

THE ROLE OF HIGH STANDARDS

Do not interpret the importance of building people up and helping them learn from mistakes as meaning that you should permit incompetent, poor, or irresponsible performance. Hand in hand with the need for positive reinforcement is the need for high standards.

Just as giving people positive reinforcement tends to increase their performance, so does the presence of challenge and high expectations. Good teachers have always known that students generally want to be challenged, and that they generally respond favorably to high expectations. Think back for a moment about the best teachers you ever had. They are probably the ones that held very stringent standards for the class. The same principle applies to effective corporate leadership.

Like a good teacher, a good leader assumes that people from all walks of life and backgrounds can perform at high levels and that, deep down, they want to. A good leader doesn't demand high performance (demanding implies that people are basically lazy and are inclined to withhold their best effort—that it must be extracted out of them, like pulling teeth).

No, a good leader offers people the opportunity to test themselves, to grow, and to do their best work. There is no shortage of people interested in doing something in which they can take pride.

But there is a vast shortage of leaders who provide the stimulation of stiff challenge and high standards, combined with the uncompromising belief that seemingly ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

Collins, Jim. BE 2.0 (Beyond Entrepreneurship 2.0): Turning Your Business into an Enduring Great Company (pp. 78-79). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.