

“Expectation impacts outcome. How successful you’re convinced you’ll be, determines how well you’ll perform. Aim low and you’ll strike low. Aim high, and you’ll shoot high.”

RAISE THE BAR

By Bill Garcia, Negotiation Trainer

Raise the Bar! It’s something you’ve heard all your life.

Sometimes it’s stated differently, such as “Shoot for the Moon,” “Go for the Gold,” or any number of other expressions. But any way you say it, the meaning is the same -- set your sights high, raise expectations, aim for something no one else has ever achieved.

On first blush, doing something no one’s ever done before might sound unrealistic. But look at recent history and you’ll find famous examples of people doing just that.

Consider the U.S. Space Program. In 1960, President John F. Kennedy proposed that the US should send men to the moon and back before the end of the decade. This was something that had never been attempted – let alone achieved. In the words of Star Trek we were going “where no man had gone before.” Of course, the effort required thousands of people working together -- scientists, engineers and technicians. But it “raised the bar” for every nation on earth.

Roger Bannister

How about an individual example of “raising the bar”? How about one man who single-handedly changed competitive athletics? Who one day in 1954, “raised the bar” by convincing himself he could go beyond all expectations. His name was Roger Bannister, and on May 6th of that



Roger Bannister

year, he did something that no man or women had ever done -- he ran a mile in less than four minutes time.

In all of human history, no human being had ever done that. Not in ancient times -- not in modern times. In fact, until that moment, most people – athletes included – assumed that running a mile in less than four minutes was physically impossible. But it wasn’t.

Roger Bannister was a college athlete who’d seen his times improve year after year. He was also a medical student, who believed

- continued -

that slow and steady training would eventually enable him to break that most famous of all world records. He convinced himself of that. And at a track meet in Oxford, England, he did just that, astonishing onlookers, and the world, by finishing in a phenomenal 3 minutes 59.4 seconds.

He beat the record, because he was in excellent shape. And because the moment he started that race, he was convinced he would run it faster than anyone had before. He raised the bar.

How Raising the Bar Affected Others.

Roger Bannister was an instant champion -- a winner. But what of his fellow athletes at the time? What about their mind-set? Their attitude? Did they persist in believing that the four-minute mile was impossible to break? Did they assume Bannister was a fluke, that they could only achieve second best?

In the weeks after the race, a funny thing happened on tracks around the world. While it took centuries for the first man to break the four-minute mile, it took just a month before someone broke the record a second time. Then a third. Then a fourth.

Over the next 50 years, runner after runner set newer, faster records.

Today the four-minute mile is just the starting point for Olympic runners. To qualify for the games, they need faster track times -- in the 3-minute plus range. And

they *know* they can do it. Because one man proved it *could* be done.

Expectation Impacts Outcome

The lesson from Roger Bannister -- and all athletes who've broken the four-minute barrier -- is this: Expectation impacts outcome. Again -- *expectation* impacts outcome. What you expect influences what you get. Stated another way, you're only as good as you think you are. If you aim low, you'll strike low. If you aim high, you'll strike high. In business or in life, where you finish depends on where you start.

That's a lesson all good negotiators understand, and it influences how they begin every engagement. Whether buying or selling, they know that going in with strong expectations -- a strong opening position and a strong bottom line -- they'll be more successful. If they *expect* to succeed, they will. If they expect to succeed *big* -- they will. It's an axiom that's been proven over the years.

A Lesson Worth Learning.

The lesson for you? Raise the bar on *your* expectations. Assume you *can* do better than you've ever done before. Remember, expectation impacts outcome -- in business *and* in life.