



Unit Purpose

This unit is designed to lessen the likelihood of certain types of risk. The types of risks are “partner distress,” dissatisfaction, and conflict. These risks may develop in a partnership if partners fail to meet one another’s key expectations because “Not fulfilling one’s partners’ expectations is tantamount to breaking a trust: It creates cynicism and sours people to the whole idea of partnerships” (The Partnership Charter, p. 178). This unit will help you discover previously unrecognized or unstated expectations of one another, weed out unrealistic expectations, and document the results. Going forward, you’ll have a method to assess whether you’re meeting one another’s articulated expectations.

Background

A common complaint of unhappy partners is that another partner hasn’t lived up to their expectations. The origin of the problem often lies in the fact that they never communicated these expectations. Most people don’t make a habit of telling others their expectations of them and even fewer tease out their hidden or unconscious expectations. Nonetheless, for business partners, it’s well worth the time and energy it takes.

Typically, our expectations of people are unconscious. We have them, and some of our behavior and emotional reactions are determined by them. For example, when we go to a doctor’s appointment, we unconsciously expect the doctor’s undivided attention. Often, we’re only aware of such expectations when they are unmet, and by then we may already feel disappointed or annoyed. With our partners, we can try to ward off such disappointment by considering our expectations, talking about them, and coming to agreements about our expectations of one another.

While completing earlier units, you undoubtedly discovered and discussed many of the expectations you have of one another related to roles, styles, values, etc. There are other expectations, though, that probably did not surface yet. For example, a partner may have expectations about their freedom to adjust their work schedule to fit religious commitments, hobbies, kids, or social activities. Another partner may be intensely private and expect their partners to limit their communication strictly to business-related matters with no after-business-hours communication except in an emergency.

The expectations that surface in this unit may be extremely personal and unrelated to business. For example, a person may believe that their future partner’s hair is too bedraggled and they should be perfectly coifed whenever they meet with clients. Or a partner believes her partner should be the first one in and last one out of the office every day. It’s seemingly petty annoyances that often become major thorns in the sides of partners.

Expectations that don’t seem personal at first blush often are. For example, a partner expects all partners to have all client communications double-checked for typos before they are sent out. Or, a partner may have a strong commitment to workplace diversity being implemented in all aspects of operations. The expectations – typo-free communications, diversity commitments – may not appear to be about the other

partners, but eventually it will be about them and what they are willing to agree to. On the surface, these ideas may not appear to be personal, but just beneath the surface, they're very personal.

Exploring expectations is a way to realize issues that many people miss until they're well into their partnership. Some of these expectations bear directly on people's day-to-day satisfaction and happiness.

Unit 8: Expectations

The preparation for your discussions about expectations is deceptively simple. It involves making lists of three types of expectations. Part A is about expectations that apply to *every* partner, more or less equally. Part B is about expectations that apply to one or more of the partners, *but not all of them*.

Five strategies will maximize the value of these exercises:

- a. Dig deep to discover expectations you maybe weren't aware of.
- b. It's okay to include general expectations (e.g., "produce quality work", "be responsive to clients"), but the more specific and measureable, the better (e.g., "bring in 3 new clients per month").
- c. Consider expectations that could be helpful to one another, or improve your relationship with that partner.
- d. Include personal expectations that could be troubling if they weren't met. Remember, being partners is personal, so practice talking about these things now!
- e. Reflect on your values and past experiences working with others. What was important to you in previous close relationships? Can you recall expectations others failed to meet?

Part A: Shared Expectations of All the Partners

- 8.A.1. What expectations do you have of *everyone* who is a partner? (These are shared expectations that apply to every partner, regardless of their specific day-to-day role or their ownership percent. If an expectation applies to only some, but not all partners, write it in Part B, not here in A.) Write as many expectations as you can think of.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 8.A.2. Some of the above expectations may be true today and in the near term, but all of the partners shouldn't be held to them indefinitely. If you think an expectation will *remain true for more than the next 3 years*, put a checkmark in front of it. (Hold down the option key, or ALT key, and press the letter "V" to insert a checkmark.)

Part B: Expectations of the Partners

8.B.1. What expectations do you have of *yourself*? (No need to include here any of the expectations in Part A that apply to every partner.) Again, write as many as you can think of.

- a.
- b.
- c.

8.B.2. Is there anything else your partners might expect of you? (That is, of you in particular, beyond what is expected of all partners, and beyond what you expect of yourself.)

- a.
- b.

8.B.3. How well have you been meeting these expectations that you think your partners have of you?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at All	Slightly	Moderately	Very Well	Extremely
<input type="text"/>				

8.B.4. Are there any expectations you have of yourself you think will still be true beyond the next 3 years? Put a checkmark in front of those. (Hold down the option key, or ALT key, and press the letter “V” to insert a checkmark.)

8.B.5. Make a complete, exhaustive lists of your expectations of your partners. (No need to include any of those already listed in Part A. Also, there’s no need to restate a partner’s role if it was duly noted in the Roles Unit. However, if you have an expectation that is an elaboration of that role, e.g., how they’ll perform their role as President, then you may want to include it here.)

➤ {PARTNER NAME}

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

➤ {PARTNER NAME}

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

➤ {PARTNER NAME}

1)

2)

3)