

## **Power of Expectations**

### **Time Expectations**

In our modern world, we are bound by time. This being the case, we have certain expectations about how time works and how long it will take us to accomplish something. Often, time becomes distorted through our perceptions and expectations. Why do some afternoons speed by faster than others? And why do we finish projects one minute before our deadline?

Parkinson's Law states that work expands to fill the time available. So, if a project is given a three-month deadline, it will take the full three months to complete. If that very same project is given a six-month timeframe, it will still take the full six months. It may sound strange, but the law has bearing because the time allotted for completion sets our expectations. It is actually our expectations that influence how we will work on a project and therefore when it will be completed. Ever noticed how there's a sudden burst of activity right before the deadline appears? We all have the tendency to procrastinate, waiting until the final wire to do most of the work. This is why it is often effective to set multiple deadlines for large projects. Projects without deadlines never seem to be accomplished, no matter how good the intentions are.

### **Reputation Expectations**

The most effective psychological tool for getting someone to follow through is to let him know that you believe he is the type of person who will follow through. Using phrases such as "You're the kind of person who..." "You've always impressed me with your ability to ..." or "I've always liked the fact that you..." invoke the powerful psychological law of internal consistency. Winston Churchill, one of the greatest masters in dealing with people, said, "I have found that the best way to get another to acquire a virtue, is to impute it to him."

When people are aware of the good or bad opinions other people have about them, they want to live up to those opinions. This is why we act out the roles assigned to us. If we receive praise, we want to be worthy of that praise. There was a police officer who always seemed to be able to get even the toughest criminals to open up and tell him everything. His technique was to tell the criminal, "I know you have a reputation for being the tough guy who's been in a lot of trouble, but everyone tells me the one thing that stands out about you is that you never lie. They tell me that whatever you say, it's always the truth, no matter what." Honestly assess how you think you make others feel when they're around you. Do you make them feel small and unimportant, or do you inspire them to achieve more? Your actions towards others will tell them how you feel or think about them. The great writer and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once stated, "Treat a man as he appears to be and you make him worse. But treat a man as if he already were what he potentially could be, and you make him what he should be."

### **First Impression Expectations**

Have you ever noticed how the people you assume are going to be jerks turn out to be just that? And if there is someone you're especially excited to meet, then you meet him or her and they seem great! Often our assumptions and expectations about someone

we're about to meet for the first time play out exactly as we've already mentally conceived them. Once again, even when first meeting someone, you will send subconscious messages about how they are to respond and behave. In a particular study, a group of high school students was brought together to hear a speech on how the minimum driving age should be raised. Half the students was told to focus on the speaker's speaking style, while the other half was forewarned that the speaker considered teenagers to be horrible drivers. Two weeks after the presentation, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire. Overall, the first group rated the speaker favorably and even leaned in favor of the position he asserted. The second group rated the speaker as hostile and seemed to have tuned out his message altogether. Because of the expectations they were set up to hold, the second set of students were already defensive before the speech even started, leaving little room for persuasion.

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