

MIND THE GAP

Unrealistic expectations can often lead to mixed consequences



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IN THE 2006 FILM, *NOTES ON A SCANDAL*, CHARACTER SHEBA HART EXPLAINS "THE GAP" AS "THE DISTANCE BETWEEN LIFE AS YOU DREAM IT, AND LIFE AS IT IS."

When it comes to property management, we have expectations about almost everything, from employee behaviors and performance, to the boss's treatment, to vendor's work. Our expectations influence how we see things, the actions we take, our reactions and ultimately, what we believe and think. But how often do your expectations differ from the resulting reality? This gap between expectation and reality can often have a tremendous effect you and your business.

Unrealistic expectations, whether they are negative or positive, can often have mixed consequences. Below are some of the repercussions.

When we have negative expectations, they can often lead to:

The Good: If things turn out well, you may be pleasantly surprised. Caution: It's also possible that a good outcome may make you more critical. You may fail to see the good that came out of the situation because you were dead set on a negative outcome. No one likes to be mistaken.

The Bad: You have needlessly subjected yourself to anxiety and disappointment based on your negative presumptions.

The Ugly: You believe that having negative expectations is an acceptable outlook. Embracing this perspective means you will continually be negative.

When we have overly optimistic expectations, they can often lead to:

The Good: When you anticipate a positive outcome, you are exhilarated. Feeling optimistic

predisposes you to perceive life more positively and that's a good thing.

The Bad: When you are confident that an outcome will be positive, you may not proactively take steps to ensure a better result.

The Ugly: If things don't transpire as you envisioned, the let-down can range from disappointing to devastating. Caution: A disappointing outcome can contain some positive elements, but you may have trouble seeing the good parts because you were looking for bigger, better results.

So, given these possible outcomes and reactions, how should we handle our expectations? Ideally, we'd all love to have constant realistic presumptions, but that simply doesn't happen. That too is unrealistic. Instead, it's important to deal with expectations in measures.

Before the results of an event are determined, try to maintain broad, flexible expectations. If you find you have narrow anticipations, either overly positive or overly negative, add an equal tempered dose of the opposite. Think of the possibilities and don't assume probabilities.

Once the results of an event are determined, try to face the outcome realistically. Accept and adapt to any challenges, and enjoy the benefits—big or small. Should your expected outcome not come to pass, remember that although the result could be better, it could also be worse. You always have options, even after the fact.

As I begin my next project to help a firm improve the operations of its management department, I am putting my expectations on hold. The situation may be one I've never seen before, or it may be similar to what I often see. Only the work will disclose reality. There will be no gap here. ■