



EPISODE 80: WHOSE EXPECTATIONS ARE THEY ANYWAY



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Welcome to the Stop Sabotaging Your Success Podcast, episode eighty. I'm your host, Cindy Eslinger. This is the podcast focusing on what we can do today to take control of our careers and overcome the inevitable barriers to success that we encounter along the way.

Navigating expectations and balancing the needs of ourselves and others is critical to achieving sustainable career success. On one hand, we need to meet the expectations of our employers, colleagues, clients, and other stakeholders. But, on the other hand, we also need to make sure that we take care of our own needs, meet the goals we set for ourselves, and protect our sense of well-being.

In this episode, we will explore the expectations that others impose on us and the value we place on those, as compared with the expectations we have for ourselves. Sometimes these are aligned, but many times we find there are conflicts, so it's up to us to manage all those expectations in order to reap the benefits of our hard work.

The first step in navigating expectations is to be clear about what is expected of us. This involves setting clear goals and objectives with our managers, team members, and all the people who have some stake in the work that we do. This involves understanding their expectations of us in terms of performance, productivity, communication, and behavior. In this way, we can develop a clear plan of action and focus our efforts where they're most needed in order to ensure everyone is on the same page and avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

It's important to recognize that meeting the expectations of others should not come at the expense of our own needs or goals, and most importantly, our well-being. It's crucial to strike a balance between meeting the needs of others while still taking care of ourselves. This means setting boundaries and clearly communicating our needs and limitations to those around us.

Sometimes, this can be accomplished in a quick conversation to set the tone as we begin working together on a new project. Getting out ahead of this is the best way to



go. But, even if you've been working with people for a while, it's always good to clear the air and give everyone a chance to reset and get more aligned in order to have a more productive working relationship.

The expectations that we have for ourselves in relation to career success refer to the set of beliefs and assumptions that we have about what we think we should achieve during the course of our career. These expectations can be influenced by a variety of factors such as personal values, cultural norms, family upbringing, educational background, societal pressures, as well as many other factors.

Our expectations can have a significant impact on our level of career satisfaction and what seems possible for each of us. If our expectations are too high, we may feel overwhelmed or discouraged when we fail to achieve them, leading to dissatisfaction and paving the way to burnout. Conversely, if our expectations are too low, we may feel unfulfilled and stuck in our jobs, leading to boredom and a lack of motivation.

We can accept ourselves and expect more of ourselves, all at the same time. The key is to have realistic, yet challenging, expectations of ourselves that align with our values, interests, and strengths. By setting big goals with achievable milestones, we can maintain a sense of progress and accomplishment, which can boost our motivation and satisfaction, while also stretching ourselves out of our comfort zone. However, it's important to be flexible and adaptable as career paths can be unpredictable, and some things are simply beyond our control, potentially requiring us to adjust our methods in achieving our goals over time.

What seems possible for each of us can depend on our unique strengths, but also on our individual circumstances. By identifying our areas of interest and exploring different ways to achieve our goals, we can gain a better understanding of what is actually possible for us and develop expectations that align better with those personal and professional goals.

It's not that we should always downgrade our expectations, but sometimes we might need to consider right-sizing our expectations due to the level of difficulty in navigating some of the barriers we will inevitably encounter along the way.

There are different types of expectations in the context of career success, including those set by others and those we set for ourselves. Let's discuss these types of expectations and their relative importance:



1. Expectations set by others: These are what is expected by our managers, colleagues, clients, or other stakeholders. Examples include meeting deadlines, delivering quality work, following company policies and procedures, and demonstrating teamwork and collaboration. Meeting these expectations is important for building trust, credibility, and professional working relationships with others. Exceeding these expectations can demonstrate our commitment and value to the organization and sometimes increase our chances for career advancement.
2. Expectations we set for ourselves: These are what we expect of ourselves based on our professional goals, values, and aspirations. Examples include achieving a certain level of education or certification, pursuing a particular career path, being promoted at a certain rate, or earning a specific salary for the work we produce. Setting these expectations is important for maintaining motivation, direction, and a sense of purpose in our careers. Meeting these expectations can provide a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment, while exceeding them can lead to even greater satisfaction and success.

Understanding and managing expectations is important, but these can vary in terms of their level of difficulty. It's crucial to set realistic expectations that are exciting and challenging, yet achievable, based on our skills, available resources, and circumstances. It's also important to recognize when our expectations of ourselves depend on things that are beyond our control, and instead, focus on what is squarely within our power to achieve.

Meeting expectations is important for maintaining a baseline level of performance and credibility, while exceeding expectations can lead to increased recognition, rewards, and opportunities. However, it's important to recognize that exceeding expectations consistently just raises the bar and can ultimately lead to unrealistic or unsustainable expectations from others or ourselves, potentially leading us down the path to burnout.

As women, we often put the needs of others ahead of our own needs. But, let's be real, if we're not taking care of ourselves, no one else is going to step up and do it for us. It can be a real challenge to balance the expectations of others with our own expectations, especially when they're pulling us in different directions.

Here are three examples of challenges we might face:

First off, time constraints can be a major issue. Meeting the expectations of others, like



completing work projects or attending meetings, can eat up all of our time and energy, leaving little room for doing the work needed to pursue our own career goals, like building those important professional relationships.

Another issue is conflicting priorities. We may want to take on the extra work projects to impress our boss, but that can leave us with no time or energy for the things that rejuvenate us outside of the office, leaving us feeling depleted and vulnerable to resentment and cynicism when that extra effort goes unnoticed.

And lastly, differing values can be a challenge. Our own expectations may be driven by our personal values, while the expectations of others may well come from organizational or societal values. Some compromise or negotiation may be required in order to strike a balance between these to create some alignment.

Here are four strategies we can use to navigate these challenges:

First up, clear communication is key. It's important to communicate our own expectations and limitations to others. Be very clear about what you will do and when you will have it done, especially with your managers and colleagues. This helps avoid misunderstandings and potential conflicts.

Next, set priorities. We need to prioritize the expectations that are most important to furthering our career goals, like meeting deadlines for work projects, and establishing our credibility as an expert in our field. By setting our own priorities, we can allocate our time and energy more effectively and minimize our frustration. When facing conflicting expectations, it may be beneficial to seek support from our mentors. They might be able to offer guidance, advice, or perspective that can help us navigate these challenges more effectively.

And lastly, flexibility is a must. We have to be willing to adjust the way in which we meet our own expectations and goals based on changing circumstances or new opportunities. By being flexible, we can adapt to these new challenges and take advantage of opportunities, as they arise, while maintaining a sense of progress and achieving steady growth in our careers.

Balancing the expectations of others with our own can be challenging, but it's possible with clear communication, prioritization, support, and flexibility. Here are three actionable tips for managing expectations:



1. Tip #1: Set realistic expectations. This means taking into account our own capabilities and limitations as well as the available resources and constraints we are working with. Setting unrealistic expectations can lead to frustration and disappointment, while setting overly modest expectations can lead to complacency and lack of motivation.
2. Tip #2: Communicate clearly. This means being upfront and honest with ourselves and others, about what we can realistically deliver and when. Under promise and overdeliver. Clear communication helps us avoid misunderstandings and builds trust in our relationships.
3. Tip #3: Follow through on your commitments. Once we have set those expectations, it's important to follow through on what we commit to. This demonstrates our reliability, and again, builds trust with others, both of which can lead to increased job satisfaction and success in our careers.

If you want to feel fulfilled in your work, and really, we could all use more of that, you'd better start putting more emphasis on meeting your own expectations. Don't wait for someone else to set the bar. Challenge yourself to achieve what it is you want to do. That's where you find the most personal satisfaction.

When you set high standards for yourself, you're setting yourself up for success. You're more likely to achieve ambitious goals, develop new skills, and build resilience even when faced with obstacles. Plus, you'll feel like you're making a more meaningful contribution to the world of work, and who doesn't want that?

So if you're ready to set and meet your own expectations, here are three actionable tips:

First, set specific and measurable goals that align with your values and priorities. Break them down into actionable steps and track your progress along the way. That way you can stay focused and motivated. And as I've said many times, remember to celebrate your successes along the way.

Secondly, hold yourself accountable. Take responsibility for your actions and follow through on your commitments. Be honest with yourself when you fall short and course correct to get back on track. Not everything is going to go as planned, but that doesn't mean you're on the wrong path.



Third, practice self-care. Setting high expectations can be stressful, so make sure you're taking care of yourself. Take breaks when needed, engage in activities you enjoy, and seek support from others when necessary. None of this is easy. It's all about managing your energy. Remember, you're a human, not a robot.

In the competitive world of work, you need to pick something and do it really well, in the hopes of getting noticed and rewarded. Unfortunately, simply meeting the expectations of your job just won't cut it, if you truly want to succeed in your career.

Exceeding expectations can bring numerous benefits for career success. It can help build trust and credibility with your colleagues, clients, and your boss, and position yourself as a valuable asset to the organization by differentiating yourself from others.

So, how do you exceed expectations in the workplace? Be proactive, deliver high quality work, and offer support to others. By taking these steps, you can position yourself as a top performer and hopefully, you will reap those rewards over time.

But, I do recognize that managing all these expectations imposed on us can be a bit of a balancing act. While meeting or exceeding the expectations of others is important in building trust, maintaining professional working relationships, and getting the recognition we deserve for all our hard work, it's also important to set boundaries and manage your own expectations to maintain some semblance of a healthy work-life balance.

So, go ahead and exceed expectations some of the time, but don't forget to take care of yourself along the way.

And that's it for this episode of Stop Sabotaging Your Success. Remember to download your [Guide to Managing Expectations](#).

Thank you to our producer, Alex Hochhausen and everyone at Astronomic Audio. Get in touch, I'm on Instagram [@cindyeliger](#) and my email address is info@cindyeliger.com.

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Until next week, I'm Cindy Esliger. Thanks for listening.

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