Steps to Setting Clear Expectations at the Office

If you're a part of an organization of any size, you know the importance of setting and maintaining expectations. Whether expectations are placed on you or ones you set for the people on your team, they need to be made clear and are understood by everyone involved. Whenever ambiguity is present, you run the risk of poor communication, people cutting corners and diminished productivity. So, just how should you go about setting expectations? Try some of the following steps.

It Starts With You

People expect you to lead by example. If they see you taking shortcuts or giving anything less than your best effort, you can't expect them to give everything they've got. This is why setting expectations for yourself is a crucial first step. It's a good idea to write them down on paper and post them somewhere you can see them on a regular basis. Having clear expectations in your head is one thing. Putting them on paper is much more effective, however. Not only do you have a visual reminder, you allow others to see the standard you've set for yourself as well.

Where in Your Organization Do Expectations Need to Be Made Clearer?

Before you go off reinventing the wheel, put in the effort to examine every aspect of your organization to see where improvements can be made. Is there is a

breakdown in communication between production and quality assurance? Are there issues with people showing up late? How can the regulatory department meet deadlines more consistently? By identifying gaps, you can hone in on where expectations need to be adjusted or made clearer.

Communicate

Once you've identified where expectations need to be made clear, the next step is to communicate them to everyone involved. Whether you're addressing an individual or an entire group, meet everyone on their level. Instead of telling them they aren't doing what's expected, frame the conversation in a way that makes them feel empowered to raise the bar. Explaining why changes are being made in the context of how the entire company benefits is also a great strategy.

Make Everyone Part of the Conversation

When you're setting new expectations, always remember that people have expectations of you as a leader too. This is why it's important to have a dialogue. By asking people what they need from you helps both parties become clear on what's expected. Are there supplies or tools that your group need to make their jobs easier? Are there antiquated processes that need to be updated? When you make everyone part of the conversation, they feel appreciated and the results will show in their work.

Write Them Down

After you've communicated what's expected going forward, people will be enthused. After a while though, the hype fades and it's easy for people to forget or just go back to the old way of doing things. If you write down what's expected and post it somewhere visible, you provide clarity and a constant reminder for everyone.

Agreement

After you've had a mutual conversation and identified what everyone expects from each other, all parties have to buy in. That's why it's important for everyone to

read, understand and come to agreement on what's been written. If you have any dissenters, the chances of your expectations being met decrease dramatically. If you're dealing with an individual that has disciplinary issues or isn't otherwise making the grade, you may want to have them sign a written contract that clearly states what's expected.

Take Time to Re-evaluate

In the age of technology, workplaces of all types have to be constantly evolving to be successful. Just because the expectations you set and the systems you implemented last year were working, doesn't mean they still are. Take time to check in with your people on a regular basis. Is there a policy that no longer makes sense? Does the IT department have everything they need to keep your systems running their best? By doing this, you not only keep a pulse on what's going on with your organization, you show people that you care. This goes a long way in determining how effective you can be as a leader.

It's no secret that the most successful organizations have clear expectations for both leadership and employees. They open channels of communication, set boundaries and define responsibilities. But how you go about setting those expectations is what makes the difference. Instead of sending out a company-wide memo that most people won't even read or barking orders at your team, go through the steps listed above. Doing so provides you an in-depth look at where improvements need and makes everyone feel like part of the process.