

LEADERSHIP LEARNING GUIDE / EPISODE 10

From 20% to 98%: Clear Expectations and Accountability

Topic: Clear expectations, objective measurement and fair accountability
Audience: Leadership, management, operations and organizational behavior courses

ABOUT THE EPISODE

Pete inherited a struggling aerospace engineering team. A SIPOC review clarified the work process, and Programming helped define a checklist for acceptable engineering output. Clear requirements, training and standardization helped quality rise from about 20% to 98% within three months. But uneven effort continued to burden stronger contributors. After establishing expectations and support, Pete addressed persistent performance gaps. Some employees left, and the smaller team delivered better results. One engineer later thanked him for taking action.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching, students should be able to:

- Distinguish unclear requirements and missing support from persistent individual performance gaps.
- Explain how internal-customer requirements and a checklist make quality measurable.
- Describe how training and standardization help people meet clear expectations.
- Explain why fair accountability protects both performance and team morale.

FOUR PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Define success together. Ask the internal customer what a complete, usable output requires.
2. Provide the means to succeed. Supply needed inputs, tools, training and consistent methods.
3. Measure fairly. Use clear criteria and evidence instead of assumptions or vague judgments.
4. Follow through. Address persistent gaps promptly and respectfully after providing support.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was it necessary to define acceptable engineering output before judging performance?
2. How did involving Programming improve the engineering team's understanding of quality?
3. What evidence would distinguish a training need from a persistent performance problem?
4. How can avoiding a difficult decision affect the people carrying the additional workload?
5. How would you combine support, a fair opportunity to improve, and clear accountability?

FIVE-MINUTE CLASSROOM ACTIVITY / DEFINE SUCCESS

In pairs, choose a task one team hands to another. List three conditions that make the output ready to use. Identify one missing input or training need, one objective measure, and the first respectful conversation you would have if performance remained below expectations after support was provided.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Leaders must make success achievable before holding people accountable. Clear expectations, resources and training come first; fair, timely follow-through protects the people doing the work and the results the team delivers.

SUPPORT PEOPLE. SET CLEAR STANDARDS. FOLLOW THROUGH.

EPISODE 10

https://theascenttoleadership.org/episodes/engineering-team-performance/

Scan for Episode 10 viewing details.

Watch the episode: https://youtu.be/Yjt0hVjdjbw

Companion resource: Pete Maher's The Lean Leader's Playbook: Guiding Teams to Excellence Through Empowerment and Effective Leadership is available on Amazon in Kindle, paperback and hardcover editions.