

Resources for Living[®]

Five signs you're expecting your team to achieve the impossible

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It's not only short-staffed teams that can have trouble reaching their metrics and goals. Sometimes there's just too much to do. Or the bar is set too high for them to jump over.

Your team members likely want to be at their best. But you can't be too surprised if they stop jumping after getting hurt from trying too hard.

Here are five signs your employees simply can't accomplish what you're asking:

- 1. They use the "u" word.** That's right, they feel unappreciated. Be sure to recognize the good work they're doing.
- 2. They aren't meeting the goals you've set.** Most employees want to please their bosses. But if they don't, take a good look at whether it's because they can't. Do you hear experienced workers complaining that you're setting unreachable goals? If so, you run the risk of burning out your team. And you may want to reconsider the ways you're measuring success.
- 3. Team members seem anxious to move to another area or company.** Chronically expecting too much can motivate your employees in a way you may not have intended — to leave.
- 4. No one talks about significant barriers to success.** All teams run into problems. But a lack of transparency can really hurt your team's morale. That's especially true if your culture doesn't encourage open and honest two-way communication.
- 5. You feel as if you're trying to achieve the impossible.** Your own stress level might be a good indicator of your team's.

Have you seen any of the above signs? If your answer is yes, take stock of your team and company culture. Think about where expectations may be unrealistic.

Find tasks your team is performing that don't add value or meet customer needs. Then decide together to stop doing those things. That can free up extra time and energy to meet the results that matter most. The more you talk about it in a spirit of open and friendly collaboration, the more ideas you'll have to choose between.

Sometimes there's a fine line between expecting the best and demanding the impossible. Remember: A culture of continuous improvement shouldn't cross the line to a state of "never good enough," or worse, "never good." Success should be recognized and celebrated.

Be sure to protect your team from unachievable goals. Consistent praise and realistic expectations go a long way toward building your team's morale.