are obvious. If you order coffee in a restaurant, you expect it to be hot ... in Mc Donalds, you'd expect it to be very hot indeed!

But if you were to refuse to go to a certain restaurant because the waiter who served you had a ring in his ear, you're in for a life of perpetual home dining, whether that might be good or bad.

What are the causes of misguided expectations? Consider the following examples.

1. When customers don't complain, is everything at its best?. Certainly not! Studies tell us that only about 4% of customers who have a problem ever complain. In my seminars when I ask why, the two biggest reasons I get are that customers feel uncomfortable complaining, and they (the business) probably won't do anything about it, so why bother?

Then we wonder why our repeat business is declining - as our dissatisfied customers tell their friends – not us - and then go somewhere else.

2. Did your company ever hire an hourly person for your department, and you instinctively considered this new employee to be a loser – and treated him accordingly – and proved yourself right?

Many managers say “Some people just don’t want to work.” I heard Russ Meyer of Cessna once say in an interview that most people go to work to do a good job. I believe that’s true, but I also believe that it has a lot to do with good leadership. Some employees, who have experienced little if any guidance at home or at school, are crying out for some solid leadership, for someone to respect them, and to help them be what they know they can be.

Each of us can think of someone whom we’ve turned around from an apparent failure to a critical success and a vital contributor to the organization. How did you do it? Do it again! Do it by having higher expectations of your employees. (But don’t waste your time if there’s no effort on their part. Don’t keep real losers around.)

3. What about our expectations of ourselves. Are you holding back on utilizing hidden talents just because you think there’s no call for them, or that you might fail? We are told that 75% of what we say to ourselves is negative, and that by coincidence, 75% of illnesses are psychosomatic. Sometimes we compare our limited success to the great achievements of someone famous, and immediately we see ourselves as failures, asking, ‘why couldn’t I do that?’, and then giving up on our own potential, and making excuses for failure – rather than competing with our own potential. I have a cartoon where a man throws his golf clubs in the trash, saying, “After watching Tiger Woods play, I thought, why bother?”

How can we change outdated and misguided expectations? Here are some of the ways:

1. Get a different perspective on your business, your customers, and your problems. Understand that we don't all think alike, and that what might be no big deal to you could be of great importance to your customers, or to your employees. Ask your customers for feedback to make sure you're not taking them for granted. Do the same for your employees.
2. Get out of your own way. Try something today that you've been putting off because of fear, or concern of what others might think. Talk yourself up. It's normal for most people to be negative. It requires practice to be consistently positive. Avoid negative people. Associate with upbeat, positive souls. They're the ones who make things happen, who embrace challenges, and who love to share their enthusiasm.
3. Don't assume anything. Don't assume that your goals and the company goals are the same; but figure out how to make them compatible, or get out. Don't assume that your customers will be loyal, if your service is only mediocre. Don't assume that your employees will be faithful if you don't train them, trust them, and grow them.
4. Take a risk. Wave or say hello to someone you never greet just because they never acknowledge you. You'll be surprised how some people are just waiting to connect and maybe to do business with you. Get out of your office and do a walk-about among your employees. It's amazing what you will learn, and how their respect for you will grow. If you think you don't have time, consider that what's taking up a

lot of your time may be caused by not being in touch with your people.

5. Expect to succeed. There's another change in expectation. Our tendency to fear failure creates an expectation of failure. As the philosopher said, "You are what you think about most of the time" So think success, talk success, and pass it on to your people. Show them how it works!

John Madden is an international speaker, trainer, *and author of "Leap, Don't Sleep"* (How to get different results by doing something different). He helps businesses and individuals become more successful through customer service training, changing present results, networking for profit, coaching skills for managers, stress management through humor, time management, and interpersonal skills. You can reach him at 316-689-6932; email at john@LeapDontSleep.com; web site: www.LeapDontSleep.com