

Transcription - Managing Expectations

Welcome back. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today, we're going to revisit a topic that we have talked about before but we will think of some other things that we can talk to you about in terms of this topic and it is managing customer expectations and managing team expectations.

This is slightly different to the previous podcast where we talked about communication and process in terms of the customer. This one is about expectations. Probably an extension of that topic but we want to focus on managing not only your customer expectations but your team's expectations as well.

In terms of the team expectations, this can probably be a little bit more challenging given that for many of you at the time of this recording, you're managing teams remotely. So how do you manage the expectations of that team when you can't visit them at will, but it has to be a managed time and a managed environment (digitally) but it's different to the way you might interact otherwise?

The other part of it is managing the customer expectations, again in a time where you might be delivering your services or your product in a different way to the way that you have for many, many years in the past, or it might be offering completely different products and services, because you can't offer the product that you used to.

To manage team expectations, you've got to know what that expectation is. To know what that expectation is you have to go back to one of our previous podcasts where we talked about communication. So you need to be communicating with your team and understanding. You need to have a clear understanding as a team, whether it's leader and team members, all of you, where is the direction? Where is the goal? Where do you need to be and what are you expecting? So you can't say, I can't manage their expectation because they want A and I want them to have B, unless you have communicated what is it we trying to achieve, how are we going to do that and what is the limitation that we have to achieve it. We might not have all the bells and whistles that we need to make it happen. So how are we going to fix that? And managing expectations of the team would be, they might think, well to get these in this period of time, I need this list of 10 resources. Then you manage those expectations by saying, well to have those resources we want to achieve our revenue expectations and timeline, whatever it is. Therefore no, we have to do with 8 or 6 resources, whatever it is.

Again, communication is very, very important so everyone is on the same page and that will enable you to manage expectations by understanding and have clarity.

And I think it is not a bad exercise, as I have seen in organisations over the past little while, actually before a meeting, before a coming together of the team that you ask them what their expectations are. So you have an agenda for the meeting and part of the agenda response is that you asked for their expectations. So that as the meeting manager, whether you are the team leader or someone else is managing the meeting, that you know that this person is coming to the meeting thinking that the whole plan will be done by the end of this meeting. Whereas you realistically know that someone else is going to say, we can't do the whole plan because their expectation is that they just want the first part of the plan to be managed. By getting that input from them about their expectations, you can manage the meeting so much better and manage the team so much better because you're constantly reviewing their expectations, they are constantly reviewing their expectations, to incorporate into the overall plan of what you are doing, what you are producing or what service you are providing.

That goes for the customer expectations as well. What they expected 12 months ago might be very different to now and will be different for the next twelve months and so on. And there again, being on top of that, by knowing what they're expecting, and there's many, many ways to find that out, listen to the feedback you're getting good and bad, and work within that, communicating and explaining the options they might have. They might previously have only known about one option, you might have different options. Their situation now requires them to have things or products or services they never had before.

For example, if you're into the hospitality industry, the cleaning aspect has changed dramatically and that service is sought after a lot more and is very specific. So, in that sense, if you're in the cleaning business, you've got to communicate that you're up to that. You could do that. You have the capacity to have a quick turnaround etc. That's as a provider. But as the customer, that's what you want. Somebody to come to you to make it easy and say to you, I've got it and I can do that, cover all the bases.

Customer expectation is understanding it and then delivering on it.

Another angle is to manage their expectations at the beginning of the process

when you can't deliver. And so I know of an organization where they will say, this process takes 8 to 10 days. If you need this product in the next three days, sorry, you'll have to try and find someone else. We can't do it. It's a written communication. If it's a verbal one, I've actually heard the owner of the business say to someone over the phone, I would rather tell you no now than raise your expectations and think that it's going to happen and then have to disappoint you when it doesn't happen. So as much as it hurts me and my business to say no, I am going to say no now because I know realistically that it can't be done.

And that doesn't turn them away. What it does is engender some trust in you as an organization, in your integrity and your honesty and so they come back next time and they give themselves more time. They understand the process and they manage their own expectations. It's this process of people thinking that they're special. They'll read on the website that it takes 8 to 10 days and they still ring you and say, but I need it in 3 days. So, you have to have some response that allows them to still feel like it was okay for them to ring you and ask but it's your fault that it can't be done. It's never their fault, they are never wrong but you just can't meet their expectations on this occasion. If they don't come back, well, they're not the customers that you would try to attract in the first place. But if they do come back, you know that your approach and your integrity remains intact.

Most of the time that customer would know that if they want this particular product and this quality that it takes more than what they're asking, whether they come to you or someone else and they have to weigh that up as well. Maybe they're getting the speed and not the quality.

Giving that negative answer also gives them things to focus on that means they would come back to you again. It's the customer service that is important to you and to your organisation. You focus on those things as the reason that it can't be done on this occasion.

I think that's probably enough. It's not big topic but it's very clear what you need to do and how you need to manage it. So we'll leave it there for today. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.