DEVELOPING POWERFUL LEADERS

Flip the Triangle: Align Expectations. Elevate Performance.

Inciting Leaders

Lately, whether it's tough conversations during annual reviews or day-to-day performance challenges, one theme keeps surfacing with my clients: **setting expectations.**

Most leaders think they're doing this well. But when we dig a little deeper, we often find what I call the Traditional Leadership Triangle. **The problem? The triangle is upside down**!

Picture this:

A triangle divided into three horizontal sections:

- At the narrow **top**: Expectations
- In the middle: Feedback
- At the wide **base**: Accountability



The width of each layer reflects how most leaders invest their time and energy.

Leaders typically spend…

…just a little time on **expectations**: like onboarding, discussing values, defining cultural norms and goals or collaborating on performance standard.

… a bit more on **feedback**,

…and a lot more on managing **accountability**: chasing updates, course correction, tracking progress and task completion, correcting mistake and addressing performance gaps.

What if we flipped the triangle?

Imagine the widest part—**Expectations**—on top**.**
You invest time and energy upfront to clarify, align, and even co-create expectations. Expectations about:

- Results and goals
- Behaviors and team norms
- How we work together



When expectations are clear, **feedback becomes more focused**—it's simply a conversation about the gap (positive or negative) between what is expected, and clearly understood, and what's delivered.

And here's the kicker:
When your team knows exactly what's expected of them and receives regular, meaningful feedback, they perform better.

Which means **less time needed on accountability**.

This isn't about lowering the bar.

It's about **shifting your leadership energy upstream**, where it has the most impact.

Ask yourself:

Are you leading from the base of the triangle… or from the top?

call. 303.585.0938 | **email**. devon@incitingleaders.com
learn more. www.incitingleaders.com

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