

Expect great things of people and they will deliver

Berrin Bayraktar, IRC Turkey | Dec. 10, 2015

One of the most interesting experiments that affected me was one with school children conducted by social psychologists Rosenthal and co-worker Jacobson in 1968. In the experiment, the positive and negative effects of expectations and prejudices on children were tested. Rosenthal and Jacobson gave an intelligence test to all of the students at an elementary school near the beginning of the academic year. Then, they at random selected 20% of the students without any consideration of their test results. They reported to the teachers that these 20% of students were showing unusual potential for intellectual growth and could be identified as academic bloomers during the academic year.



Near the end of the school year, they came back and re-tested all students with the same test and the degree of change in IQ was calculated for each child. Those labelled as intelligent children, for whom the teachers expected greater intellectual growth showed significantly greater improvement in the new test than the other children who

were not singled out for the teachers' attention. This means that the change in the teachers' expectations regarding the intellectual performances of children had led to an actual change in the intellectual performance of these randomly selected children. This phenomenon, in which expectations placed upon humans lead to a better performance, is called the Pygmalion or Rosenthal effect.

Thirty-four years later, in 2002 Rosenthal continued his research with adults from different professional groups. He found out that expectations and prejudices don't just affect children in the educational settings, they have the same effects on adults in numerous settings including business environments.



While displaying expectations about employees, the difference which could be created with positive communications is worth taking into account since all human beings, children or adults – because of their nature – will produce results parallel to the value put on them.

If you are in a leadership role, your expectations will have a real impact on what you get in return:-)