CLARITY = KINDNESS

PFM | What the Next Generation Wants from Leaders
A practical reminder guide for colleagues, project teams, and people leaders

The goal is not to lead every generation differently. It is to make sure every generation knows how to succeed.

WHY EXPECTATIONS FEEL DIFFERENT

Schools changed how people learned: more rubrics, collaboration, progress monitoring, feedback, and opportunities to revise. These experiences can shape what employees expect at work. They do not determine anyone's personality.

Reframe: “They need constant praise” may really mean “Tell me where I stand before it is too late.” Silence may feel like trust to one colleague and uncertainty to another.

THE THREE MOVES THAT BUILD TRUST

1. CLARITY: Set expectations before disappointment. 2. COACHING: Correct while improvement is possible. 3. CONSISTENCY: Hold the standard without moving the finish line.

BEFORE THE WORK: FIVE EXPECTATION QUESTIONS

☐ What does “done” look like?

☐ What quality standard matters most?

☐ Who owns the decision and approvals?

☐ When will we check in before the deadline?

☐ What should happen if someone gets stuck?

PFM example: “For the client briefing, bring three financing options, your recommendation, and the key risks. Send a draft Wednesday so we can review before Friday.”

CHECK UNDERSTANDING WITHOUT ASKING “DOES THAT MAKE SENSE?”

Ask: “What will you do first?” “What does success look like from your seat?” “Where do you think you might get stuck?”

DURING THE WORK: GIVE FEEDBACK THAT LANDS

NOTICE what you observed. IMPACT why it matters. EXPECTATION what changes. SUPPORT what helps. CHECK-IN when you will revisit.

Example: “The client received an outdated attachment. That creates confusion and extra work. Please verify the final file before sending. Let's use a two-step check and review the next deliverable together.”

“If nobody is correcting, nobody is coaching.”

SAME STANDARD. DIFFERENT SUPPORT.

Fair does not always mean identical. Keep quality, ethical expectations, client service, and accountability steady. Adapt the training, tools, context, check-ins, or accommodations needed to help people succeed.

HOW TO PRACTICE LEADERSHIP WITHOUT A TITLE

☐ With colleagues: make handoffs and decision ownership explicit.

☐ On project teams: agree on the definition of client-ready work.

☐ With clients: confirm deliverables, deadlines, and next steps.

☐ Working remotely: agree on response times, checkpoints, and escalation.

☐ When reviewing someone’s work: give usable correction before the final deadline.

DON’T ADD MORE MEETINGS. EMBED BETTER CONVERSATIONS.

Clarify expectations in the kickoff. Coach in the existing project check-in. Recognize a specific contribution in the team meeting. Don't rescue every task; help the other person build capability.

YOUR MONDAY MORNING CHECKLIST

☐ Rewrite one vague expectation into a measurable outcome.

☐ Give one piece of feedback while there is still time to improve.

☐ Name one unwritten rule a new colleague may not know.

☐ Ask a teammate to explain their first step and success criteria.

☐ Check whether you are raising support or quietly lowering the standard.

THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Did I define success before judging the work? Did I correct early enough to help? Would I hold someone I respect to the same standard?

“Most employees don’t hate accountability. They hate surprise accountability.”

SET THE EXPECTATION. GIVE THE CORRECTION. HOLD THE STANDARD. BUILD THE TRUST.

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