

Overview:

The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, also known as the Pygmalion Effect, occurs when we have faith in a person’s abilities. When we have high expectations for people, they tend to meet those expectations.

The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy has been demonstrated in many psychological studies and proven to be effective. It is perhaps most well known due to the film *My Fair Lady*. In the film, Professor Higgins came across a woman on the street who had no formal education, spoke with an unsophisticated accent, and was poor. He made a bet with a friend of his that he could turn her into a society woman that he could bring to a formal affair. Professor Higgins clearly had high expectations for the woman, and slowly over time she realized his goals for her.

Other studies that have been conducted include a group of elementary school children and their teacher. The teacher was told that she had a group of intellectual “bloomers” who were randomly placed in the class. The only difference between the “bloomers” and the other students was the teacher’s expectations for them. In fact, the experiment did prove that the students who the teacher saw as “bloomers” did bloom based on her expectations of them.

After reading this module, you should:

Goals:

1. Understand the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy.
2. Understand the impact you can have on influencing your employees.
3. Use the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in your department.

Comments:

Topic: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

1. What Is the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?

- ◆ Robert Rosenthal was one of the original theorists to prove that the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy worked in studies he conducted.
- ◆ Rosenthal defined the phenomenon in the following way: “One prophesies an event, and the expectation of the event then changes the behavior of the prophet in such a way to make the prophesied event more likely.”

2. Using the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Your Department

- ◆ You can drastically improve the productivity of your subordinates through the expectations you have for them.
- ◆ People are motivated to perform at a level that is consistent with their perception of their own competence.
- ◆ Employees who believe that they are very competent will perform to the level that they believe they should; they meet their own standards..
- ◆ Likewise, employees who feel that they are less competent will also perform to the level of their own expectations.
- ◆ Managers who set high expectations and goals for their employees can have a dramatic impact on the performance of their subordinates simply because of these high expectations.

3. The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Ongoing

- ◆ The phenomenon of the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy can be permanently transferred to the employee over time.
- ◆ As the employees continue to meet the high expectations of their supervisors, their own expectations begin to change and employees begin to achieve at high levels because they believe they can..

4. How You Should Act

- ◆ As you might expect, there is more to this phenomenon than simply setting high goals..
- ◆ The other important factor is you. You must truly have faith in the employee’s ability to achieve, at the high levels you are asking for.
- ◆ If you don’t have this faith, you run the risk of the employees seeing you in a negative light-as someone who continually expects more and more from his or her employees.

Methods to Create High Expectations:

1 Climate

Supervisors must establish a warm climate with their employees that allows for support and acceptance so that the expectations will be seen as a genuine high opinion of the person and not perceived negatively.

2 Input

Supervisors who have high expectations for their employees also tend to provide them with resources like training, access to people, supplies they need, and adequate time.

3 Feedback

Research has shown that managers and supervisors who have high expectations for their employees provide frequent and very specific feedback about what the employee is doing well.

4 Output

If you have high expectations for employees, you will tend to encourage them to be creative with their output and you will be supportive through the process.