THE JOYFUL PERFORMANCE MODEL | NO. 1: ALIGN

EXPECTATIONS EVERYONE CAN NAME

How a few minutes of clarity gets everyone aiming at the same target



- **Only one in five managers and individual contributors strongly agree that they have a clear definition of what exceptional performance looks like in their role.**
- **Those who do are nearly four times as likely to be engaged at work.**
- **Leaders are nearly three times as likely to be engaged if they have clear expectations for exceptional performance.**

Gallup, U.S. Employee Engagement Declines From 2020 Peak, 2026

The problem is rarely the person

When a team or individual is underperforming, leaders often reach for external motivation, hiring, or increased pressure. Most of the time, the expectation was never clear enough to begin with, so those approaches don't move the needle. Unaligned expectations show up on your P&L through rework, inconsistent customer experience, and employee burnout. Everyone is working harder than ever, and yet targets are missed. Agree up front on what good looks like, and the rest of the cycle has something to stand on.

Three in-the-moment signs your expectations are not landing

- You are correcting the same issues repeatedly.
- Your team is working hard, the strategy is right, but the numbers are not moving.
- People seem blindsided by or push back on feedback.

Adjust your approach – a clear expectation answers five questions

1. **What is the outcome?** Name the result you want, not just the activity.
2. **What does good look like?** Define the behavior in terms you would both recognize when you see it. Clarity comes in the details.
3. **Why does it matter?** Tie it to the customer, the team, the individual, AND the number it moves for the company.
4. **By when?** Set the timeline and how often you will check in.
5. **How will we know it is done?** Agree on how you will review progress together, so it is an expected interaction and never a surprise.

Be clear

Aligned expectations are the catalyst of performance. They open the door for engagement, collaboration, and achievement. The results compound when you pair clear expectations with consistent observation and a real plan to celebrate wins and close gaps.

Want help building this into your business? Let's talk.

Want to dip your toes in first? Join The Joyful Leadership Lab, a free monthly discussion group.

Emily Gospodarek | Owner, Performance Consulting Services, LLC
Certified Everything DiSC and Five Behaviors Practitioner | www.PerformanceConsultingServicesLLC.com
Emily@PerformanceConsultingServicesLLC.com | 207-987-0726

©2026 Performance Consulting Services, LLC