

Expectations Can Be the Enemy to Success

By Jon Pelzer



The collective impact of whomever we target and however we go after these targets is supposed to deliver the results we need. Right? When it does happen, awesome! When it doesn't happen, then sometimes we go job hunting!

The typically talked about reasons for success or failure relate to dependencies such as ¹⁾ the competencies of the people involved or ²⁾ the quality of the product/service or ³⁾ the ability to get the message right or ⁴⁾ what the competition is doing or ⁵⁾ whether the budget was adequate. We point fingers to the things we can directly control or are out of our control to either take credit for success or explain why expectations were not met.

I would argue the orgs perception of successful or failed results is determined by expectations. Expectations can be dictated by budgets, bonuses, forecasts, pressure from investors, finances, and/or operations. To some extent, even driven by the pie in the sky promises of people responsible for producing the results! So, this boils down to whether the expectations are reasonable or realistic or managed correctly. Does the expectation even consider the dependencies that will determine results?

A realistic forecast (or expectation) will account for all the dependencies that will positively or negatively contribute to outcomes. Importantly, a realistic forecast should mathematically account for these dependencies in some manner to increase or reduce expectations.

Dependencies might include, for example, whether the effort is based on something that is completely new to the market or is a major learning curve for the organization. An expectation dependency could also be whether there will be enough people reached, the money spent will be efficient and enough frequency of message to produce expected results.

To be sure, this is an uncomfortable conversation to have in many settings. But an environment of honest expectations can be fostered by realistic forecasts that account for dependencies.

If you would like to discuss or have questions, please feel free to message me anytime on LinkedIn or via my published contact information.