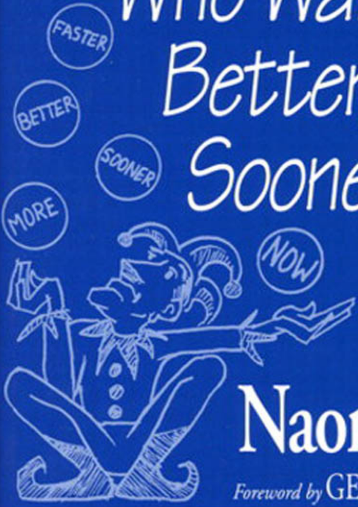
# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

## Working with People Who Want More, Better, Faster, Sooner, NOW!


FASTER
BETTER
SOONER
MORE
NOW

**Naomi Karten**

*Foreword by* GERALD M. WEINBERG

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

SHARE WITH OTHERS

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

# *Also Available from* DORSET HOUSE

*Adrenaline Junkies and Template Zombies: Understanding Patterns of Project Behavior*
by Tom DeMarco, Peter Hruschka, Tim Lister, Steve McMenamin, and James & Suzanne Robertson
ISBN: 978-0-932633-67-5 Copyright ©2008 248 pages, softcover

*Agile Software Development in the Large: Diving Into the Deep*
by Jutta Eckstein ISBN: 978-0-932633-57-6 Copyright ©2004 248 pages, softcover

*Agile Software Development with Distributed Teams: Staying Agile in a Global World*
by Jutta Eckstein ISBN: 978-0-932633-71-2 Copyright ©2010 264 pages, softcover

*Complete Systems Analysis: The Workbook, the Textbook, the Answers*
by James and Suzanne Robertson foreword by Tom DeMarco
ISBN: 978-0-932633-50-7 Copyright ©1998 624 pages, softcover

*Just Enough Requirements Management:*
*Where Software Development Meets Marketing*
by Alan M. Davis ISBN: 978-0-932633-64-4 Copyright ©2005 256 pages, softcover

*Peopleware: Productive Projects and Teams*, 2nd ed.
by Tom DeMarco and Timothy Lister
ISBN: 978-0-932633-43-9 Copyright ©1999 264 pages, softcover

*Perfect Software: And Other Illusions About Testing*
by Gerald M. Weinberg ISBN: 978-0-932633-69-9 Copyright ©2008 200 pages, softcover

*Surviving the Top Ten Challenges of Software Testing: A People-Oriented Approach*
by William E. Perry and Randall W. Rice
ISBN: 978-0-932633-38-5 Copyright ©1997 216 pages, softcover

*Waltzing With Bears: Managing Risk on Software Projects*
by Tom DeMarco and Timothy Lister
ISBN: 978-0-932633-60-6 Copyright ©2003 208 pages, softcover

*Weinberg on Writing: The Fieldstone Method*
by Gerald M. Weinberg ISBN: 978-0-932633-65-1 Copyright ©2006 208 pages, softcover

***For More Information***

- ✓ Contact us for prices, shipping options, availability, and more.
- ✓ Visit Dorsethouse.com for savings, reviews, downloads, and more.

DORSET HOUSE PUBLISHING
*An Independent Publisher of Books on*
*Systems and Software Development and Management. Since 1984.*
3143 Broadway, Suite 2B New York, NY 10027 USA
1-800-DH-BOOKS 1-800-342-6657
212-620-4053 fax: 212-727-1044
info@dorsethouse.com www.dorsethouse.com

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

---

## Naomi Karten

DORSET HOUSE PUBLISHING
3143 Broadway, Suite 2B, New York, New York 10027

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Karten, Naomi.
Managing expectations : working with people who want more, better, faster, sooner, now! / Naomi Karten ; foreword by Gerald M. Weinberg
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-932633-27-9
1. Software engineering--Management. 2. Consumer satisfaction.
I. Title.
QA76.758.K37 1994
004'.068'4--dc20 93-48270
CIP

Quantity discounts are available from the publisher. Call (800) 342-6657 or (212) 620-4053 or e-mail info@dorsethouse.com. Contact same for examination copy requirements and permissions. To photocopy passages for academic use, obtain permission from the Copyright Clearance Center: (978) 750-8400 or www.copyright.com.

Trademark credits: All trade and product names are either trademarks, registered trademarks, or service marks of their respective companies, and are the property of their respective holders and should be treated as such.

Text and Cover Illustrator: Conrad Cooper
Cover Design: Jeff Faville, Faville Design

Copyright © 1994 by Naomi Karten. Published by Dorset House Publishing, 3143 Broadway, Suite 2B, New York, NY 10027.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Distributed in the English language in Singapore, the Philippines, and Southeast Asia by Alkem Company (S) Pte., Ltd., Singapore; and in the English language in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Mauritius by Prism Books Pvt., Ltd., Bangalore, India.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 93-48270

ISBN: 978-0-932633-27-9

12 11 10 9 8 7

Digital release by Pearson Education, Inc., June, 2013

# Dedication

---

To my husband, Howard,
my partner in exploration.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Acknowledgments

Many clients have asked me, kiddingly, whether their experiences and problems would appear in this book. Absolutely, I told them, but I promised anonymity, and have changed their names to ensure that anonymity. I appreciate their trust in me, and their openness in sharing their concerns.

Jerry Weinberg was a constant source of support throughout my writing and rewriting of this book. Through his suggestions and advice, he has shown me a learning curve that I am greatly enjoying climbing.

Wendy Eakin and David McClintock at Dorset House have impressed me with their caring attitude and their amazing attention to detail. I used to resist having my writing critiqued; in working with them, I have come to welcome it. I appreciate them for making this effort a truly collaborative one.

*December 1993* N.K.
*Randolph, Massachusetts*

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Contents

**Foreword** *xvii*
**Preface** *xix*

**INTRODUCTION: THE EXPECTATIONS CHALLENGE 1**
  THE EXPECTATIONS-MANAGING FRAMEWORK 2
    Communication 2
    Information Gathering 2
    Policies and Practices 3
  INVOLVING CUSTOMERS 3
  FORMULATING AN ACTION PLAN 4
  GETTING STARTED 5
  TAKING THE CHALLENGE 6

**SECTION 1: COMMUNICATION 9**

**1. GUARD AGAINST CONFLICTING MESSAGES 11**
  COMMUNICATING CONFLICT 12
  Conflict #1: What You Promise vs. What You Do 12
  Conflict #2: What You Say You Won't Do vs. What You Do 14
  Conflict #3: What You Imply vs. What You Do 16

Conflict #4: What You Say vs. How You Say It 17
Conflict #5: What You Write vs. What You Mean 19
Conflict #6: What You Say vs. What Else You Communicate 20
CIRCUMVENTING THE CONFLICT 22
NOTES 22

**2. USE JARGON WITH CARE 23**
MISCOMMUNICATING WITH TECHNICAL TERMS 24
    Muddling Messages 24
    Alienating Listeners 25
    Speaking Technobabble 26
MISCOMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIAR LANGUAGE 27
    Differing Definitions 27
    Ambiguous Statements 30
    Misguided Labels 32
    Code Words 35
MISINTERPRETING CUSTOMERS' LANGUAGE 36
JARGON-CHECKING KEPT IN PERSPECTIVE 37

**3. IDENTIFY COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES 38**
COMMUNICATING STATUS INFORMATION 39
    Nathan's Preference 40
    Building a Skyscraper 41
COMMUNICATING IDEAS 42
ACCOMMODATING DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES 44
GAINING CONSENSUS AND ACHIEVING BUY-IN 46
    A Technique for Building Consensus 47
LEARNING FROM PREFERENCES 48
NOTES 49

**4. LISTEN PERSUASIVELY 50**
APPEARING NOT TO LISTEN 51
    Dividing Your Attention 51
    Closing a Conversation 52
    Testing Your Tolerance 52
DEMONSTRATING LISTENING 53
    Eye Contact 53
    Responsive Behavior 54
    Moderation 55
LISTENING ACTIVELY 56
    Listen Before Drawing Conclusions 56
    Listen to Customers' Questions 57

  - Listen for Statements of Expectations 58
- HELPING CUSTOMERS TO LISTEN 58
- SPEAKING THE WAY YOU LISTEN 59
- OBSERVING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES 60
- LEARNING TO LISTEN 61
- NOTES 61

**SECTION 2: INFORMATION GATHERING 63**

**5. HELP CUSTOMERS DESCRIBE THEIR NEEDS 65**
- ANALYSIS WITH FOCAL POINTS 66
  - Saying That's Not It 66
  - Missing a Focal Point 68
- TECHNIQUES FOR DESCRIBING NEEDS 68
- TYPES OF FOCAL POINTS 70
  - Prototypes as Focal Points 70
  - Service Requests as Focal Points 71
  - Bargaining Chips as Focal Points 72
- PITFALLS OF FOCAL POINTS 72
- THINKING WITH FOCAL POINTS 73
  - Finding More Focal Points 74
- NOTES 75

**6. BECOME AN INFORMATION-GATHERING SKEPTIC 77**
- LEARN FROM A MODEL SKEPTIC 78
- CLARIFY SERVICE REQUESTS 78
- CHALLENGE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS 79
- ALLOW FOR INACCURACY 82
- POSE STRATEGIC QUESTIONS 84
- LEARN TO THINK LIKE A SKEPTIC 87
- NOTES 88

**7. UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMERS' CONTEXT 89**
- CATEGORIZE THE CONTEXT 89
  - Consider All Factors 90
  - Develop Your Own Questions 92
  - Draw Conclusions from the Responses 93
- CASE STUDY: PEAK WORKLOAD 93

- Group Brainstorming 96
- Unforeseen Interconnections 96
- FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER 97
  - Questioning Strategies 98
  - Talk-Inducing Topics 99
- GATHER INFORMATION REGULARLY 102
- NOTES 103

**8. TRY THE SOLUTION ON FOR SIZE 104**

- FINDING THE PERFECT SOLUTION 104
- BECOMING IMMERSED IN THE SOLUTION 106
  - Conduct a Demonstration 107
  - Facilitate a Solution Review 108
  - Do a Plus/Minus Exercise 108
  - Perform a Solution Analysis 110
  - Analyze What Can Go Wrong 113
  - Consider Alternative Solutions 114
  - Create Your Own Techniques 115
- REFLECTING ON A JOB COMPLETED 116
- A JACKET ANALYSIS 117
- NOTES 118

**SECTION 3: POLICIES AND PRACTICES 119**

**9. CLARIFY CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS 121**

- DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS 122
- PERFORMING FOR SATISFACTION 123
- DISCUSSING CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS 124
  - Questions About Perceptions 124
  - Discussions of Perceptions: Two Examples 125
  - Anticipate the Consequences of Discussion 127
- GAINING FEEDBACK FROM CUSTOMERS 127
  - Customer Surveys 127
  - One-on-One Interviews 129
  - Team Interviews 130
  - Customer-Led Interviews 130
  - Group Meetings 131
  - Your Participation 131
- CREATING A SERVICE GUIDE 132

- Statement of Benefits 133
- Image Enhancement 134
- Clarifying Your Own Perceptions 134

EXPLAINING YOUR DECISIONS 135
- Why As Well As What 135
- Advance Notice 135
- Management Rationale 136

INVOLVING CUSTOMERS 136
- Acceptance Testing Teams 137

INTERPRETING COMPLAINTS 138
- Checkpoint Assessments 139

SAUNAFACTION GUARANTEED 140

NOTES 140

**10. SET UNCERTAINTY-MANAGING SERVICE STANDARDS 142**

STANDARDS FOR COMMUNICATING "WHEN" 143
- What Your Service Philosophy Communicates 144
- What Customers Can Expect 144
- What You Expect of Customers 146

CATEGORIES OF STANDARD-SETTING 146
- Select the Category You Can Implement 148
- Select the Category You Can Support 149

STRATEGIES FOR STANDARD-SETTING 151
- Service Targets 151
- Exception Standards 151
- Incentives 152
- Standards Based on Past Performance 153

STANDARDS FOR SERVICES THAT GO AWRY 154
- Regular Updates 155
- Acknowledgment of Error 156

SOLUTIONS GUARANTEED (OR PROBLEMS RETURNED) 157

NOTES 157

**11. WHEN APPROPRIATE, JUST SAY WHOA 158**

SAYING YES AND SAYING NO 158
- The Connection Between Actions and Expectations 159
- The Limits of Service Orientation 159
- The Path of Least Resistance 161

SAYING WHOA 161

    Benefits 162
    The Hit-by-a-Bus Test 164
  PUTTING WHOA INTO PRACTICE 165
    Review Your Department's Request Process 165
    Establish Whoa-Based Service Standards 166
    Identify Alternative Resources 167
    Say Whoa to Your Manager (When Appropriate, of Course) 168
    Specify Who Has Authority to Accept Customer Requests 170
    Identify Services and Activities That Can Be Cut 171
    Develop Scripts That Can Help You Just Say Whoa 173
  SEEKING NO HELP 173
  NOTES 174

**12. BUILD WIN-WIN RELATIONSHIPS 175**
  CUSTOMERS AS ALLIES 176
    Customer Contact 176
    Reputation for Performance 177
  TECHNIQUES FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING 178
    Arrange Department-Specific Meetings 178
    Conduct Cross-Functional Exchanges 179
    Accept Responsibility for Your Mistakes 181
    Remember the Basic Courtesies 182
    Confront Negative Relationships 183
    Don't Take It Personally 184
  RELATIONSHIP PITFALLS 186
    Build Relationships with Colleagues 187
  ALL'S WELL THAT MENDS WELL 189
  NOTES 189

**CONCLUSION: FORMULATE AN ACTION PLAN 190**
  DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN 191
    Plan as a Group 191
    Assess Your Current Efforts 192
  REVIEW THE THREE CENTRAL ISSUES 193
  CREATE YOUR STRATEGY 195
    Prepare Your Own To-Do List 199
  BECOME AN EXPECTATIONS MANAGER 199
    Role Responsibilities 199

        Personal Action 201
        Customer Involvement 202
    START ANYWHERE 202
        Identifying the Predictable 203
        Call Me 204
    NOTES 204

**Related Reading 205**
**Index 209**

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Foreword

The information industry is growing up. After four decades of fascination with our high-tech toys, some people in the industry are beginning to realize that we are not in the toy business, but the service business. A few have even realized that playing with high-tech toys isn't the only way—or even the best way—to better service.

One of the earliest of those few visionaries is Naomi Karten, author of *Managing Expectations.* I was first attracted to her work many years ago because she saw so clearly that the information industry was stuck—unless it could find a way to be more responsive to its customers. For many years, the newsletter she wrote, *Managing End-User Computing,* was a monthly reminder, prodding us to look up from our toys from time to time and cast our eyes on our customers.

Now, how could an industry as large as the information industry get so far removed from its customers that it needed visionaries to propose a service orientation? As industries go, we are large, but we are new. In mature industries, the customers have evolved along with the industry itself, and know what to expect. When you set out to buy a car, you're quite sure it won't cost a hundred dollars, nor is it likely to drain your purse of a hundred thousand dollars. When you order a steak, you expect neither a hamburger nor a steer. When you board a train for Chattanooga, you're confident you won't wind up in Oshkosh.

In the information industry, it's different. In our short history, we've seen numerous cases of systems development in which a job estimated at ten thousand dollars wound up costing a hundred thousand dollars. We've asked for a two-page report on sales of steak and gotten a thousand pages on sales of everything from hamburgers to steers. We've set out to buy a personal organizer and gotten an esoteric spreadsheet.

Because of our short, checkered history, our customers have no historical expectations except, perhaps, that when you cross the threshold of your information department, you abandon all hope of getting what you really want. Or, if they have no direct experience with information systems, our customers pick up expectations from analogous businesses—but those don't apply either.

Our customers expect little from us, or expect the wrong things, and in this they're not disappointed. We thought that as our technical prowess grew, our customers would be happier, but they aren't. To match our increasing ability to produce excellent systems, we need to increase our ability to manage our customers' expectations. Naomi Karten's pioneering book teaches us how to do it. Before you play with your toys again, read it!

*September 1993* Gerald M. Weinberg
*Albuquerque, New Mexico*

# Preface

I'm a student of human behavior and a dabbler in the art of managing expectations. It was not part of my master plan to become either the student or the dabbler. In fact, I was destined for greatness in the field of mathematics, and would, I'm sure, have achieved that greatness, were it not for day one of my class in linear algebra as a college freshman.

There, perched on a platform where she towered over a sea of mathematician wannabes, stood the most terrifying woman I had ever seen. She looked tough, and sounded even tougher. She was wearing high-heeled boots, and I, a member of the sneaker set, found this image frightening. In one of those memorable moments that shapes lives, I listened to this woman bellow at us, "If you don't learn the eighteen-step proof that A times one equals A, don't expect to pass this course!"

That, although I didn't know it at the time, was the beginning of my interest in the subject of expectations.

It was also the end of my not-yet-budding career in mathematics. I was into efficiency, and eighteen steps to prove A times one equals A was seventeen too many. A times one *did* equal A. What else *could* it equal?

I switched my major to psychology. I learned about motivation, learning theory, patterns of reinforcement, expectations . . . . Well, there wasn't really a course in expectations, but that's what many of the courses were about, as I realize in looking back.

After getting a couple of degrees in psychology, I switched focus again and became a programmer. That wasn't part of my master plan either, but my husband, Howard, was a programmer, and he and his techie friends spoke a language I couldn't understand. It was full of buzzwords, jargon, acronyms. I couldn't stand not understanding that language, and decided to become a programmer just for a short while, until I learned some jargon.

To my great surprise, I got hooked. I discovered I loved programming. I loved debugging. I loved the buzzwords, the jargon, and the acronyms. And I loved working with our internal customers. Well, most of them, anyway. And even then, not all day every day. They all seemed to have so many expectations. Occasionally, I found myself thinking, If it weren't for the customers, this job could be fun.

I rose through several technical and customer support positions, and suddenly one day I was an information systems manager. This, too, was not part of my master plan, but there was a reorganization, and the next thing I knew, I was a manager. And before I could adjust my new chair so that my feet could reach the floor, customers started calling, wanting to know where their output was. They didn't care that I had just started as manager an hour earlier, and they didn't want to hear that the system had crashed, and that we were scrambling to figure out why. All they knew was their output was due at eight o'clock, and it was now nine o'clock. From that moment on, almost every problem I experienced, witnessed, or heard about revolved in some way or other around expectations.

I've now spent more than a decade as a speaker, seminar leader, and consultant, and I've listened to countless stories information systems professionals have told me about their customers' misguided or hard-to-manage expectations. However, what has become apparent from these stories is that only rarely do these people see themselves as responsible for the problems they face. Instead, in the vast majority of experiences, information systems personnel fault their customers for having unreasonable or unrealistic expectations.

Ironically, as I've listened to information systems customers describe *their* experiences, it has become apparent that systems professionals often have expectations of their customers that are just as unreasonable. In fact, it's intriguing how often systems professionals and customers accuse each other of exactly the same faults: withholding information, not listening, making false assumptions, and failing to understand their perspective.

My conclusion is that if each party sees the other as the problem, then the problem must belong to both. It is probable that we service providers bear responsibility for some of our customers' expectations. We may have done things, or failed to do things, that led our customers to have the expectations they have. And what about all those situations in which expectations on both sides have been perfectly reasonable, but different—only we didn't realize it until it was too late, because we mistakenly believed we understood each other, were talking the same language, and were striving for the same goals?

Despite all the factors that make customer/provider relationships difficult, such interactions should be win-win relationships, and can be if expectations are clarified early on. It is my hope that this book will help you gain a better understanding of the role expectations play in your relationships with those you serve, support, or interact with in the course of your work.

I hope it meets your expectations.

*November 1993* N.K.
*Randolph, Massachusetts*

*This page intentionally left blank*

# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Introduction: The Expectations Challenge

Managing expectations in today's turbulent business world is indeed a challenge, and it's not hard to understand why: Expectations affect a range of interactions with customers, including service responsiveness, service capability, product functionality, and project success. These types of expectations vary from one person to another, one situation to another, and one day to another.

Expectations are influenced by so many factors, such as lifelong beliefs, past experience, common sense, wishful thinking, false assumptions, external pressures, the wisdom of those we trust, and the slickness of those who mislead us. Expectations are further influenced by departmental and organizational priorities, management styles, and modes of operation. Expectations are likely to vary greatly across organizational and functional boundaries; the greater the number of business units involved in any given effort, the more expectations we must wrestle with at any one time. Furthermore, organizational cutbacks, competitive pressures, and technological change create even more expectations.

Given all these factors, the amazing thing about managing expectations is not how poorly we do, but how well.

## THE EXPECTATIONS-MANAGING FRAMEWORK

In my work with organizations, I have been struck by the extent to which many problems revolve around three issues: communication (how to communicate with customers to create appropriate expectations); information gathering (how to determine customers' needs and evaluate solutions); and policies and practices (how to establish formal policies and sound practices to provide an infrastructure for managing expectations). Most problems in managing expectations can be eliminated or reduced with attention to these three issues. This book devotes a section to each of these issues, and each section contains four chapters that present related guidelines. The sections are described below.

**Communication.** The starting point for managing expectations is to become more conscientious about what you communicate and how. In both verbal and written communication, you may inadvertently contradict the messages you intend to communicate, without knowing you've done so. Problems in supporting customers crop up that don't make sense relative to what you think you communicated.

Guidelines 1 through 4 help you guard against conflicting messages, use jargon with care, identify communication preferences, and listen persuasively.

**Information Gathering.** The importance of information-gathering skills in managing expectations is simply stated: You can't meet customers' expectations if you don't know what they want. Yet, finding out is rarely straightforward; you can't just ask them and then assume they've told you what you need to know. In fact, it's safest to assume they haven't, because what they say they need may differ from what they actually need. And you must make very certain that your expectations are as reasonable and realistic as you want theirs to be.

Guidelines 5 through 8 describe how you can help customers describe their needs, become an information-gathering skeptic, understand your customers' context, and try the solution on for size.

**Policies and Practices.** Communication and information-gathering know-how will help you manage expectations on a case-by-case basis. However, in an organizational setting, something more is needed: an infrastructure that facilitates managing expectations consistently and over the long term. This third section concerns the policies and practices that clarify customer perceptions of your services, establish service standards, create reasonable boundaries on your workload, and most important of all, build strong relationships with customers. These policies and practices will help you and your customers create a shared understanding of what you can each expect from the other.

Guidelines 9 through 12 enable you to clarify customer perceptions, set uncertainty-managing service standards, say whoa (when appropriate), and build win-win relationships.

## INVOLVING CUSTOMERS

Since a shared understanding is so central to the successful management of expectations, it makes sense that the very process of addressing this subject is something that can be shared. Therefore, as you begin to give it your attention, it is worthwhile to inform your customers that expectations management is a subject you are now paying more attention to, and to discuss how you and they can jointly improve your ability to work together. In fact, just raising and discussing the subject with your customers can improve your ability to meet each other's expectations.

For example, I've seen exciting results in systems-sponsored discussions on expectations-related issues. Two important aspects of the relationship with customers emerge in these discussions: first, the extent to which service providers and their customers already share similar views; and second, the extent to which service providers misjudge what is important to their customers.

Two such discussions stand out. In one, a specially scheduled session on success and risk factors in computing, systems personnel had expected their customers to dispute the necessity of following standards. They were surprised to discover the similarity between their own views and their customers'—not only about the factors that cause computer projects to fail, but also the standards that would improve the odds of success. Discovering the extent of their shared views was a major eye-opener for information systems staff that led to more open dialogue with their customers thereafter.

In another company, systems staff were surprised by how strongly their customers wanted not instantaneous service, as was expected, but simply to be kept informed on a timely basis.

For many participants, specially arranged forums of this kind provide the first opportunity they've ever had to discuss their concerns in a non-project-specific setting. And when differences in perspective arise—as they invariably do—participants have an opportunity to air these perspectives and exchange their views.

When systems professionals and their customers compare their views, they find a common ground that neither knew existed. In organizations that least expected it, I have even heard customers defend the reasoning of the systems organization to their own peers.

## FORMULATING AN ACTION PLAN

You can make considerable headway in managing expectations by taking action on the twelve guidelines in this book, one by one, a little at a time, with one group of customers or another. Moreover, these guidelines provide a foundation on which to formulate a comprehensive expectations-managing action plan. Such a plan can help you systematically manage expectations—not just for the next customer, the next week, the next project, or the next interaction, but consistently and over the long term.

The concluding chapter of this book will help you translate your ideas into immediate action. One element of this plan entails something you may never have considered before: appointing someone to take primary responsibility for managing expectations. An expectations manager, in other words. More than a customer service representative, this person would implement the plan for your department or division and oversee efforts from an expectations-managing perspective. The concluding chapter describes the role and responsibilities of an expectations manager, and helps you assess whether such a role would be of value to your organization.

## GETTING STARTED

To be able to quickly recognize useful strategies and techniques as you review the twelve guidelines in this book, start by identifying some specific expectations-related problems you'd like to resolve. The following three steps can help you pinpoint problems or situations you'd like to keep in mind as you read.

**Step 1.** Think about your current service strategies. In particular, consider these questions:

- How would you describe the overall level of customer satisfaction with your services?
- In your own view, are you delivering services effectively? As measured how?
- What are the biggest obstacles you face in successfully meeting customers' needs?
- What actions have you taken to eliminate these obstacles?
- What services would you like to change, and in what ways?
- How well do you believe you understand your customers' expectations?
- In what ways do you typically communicate with customers?

Evaluate your responses in terms of what they suggest about your service strategies, and make a mental note of the problems and concerns that came to mind as you responded. If possible, compare your coworkers' responses with yours. Major differences in responses among members of the same group may point to some problems in managing each other's expectations.

**Step 2.** Perform an expectations analysis. First, list some of the ways in which you're doing a good job in managing expectations. Second, list some of the ways in which you're doing a not-quite-so-good job. The second list often proves to be longer than the first, but be sure to give yourself credit for the things you're doing well. The very process of identifying what's working and what's not provides a context, as you read this book, for identifying opportunities for improvement.

**Step 3.** Target one or two key problems. Based on your assessment of your current service strategies, and the results of your expectations analysis, identify the key problems that you'd like to address. You may have many more than two such problems, but each one that you solve will ease the way for those that follow, so there's no need to try to solve all of them at one time. Chances are, you haven't previously analyzed problems in terms of expectations, so even if you select problems you've worked on before, you can now look at them from a new perspective.

## TAKING THE CHALLENGE

In this age of corporate reorganization, and at a time when technology is becoming more complex even as it's becoming more useful, some people find it hard to believe that tackling an issue like expectations can make a difference. Yet it's precisely because of this organizational turbulence and technological complexity that it *can* make a difference, because managing expectations is a people issue—not an issue of products, tools, or methodologies. Given the current rate of change, focusing on people may be more important now than ever.

The challenge is yours to make expectations something you and your customers think about, discuss, and work together to resolve. Becoming better at managing expectations doesn't require an advanced degree, a multi-volume methodology, or a newfangled technology. It also doesn't require support from the top, a bottomless budget, or all the time in the world.

It's something you can do, starting immediately.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# 3

# Identify Communication Preferences

## *One method does not serve all*

You can communicate goals, objectives, tasks, procedures, constraints, interdependencies, timetables, priorities, responsibilities, and accountabilities—and still not meet your customers' expectations. You can deliver a solution that perfectly addresses your customers' needs, and still not meet their expectations. Why? Because for some customers, *how* you communicate is more important than *what* you communicate. Such customers are concerned with *process,* that is, with how well your communication style respects and accommodates their communication preferences. For such customers, meeting their process expectations is even more important than meeting their project expectations.

What makes communication preferences especially difficult is that they vary not only from one customer to another, but also from one circumstance to another. A customer who wants a lot of information at one time may want very little at another. To complicate matters further, customers rarely tell you their communication preferences, making it your job to investigate. This guideline provides examples of different communication preferences, and describes some techniques for identifying and working with your customers' preferences.

## COMMUNICATING STATUS INFORMATION

It took a major confrontation for me to appreciate the importance of communication preferences. It happened when I was an IS manager, and one of my responsibilities involved developing a complicated system for a division widely reputed as being hard to work with. The division manager was Charlie, who was demanding, unyielding, and resistant to views other than his own. "We've been burned by IS," he told us repeatedly, and it was clear he expected it to happen again. My staff and I were determined to prove him wrong.

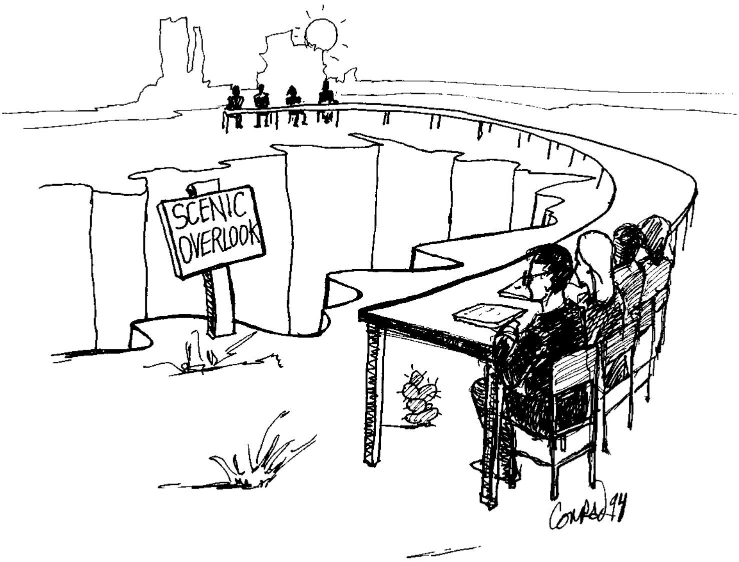
The project would have been challenging even under friendlier circumstances: The scope of the system was vast and the logic intricate; the deadline was externally mandated and nonnegotiable. The four years of monthly files needed to initialize the system resided in dozens of departmental files—and departmental staff had named these files after cities, cars, and baseball teams! Documentation for these files consisted largely of handwritten notes. On top of all this, Charlie and his division hated us simply because we were IS. It was any manager's worst nightmare.

Despite obstacle after obstacle, however, my development team was on time and on target. I thought Charlie would be thrilled. He wasn't. I gave him weekly status reports describing our consistent progress. I assured him work was proceeding smoothly, and we were meeting our milestones. He rejected the reports and insinuated I was lying. He reminded me again that he'd been burned by IS.

Convinced that we weren't getting the job done, Charlie sent a steady stream of complaints about us to Nathan, his vice president. I notified Victor, my own vice president, about the situation. Initially, the vice presidents kept their distance, hoping we'd work things out on our own, but when the situation intensified, they decided to intervene. What we would all do, they decided, would be to spend an evening together to try to resolve our differences.[1]

The evening began with dinner. We sat on one side of the table and talked among ourselves. They sat on the opposite side and did the same. Fake smiles passed back and forth. Charlie talked baseball, revealing the names of several files in the process. We were civil to each other, but no one was fooling anyone.

After dinner, we regrouped in the executive conference room, where a table was set up in a large U shape. A fifteen-foot gap separated one side of the U from the other, and our customers, in unison, marched to one leg of the U and sat down. We did the same on the opposite side. And there we sat, staring across a canyon at each other.



## Nathan's Preference

Our customers took the offensive, and with Nathan leading the attack, hurled complaints and accusations at us. Victor did his best to defend us, but these folks were angry. Logical responses such as "But we *are* on time" weren't going to work. Then, in one of those moments I'll remember forever, Nathan scowled at me, and, with the full weight of his voice on each word, said, *"I . . . think . . . you're . . . incompetent."* I can hear it to this day.

Well, I'm not perfect, and I know it, but I prize competence above almost all else, and one thing I know positively is that

I'm not incompetent. We were getting the job done—but if this is how Nathan perceived things, then this, for him, was the truth.

Finally, Victor looked at Nathan and asked the question that changed the course of the evening: "What do you want?"

One long moment later, Nathan said, "I want a picture. All I want is a picture." It seemed unbelievable, but it was true. He wanted a graphical representation of our status reports.

## Building a Skyscraper

Although Nathan's request initially seemed strange, it made sense. The building of a complex system, unlike the building of a skyscraper, is an intangible process. You can't pass by once a day, gaze at the construction, and watch it progress from a hole in the ground to a sixty-story edifice. When you develop a system, it may be a million lines of code, but it's still invisible. And things that are both invisible and technical are, to those who don't understand them, mysterious, elusive, threatening, and not to be trusted—and so, too, are the people who develop those invisible, technical things.

Up to that point, we'd given our customers both verbal and written status reports. We'd met each milestone in our project plan, but Nathan couldn't see the system, and neither could Charlie.

This was back when mammoth mainframes ruled the earth, and PC graphics were a thing of the future. Nevertheless, now knowing what Nathan wanted, we began to prepare status reports consisting of graphs, diagrams, and charts, with a paragraph describing each one. We presented a visual report to Nathan every two weeks. And he was, if not always happy, at least less distrustful. He still made me the occasional object of his target practice, but it was never with quite as much venom.

This single event did not turn a troublesome project into a team picnic, but it did help me realize that, to manage customers' expectations, you must do more than focus just on project deliverables, even when you're on time, under budget, and all is well with the world. You must also consider how you work with customers.

The idea of a visual representation may seem obvious now that you can produce the graph of your choice in minutes. Back then, though, chart-making was slow, plodding manual labor, and not a customary component of any reporting process. The fact that it could make a genuine difference in managing Nathan's expectations never occurred to me. This is not to say that the format of a status report is more important than its content; a visual report describing schedule slippages would not have spared us Nathan's wrath. However, neither did a non-visual report of our on-time status. Since a visual representation of our status was important to Nathan, that made it important to the success of this project.

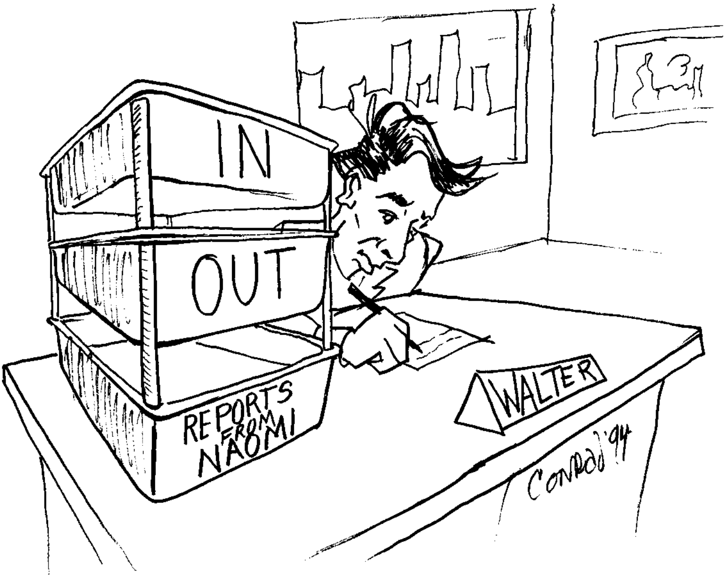
## COMMUNICATING IDEAS

With Nathan, the issue revolved around how we communicated status information. Different people may have other preferences that can determine their receptiveness to the information you send them.

These preferences often vary significantly from one person to another, as I learned from three of my IS superiors: Mike, Walter, and Bob. Mike, my director, liked paper, especially paper filled with charts. He thrived on spreadsheets, and giving him lots of paper filled with lots of spreadsheets improved the odds of getting his attention.

At another point in time, I worked for Walter, a division manager who like Mike was paper-happy. However, Walter was fond of words, not charts. He issued memos galore, and his incessant paperwork drove his employees crazy. With every reorganization, department managers held their breath, fearing they'd end up working for him.

By the time I came to work for him, I saw I'd have a better chance of succeeding with him if I accepted his communication preferences, and responded accordingly. One way I did this was by periodically preparing wordy reports for him. This strategy led him to feel that I understood him, and it caused him to go to bat for me more than for the other managers in his division. They could have accomplished the same just by sending him an occasional memo, but they failed to understand that I was successful in working with Walter, not despite his idiosyncrasies, but because of them.



The communication preferences of Bob, an assistant vice president who was Mike's superior, differed significantly from both Mike's and Walter's. Bob was a man of few words. He made decisions quickly and didn't want anything in writing. Gaining his attention meant talking, and doing so concisely. Managers accustomed to Mike's style, and oblivious to individual differences, mistakenly plied Bob with paperwork and excessive detail; when he ignored them, they failed to understand why peers who did no more than chat with Bob occasionally were more successful in getting his approval for their recommendations.

Be warned, however, not to become too accustomed to a communication style that works. One senior vice president, Dave, told me about an experience that almost ended his tenure as a senior VP. It was tough getting time to pitch ideas to his CEO, but they'd occasionally run into each other in the elevator. So Dave learned to package his ideas into snippets of thirty seconds. Then, whenever he saw the CEO in the elevator, he was prepared to take advantage of the opportunity. During the brief time in transit, Dave completed his proposal, and the CEO ruled on it.

When the CEO retired, Dave continued to treat his successor in the same way, and nearly got fired. Why? Because the new CEO didn't understand what was going on. Who was this fast talker, and why did he always expect an instant answer? Dave, for his part, was mystified as to why he no longer got a quick decision on his proposals. Fortunately, he realized just in time that the problem wasn't with his ideas, but his method of communicating them. This new CEO, unlike the previous one, needed to feel he had enough information before he made a decision. He wanted to discuss the issues, weigh the alternatives, and consider the tradeoffs—and he wanted to do it sitting down and face-to-face, not standing and on the run.

## ACCOMMODATING DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES

It is not unusual for service personnel to view their customers as if they are a single homogeneous group, with identical styles, attitudes, and modes of operation. The fact is, though, that customers are usually as different from each other as they are from the people who serve and support them.

Think about the various departments in your organization: marketing, engineering, finance, human resources, and so on. Although striving toward common goals, each has its own priorities, pressures, time frames, and objectives. So, too, do the work groups within each department. Departments also vary in such things as the emphasis they place on speed, accuracy, cost, and flexibility. Furthermore, individuals within a single work group often exhibit major differences in such things as their attitude toward change, their ability to see the big picture, and their attention to detail.

Here's a list of five steps you can take toward discerning and accommodating your customers' preferences:

**1. Be cognizant of your customers' communication styles.** How would you characterize the departments you work with?

Consider such things as their pace of activity, receptiveness to new ideas, style of decision-making, adherence to protocol, preference for individual versus team efforts, and level of risk-taking.

**2. Think about how you can modify your communication style to mesh with your customers'.** For example, if you're working with a department that likes to take risks and learn by doing, it may not be wise to encourage too much analysis. Or, if a particular department's style is to be slow, plodding, and methodical, members of the department will be more likely to view you favorably if you accept their approach, and even encourage it, than if you rush them. By your standards, it may not feel like you're rushing them, but it's their perception that counts. Or, if a department makes decisions by consensus, you may need to communicate with several members of the department in order to sell your ideas or gain buy-in. By contrast, if they make decisions by fiat, you need to know who the chief decision-makers are, and adapt your approach accordingly.

**3. Spend time with your coworkers analyzing differences between your customer areas.** Identify the key characteristics of each, and think about how you can adapt your style to accommodate theirs. The better you can mirror the dynamics of your customers, the more comfortable they are likely to be with you.

**4. Don't wait until customers complain to consider their preferences.** Ask your customers to verify your own observations and analyses. Ask questions rather than take anything for granted. Build into your project methodology a way to determine communication preferences. Ask customers, for example, if they'd like status reports to focus on general information or details. Find out whether they want to be advised of every deviation from the project plan, or just those that exceed some prespecified limit. Inquire whether they want to be notified by telephone, electronic mail, paper document, fax, or in person. If you're preparing proposals or reports, ask customers whether they like quantitative or qualitative information, and whether they prefer charts, narrative description, or thirty-second briefs. Ask how they would characterize their department's communication style and preferences, and the style and preferences of particular individuals with whom you'll be working. Or offer your preferred approach, but give your customers a chance to suggest alternatives.

5. **Remember that communication preferences may change over time and over the course of a project.** For example, multi-color charts may suffice early in a project, but later on, a narrative approach may be preferable. Or, you may have customers who prefer to take their time making decisions, but then will want quick action once that decision has been made. Review your customer's preferences throughout the life of a project, periodically asking if they're comfortable with the way you're working together.

Many customers have never been offered choices on such matters, and some customers won't particularly care what approach you use so long as you produce results. But everyone cares, at least, about being asked. The fact that you show an interest in their preferences may impress them and increase the odds of your success in communicating with them, working with them, and meeting their expectations.

## GAINING CONSENSUS AND ACHIEVING BUY-IN

Few process issues are as crucial to whether customers perceive that you have met their expectations as buy-in: If they judge that their views have been taken into account, they are more likely to feel that you have met their expectations. For many people, having an opportunity to express their views is sufficient for them to feel they have a stake in the outcome.

In organizations, generating buy-in may require meeting with the various parties to an effort and giving each an opportunity to present his or her views. Time-consuming though it may be, soliciting these views is too important an activity to bypass. However, as the number of participants and the number of customer areas involved in an effort increases, it becomes increasingly difficult to generate consensus from their different and perhaps strongly held views. If a consensus is either necessary or desirable in making key decisions, then you face a challenge, because almost any decision is likely to win the support of some participants, and to be resisted and resented by others. In such circumstances, special methods are required.

## A Technique for Building Consensus

One such method for gaining consensus is the Delphi process, a technique that can be especially effective when a decision must be reached on an issue that involves numerous different viewpoints. The process entails polling a group of individuals on an issue, having them privately prepare their responses, documenting the responses without listing names, and redistributing all of them to each individual. Participants are then polled again, and the process is repeated until the group has reached a strong consensus. Interestingly, achieving this consensus often takes no more than one or two iterations. This process allows participants to reassess their opinions in light of the views of others, and to change their opinion privately, without being pressured to do so, or embarrassed by doing so.

For example, a project manager named Sarah used a Delphi process to select the product that would best meet her organization's needs. She sensed that if she made the decision unilaterally, her customers would reject or resist her decision. After only two iterations, the group Sarah polled reached agreement about the product they wanted. It was the one Sarah would have selected herself, but now these representatives from throughout the organization "owned" the decision and felt a stake in the success of the product.

I asked Sarah whether she thought the product-selection team members would have reached agreement as quickly through discussion, and whether they would have reached a unanimous decision if they had communicated their views publicly. "Unlikely," she said, "because public discussions become too political. What made the difference was that participants were able to review other participants' responses. As a result, everyone was more receptive to compromise."

This type of consensus-building process has numerous benefits: It allows participants to communicate their opinions freely, and to change their views without losing face. It prevents embarrassment to those who know less than others, and gives those who might withhold their views a chance to participate. Most importantly, it enables people to make decisions objectively, without concern for political considerations. As a result, it brings closure to decisions that otherwise might be unsatisfactorily resolved.

## LEARNING FROM PREFERENCES

The very process of communicating about preferences is one of the most important techniques you can use to manage expectations. Of course, finding out what customers expect of you doesn't mean you can necessarily meet those expectations. And clarifying what you expect of customers doesn't mean they'll comply. But by raising the issue and identifying differences in expectations, you are in a much better position to resolve problematic differences before they loom large.

After listening to me spout at length on this subject, my husband, Howard, is trying to learn how to generate my buy-in for his decisions. As the cook in the family, he recently asked me what time I expected dinner:

Me: I expect dinner at seven o'clock.

Him: Sorry, it won't be ready until seven-thirty.

Me: Well, if you already knew that, why did you bother asking?

Him: Because now you feel like you had a say in the decision before I go and do it my way.

He hasn't quite got the idea yet, but we're working on it.

## NOTES

[1] What these vice presidents hoped to accomplish in our evening together was a greater sense of teamwork between our two organizations. DeMarco and Lister refer to the process of team formation as "jelling," and point out that when a team does come together, it's worth the cost, because the work is fun, and the people are energized. [See Tom DeMarco and Timothy Lister, *Peopleware* (New York: Dorset House Publishing, 1987), p. 156.] In this case, team formation earlier in the effort might have made a major difference in our subsequent ability to work together and to understand each other's expectations.

# Index

Acceptance testing teams, 137-38, 182
Action plan, 4, 190, 191-204
Albrecht, Karl, 205
Assumptions, *xxi*, 1, 79-81, 194, 197
Axtell, Roger E., 61
Barker, Joel Arthur, 140, 205
Billing system, 93-97, 113
Bob, assistant vice president, 42
BOC naming lesson, 32-35
Brainstorming, 96, 164, 191
Brightman, Harvey J., 81, 88, 205
Brooks, Frederick P., Jr., 71, 76, 156, 157, 174, 205
Burned by IS, 39
Business factors, 90, 94
Buy-in, 45, 46, 48
Canyon conference table, 40
Categories:
  of descriptions, 69-70
  of questions, 90-92
Chair lift, 143-44, 154, 156
Champy, James, 103, 206
Charlie, customer division manager, 39-41, 72-73, 184-86
Checkpoint assessments, 139, 178
Cialdini, Robert B., 140-41, 206
Clarification:
  of customer perceptions, 121-41
  seeming unprepared and, 81
Clutch pedal, 83-84
Colleen, customer, 182
Columbo, 78, 87, 98
Common sense, 1, 190
Communication, 2, 9, 20, 28, 193-94
  *see also* Focal points
  preferences, 38-46, 196
  written, 9, 19-20, 30, 41, 196
Competitors, 12, 138, 177
Complaints, 16, 138-39, 170, 186
Concrete questions, 81
Consensus, 45, 46-47, 85, 106

- self-sufficiency, 134, 168
- Consider All Factors (CAF), 90-92, 108
- Covey, Stephen R., 174, 189, 204, 206
- Cross-functional exchanges, 179-81, 188, 189
- Culture:
  - corporate, 26, 149
  - differences, 60
- Customer calls, 18-19, 182
  - analysis, 125-26
  - response authority, 170-71
  - silly, 35-36
- Customer feedback:
  - on benefits of implementation, 146
  - complaints, 16, 138-39, 170, 186
  - customer-led interviews, 130-31
  - defensiveness and, 132
  - direct, 127
  - formal mechanisms for, 35
  - group meetings, 131
  - illustration of survey responses, 37
  - information-gathering meetings, 100
  - from multiple sources, 82
  - objectivity towards, 130
  - review of service information, 32, 134
  - solution reviews, 108
  - standard-setting and, 147, 148
  - team interviews, 130
- Customer involvement, 136-37, 202-203
  - acceptance testing teams, 137-38, 182
  - in generating questions, 87, 96
  - in standard-setting process, 149
  - in visits to other sites, 115
- Customer as liar, 83-84
- Customer perceptions: *see* Perception
- Customer requirements, 66, 107, 194
  - as subject of review, 108
- Customer satisfaction:
  - complaints and, 138-39, 170, 186
  - department-specific meetings and, 179
  - difficulty of voicing, 132
  - dissatisfaction, 14, 58, 131-32, 136, 142
  - diversity of perceptions, 131
  - face-to-face subtleties, 17
  - lessened by responsiveness, 159
  - listening and, 51, 196-97
  - perception vs. performance, 123
  - service philosophy and, 144
  - stress of not knowing what to expect and, 142
  - survey, 16, 36, 127-29, 179
- Customers' context, 89, 93, 96, 98, 99, 197
- Dave, senior vice president, 43-44
- de Bono, Edward, 90, 92, 103, 108-109, 206
- Defensiveness, 84, 85-86, 132
- Delphi process, 47-48
- DeMarco, Tom, 49, 103, 206
- Demonstrations, 107, 115
- Descriptions of needs, 65ff., 196-97

Doctor, "unremarkable," 23, 57
Error acknowledgment, 156, 181-82
Expectations:
  analysis, 6, 192
  art of managing, *xix*
  based on normal delivery, 13-14
  challenge, 1-7, 190
  customer perceptions and, 121, 125
  historical, *xviii*
  from management, 82
  -management success, 203
  -managing framework, 2-3, 193-95
  as a people issue, 6
  post-project review questions of, 117
  range of interactions, 1
  responsiveness and, 159
  service guide and, 134
  statements of, 58
  terminology-related misinterpretation, 36-37
  unintended, 11, 13
Expectations manager, 4-5, 139, 190, 199-202
Express lane failure, 113-14
Familiar language, 27-36
  BOC mislabel, 32-35
  definition of month, 28-30
  Problem Report, 33
  silly calls, 35-36
Fault-finding, 108, 109, 200
Feedback: *see* Customer feedback
Fink, Steven, 206
Focal points, 66-75, 77, 197
  Charlie's misinterpretation, 72-73
  lost luggage chart, 67-70, 107
  planning efforts and, 72
  prototypes as, 70-71
  service agreement negotiations and, 72, 157
  service levels as, 154
  service requests as, 71
  specifications as, 106
Framework, expectations-managing, 2-3, 193-95
Freedman, Daniel P., 206
Gause, Donald C., 75, 88, 89, 96, 103, 206
Gilovich, Thomas, 140, 206
Group meetings, 131
Hammer, Michael, 103, 206
Happy-go-lucky manager, 168-69
Help desk, 33-34, 103
Hit-by-a-Bus test, 164
Howard, *v*
  chair lift repair and, 143-44
  clutch pedal and, 83-84
  dinner buy-in and, 48
  listening and, 53-54
  parasailing and, 20
  sauna and, 122-23, 140
Impact factors, 91, 94
Incompetence, 40-41, 186
Information gathering, 2, 63, 77ff., 193, 194
  educating customers, 93, 166
  focus on person, 84-85, 97-102
  focus on process, 84-85
  interview, 81-82, 85, 129-32
  multiple sources and, 81-82, 96
  objectivity of least familiar, 96, 108
  questions, 78, 80, 81, 82, 84-87, 90, 92, 129, 197

  session, 30, 85, 87, 88, 100, 102
  skeptic, 77, 80, 84, 87, 97, 194, 197
  talk-inducing topics, 99-102
Interviews, 37, 129-32
Jargon, *xx*, 23-37, 196
  *see also* Familiar language; Speaking
  technical terminology, 24, 26-27
Jim, Mr. Customer Service Personified, 171
Karten, Naomi, 88, 206
Kuhn, Thomas S., 140
Language: *see* Familiar language; Shared language
Listening, *xxi*, 50-61, 196-97
  role-play exercise, 52-53
Lister, Timothy, 49, 103, 206
Luggage photos, 67-70, 107
Martel, Myles, 207
Messages, conflicting, 11-22, 195-96
Mike, IS director, 42, 65-66, 161
Nathan, vice president, 39-42, 73, 186
No, saying, 158, 161-62, 170, 173-74
  Mike's Absolutely, Positively, 161
Norman, Donald A., 75-76, 207
Not-so-goods, 109, 110
Olympic racer, 104-105
On-the-fly techniques, 201-202
Pam, software specialist, 183
Perception, 121-41, 198
  complaints and, 138
  group meetings and, 131
  of listening, 50-51
  management team and, 130
  performance and, 123
  promotional material and, 126
  questions about, 124-25
  service guide and, 134, 135
  of services, 51, 119, 124, 125-26, 194, 195
Performance: *see* Service
Perspective, *xxi*, 3, 6, 27, 82, 86, 139, 165, 180-81, 182, 202-203
  categories of questions and, 92
  customer knowledgeability and, 26
  expectations manager and, 200-201
  plus/minus exercise and, 109-10
  solution and, 100, 106, 109
  of success criteria, 102
  of what takes too long, 101
Planning session, 191-93, 199
Plus/minus exercise, 108-10
Policies and practices, 2, 119, 158, 165, 194-95
Policy manuals, 15, 19, 31, 32, 200
Politics, 47-48, 73, 162, 185
Post-project reviews, 116-17
Preferences, communication, 38-46
Priorities:
  changing, 69, 100, 151, 163
  company-standard products and, 162
  information-gathering meetings and, 100
  revealed through demonstrations, 107
  set as incentive, 152-53
  set in service guide, 132, 134

  - wrong time to ask about, 103
- Problem:
  - desirable aspects, 95-96
  - predictability and, 203
  - -solving methodology, 96
- Process expectations, 38
- Product selection, 47-48
- Project methodologies:
  - customer preferences and, 45-46
  - definition-checking, 29
- Prototypes, 70-71, 106
- Relationship-building, 175-89, 198
  - colleagues and, 187-89
  - competition and, 177
  - customer-focused questions and, 102, 178
  - customer/IS and technology, 26-27
  - interview participation, 131
  - listening and, 50, 182
  - managing expectations and, 176
  - negative relationships and, 125, 183-85, 188
  - plus/minus exercise, 110
  - pitfalls of, 186-87
  - regular meetings, 102-103
  - reorganizations and, 177
  - responsibility for your mistakes and, 156, 181
  - techniques, 178-86
  - win-win relationship and, *xxi,* 135, 175-77, 195, 198
- Reputation, 150, 177-78, 188
- Requirements: *see* Customer requirements
- Responsibility, 116, 146, 156, 159, 162, 163, 165, 172, 181, 199-203
  - comparing perceptions and, 123
  - expectations manager and, 200-203
  - identifying success criteria and, 102
  - non-supported applications and, 14-15
- Responsiveness, 12, 36, 151, 154, 156, 158, 171
  - as contributor to poor service, 159
  - decreased, 159
  - expectations and, 159
- Risk factors, 3, 91-92, 94
  - service standard, 150, 151
  - solution, 101, 116
- Sarah, project manager, 47
- Sauna, 122-23, 140
- Scripts for responses, 162, 173-74
- Self-sufficiency:
  - alternative support and, 168
  - decreased service and, 15, 135, 163
  - definitions of, 134
  - improved, 92
  - premature, 34
- Senge, Peter M., 189, 207
- Service:
  - advance notice of changes, 135-36
  - agreement, 148, 149
  - alternatives, 133, 135, 163, 166, 167-68
  - annual report of, 133-34
  - effectiveness, 191
  - high-quality, 158-59
  - Hit-by-a-Bus test, 164
  - incentives, 152-53, 163
  - justifications, 126-27, 165
  - level, 12, 153-54

  - measured by complaints, 16, 138-39, 170
  - orientation, *xvii*, 16, 125, 126, 159-60, 163, 171, 173
  - performance, 13-14, 153-54, 195
  - philosophy, 144
  - promised, 12-13
  - redundant effort, 166, 172-73
  - reputation, 150
  - responsiveness and, 159
  - strategies, 5, 35, 192, 198
  - targets, 151, 167
  - tracking system, 166
  - unproductive or nonessential, 171-72
  - updates, 155

Service guide, 132-35
  - ambiguous language, 31
  - annual report of services, 133-34
  - benefits statement, 133-34
  - buried policy and, 19
  - customer feedback, 32, 132
  - expectations manager and, 200
  - image enhancement and, 134
  - as marketing tool, 133, 134
  - mission statement, 132
  - other mediums vs., 132
  - perception and, 134
  - request procedures, 132
  - responsibility and, 132, 134
  - setting priorities, 132, 134, 145
  - without explanations, 31

Service request, 71-72, 77-82, 94-97, 126-27, 145, 165-67
  - approval authority, 170-71
  - classification system, 167
  - as expectations-managing form, 127
  - procedures and service guide, 132
  - rejection, 165-66, 173-74

Service standards: *see* Standards

Shared language, 70

Shared understanding, 3, 119

Ski lift ticket, 21, 22

Ski jacket, 104-106, 117-18, 175-76, 189

Solution, 104-18, 197
  - alternatives, 114-16
  - analysis, 110-13
  - benefits, 85, 115, 146
  - impact of not proceeding, 112
  - not-so-goods, 109, 110
  - pitfalls, 115
  - plus/minus exercise, 108-10
  - ramifications, 110-12
  - reviews, 108-10
  - specification and, 104-106
  - systems vs. jacket, 117-18

Spaghetti Code Olympics, 18

Speaking, 17-19
  - active talking, 60
  - eye contact while, 59-60
  - play back statements, 86-87
  - technobabble, 26-27

Specification:
  - focal point, 106
  - solution vs., 104-106
  - as subject of review, 108

Speed limit signs, 11-12, 22

Standards, 3, 4, 119, 142-57, 194-95, 198
  - ad hoc approach, 149, 156
  - for backups, 15, 145, 153
  - for bad news, 156
  - boldest-of-bold, 150

  categories of standard-setting, 146-51, 157
  conflicting messages and, 16
  exception, 151-52, 154
  explanations of, 59, 135
  misinterpretation by customers, 31, 135
  for power outages, 154
  priority sequence, 145, 152-53, 162, 166
  problem acknowledgment, 144
  problem diagnosis, 144
  product support, 145, 166
  recovery assistance, 15, 145, 153
  relationships and, 157
  for reporting implementation benefits, 146
  routine services, 145
  samples, 145
  as saying whoa, 163, 166-68
  status updates, 145, 157
  typewriter ribbons, 157
  uncertainty-managing, 142, 144
  violation, 22, 159, 163, 196
Status information, 39-46, 145
  chair lift repair and, 143-44, 154
  expectations manager and, 200
  plane delay and, 155
Stress, 18, 68-69, 142, 185-86
Success, criteria of, 102, 114, 165
  in managing expectations, 204
Summer camp, 50
Surveys, 36-37, 125, 127-29
  announcement of, 129
  due date, 128
  examples vs. ratings, 36-37, 128
  feedback, 17, 127, 128
  follow up, 16, 17, 37
  flaws, 128
  hotel satisfaction, 16
  meeting vs., 131, 179
  misinterpretation, 36
  overuse, 127
  report of results, 16-17
  response rates, 17
  signatures, 128-29
  testing of, 129
  written responses, 128
Tailor, 175-76, 189
Talkaholic, 98-99, 100
Tanya, a trainer, 78-82, 86
Technical terminology: *see* Jargon
Technological change, 1
  common technical language and, 26-27
  complex and useful, 6
  customer/IS relationship and, 26
  as meeting subject, 180
That's not it, 66, 75, 107, 154, 197
Timing factors, 91, 94
Traffic jam, 114
Training:
  advanced spreadsheet, 78
  benefits, 80, 165
  customer perception of, 123
  question category and, 92
Trust, 72, 167, 177, 178, 181
Uncertainty, 142, 154, 155
Understanding: *see* Shared understanding
Unremarkable, 23, 33, 37
Updates, 155-56, 157
Usability labs, 106

Utility company, 93-97
Vacuum cleaners, 24
van Steenis, Hein, 56, 61, 207
Victor, vice president, 39-41
von Oech, Roger, 207
Walter, IS manager, 42-43
Weekly status reports, 39
Weinberg, Gerald M., *vii*, *xvii-xviii*, 75, 88, 89, 96, 103, 204, 206, 207
Whoa, saying, 158, 161-70, 173, 198
  benefits of, 162-63
  scripts for, 173
  when appropriate, 158
Why behind the what, 59, 135, 136
Why questions, 85-86
Wilson, Ralph, 18, 22, 56, 61, 81, 88, 207
Workload, 119, 160, 161, 162, 164, 168-70, 171, 186