

# How to Balance Client, Media and Colleague Expectations

I am a big fan of expectations. Defining them. Knowing them. Communicating them. Aligning them. Working to exceed them. For example, my husband and I just closed on our first home (Yay!) and decided to host my entire family for Easter weekend one week after moving in (Yikes!). To ensure the most pleasant holiday weekend possible, we:



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- a. Stocked up on our favorite foods and wines,
- b. Hid giant candy- and toy-filled Easter eggs for my nephews to hunt, and
- c. Laid out expectations for our visitors. (“Dear family, we haven’t finished unpacking, we don’t yet have an adequate number of matching dining room chairs, and there aren’t curtains or blinds in any windows just yet. We may also send you on trips to the hardware store and put you to work in the yard ... cool?”)

The weekend, while laughably disorganized, was actually perfect in every way. I loved having my entire family at our house for an unforgettable housewarming weekend and could rest easy knowing that they had a clear expectation of how the weekend would unfold. Looking back, I believe the weekend exceeded expectations of both visitors and hosts.

As professionals who focus either entirely or in some strong capacity on marketing and PR initiatives, the concept of defining, knowing, communicating, aligning and working to exceed expectations is one to embrace. Whether working with media, clients or colleagues, it’s always important to ensure that expectations are clear.

Consider the following.

**Media:** Reporters live and breathe deadlines. They expect sources to be responsive, available and primed with key points for an interview. On the flip side, those being interviewed need a clear understanding of what to expect during a phone or in-person media interview – what information does the reporter hope to gather? Is the interview on the record or off? Will the conversation result in an article, or is it just for background? Successful interviewing involves [thoughtful preparation](#) and clearly defined expectations.

[Bylined article opportunities](#) are generally straightforward, since most editors clearly spell out their expectations in the form of author guidelines that provide specifications on length, tone, style, formatting, deadline and publishing timeframe.

**Clients:** Clients expect complete transparency and also deserve to feel that you, as their counsel or PR/marketing consultant, are [working to exceed their expectations](#). When working with a client on any project or matter, make it a point to define realistic expectations clearly for outcomes. This minimizes the chance for surprises or disappointment. Your client may be expecting the galaxy, which isn’t usually attainable. In

those situations, it's our (sometimes difficult) job to help clients reframe their expectations in a way that ensures success for all parties.

Keep in mind that clients come to you for sound guidance in your area of expertise. This involves you helping them identify feasible, measurable goals, even if it means working with them to develop new objectives that will hit the mark instead of falling short of it.

**Colleagues:** Even if you don't always see eye to eye with your colleagues on best practices or project approaches, don't ever forget that you're on the same team. Setting expectations with colleagues comes down to collaboration, compromise and teamwork. It involves building one another up and working through obstacles together to ensure the end result benefits your clients.

One common denominator that applies to all the above is time: the reality of time constraints and the importance of time management. One minute = 60 seconds. No one can change that and everyone faces that reality. You can't tackle eight hours worth of work in just five hours. In the professional services and PR/marketing realms in particular, balancing deadlines can feel like a juggling act, which is another reason why expectations are so important. We all have to be realistic about deadlines and time constraints so no one is left waiting and frustrated. Set realistic timelines for all projects and make sure the timelines are communicated to all members of the team.

Benjamin Franklin once famously stated, "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed." While there is literal truth to this, it's not a truth to which we at Jaffe subscribe. Success in our realm involves setting and maintaining high expectations! Just be sure to define and communicate expectations clearly, and then do everything possible to meet and exceed them. It's our job to align recommendations and goals with work product and results.

Do you need help with defining expectations or have a story to share? Email Vivian Hood at [vhood@jaffepr.com](mailto:vhood@jaffepr.com).