

Hello and welcome to Mindset Monday. This is Jayme Dill and this series is all about helping you to create a success mindset and the habits and skills that go with it so that you can create the business and life that you've always wanted.

So welcome, welcome. Hello! Today we're going to be talking about something that comes up quite a bit as I work with business owners, CEOs, high achieving c-suite executives, and that is this concept of high standards. Do you recognize yourself as someone who has high standards? Well, most of the people I work with would definitely say yes to that. High standards are really important to them personally and to their business and the business's performance. There's a sense of pride and ownership of the business or their functional area, for the kind of the results that they're able to produce individually, but also that they're able to lead within their organization. So there's this sense of pride and ownership of what they're creating.

Also, they know that high standards are so important because they create a really strong value that the brand can stand behind. You can go out there and you can make promises and know that you can come back and deliver on those promises that your business consistently delivers against the promise that you make out in the marketplace.

So that gives you, as a business, generally speaking, a higher ROI, right? Your investors, whether it's you personally or the investors that are coming to your company, they like that strong brand and the value, and because that creates a better investment for them and a safer investment, generally speaking.

For employees, there is also a sense of pride among employees when they're part of something, it's like being part of the winning team that you are able to deliver as a company that you're working with a team of other people who are high performers, who are committed to this level of excellence or high performance, high standards that helps you not only retain high quality employees, but also to become more of an employer of choice. Because high performers want to work together. People want to believe in what they do. We've just seen a lot in the media recently about the importance of meaning in work. They want to be able to believe in what they do, but they also want to be able to believe in we're going to do it well. And then that all leads to a higher morale, a better culture.

So...High standards are really important.

But today I want to make a distinction that I see is really necessary with leaders, and that is the difference between high standards and impossible standards. Now, if you're like many of the clients I work with, they'll be like, huh, that's no fair. There's no such thing as an impossible standard. And I actually believe that. We've seen records being broken all the time. We see ourselves push beyond what we thought was possible, and that's a really important vision to hold as a leader so we can always continue to grow.

But there's this idea of impossible standards that I want to talk about because rather than elevating a team's performance, a company's performance, people's morale, these types of standards diminish and can really be a backbreaker for an organization's culture and morale.

And there are three things that I'm going to talk about today that really jump out to me as a coach that when I see them, they really point to this idea of impossible standards.

First one is moving targets. That's different from incremental growth that I'll talk about in a moment or a continual improvement. What I'm talking about is not having a set documented target of what the standard is, a measurable target, as much as possible, a measurable target of what exactly is the standard that we're holding ourselves to. And instead of this set standard, it always seems to shift, it seems to be whatever mood the leaders in that day or one better than what we did before. This idea of continually raising the bar. Again, I'll talk in a moment about how to do that productively, but that can really be a way of having people feel like these standards are not high standards, but they're impossible standards.

The second is having a target or a standard of perfection. So again, we want to continually grow, but a standard of 100% for most businesses in most areas is not achievable. And again, I'm not saying 99.9%, but I'm saying we are humans operating with error and mistakes that happen. So wanting everything to be perfect all the time is not a standard that's reachable. Instead of being a high standard, it becomes an impossible standard. Perfectionists out there are probably squirming right now because that's a hard thing to get your head around. And I'm going to talk again in a moment about how to continually raise standards that you can move closer and closer and closer to your target of perfection.

And then another indicator of impossible standards also in the line of the perfectionist is this idea of an after the fact critic, "you should have done this. You should have done that. We should have done better". After the performance has happened, mistakes are jumped on and people are beaten up for mistakes rather, rather than learning and growth. So you can generally tell that you are doing this if people duck and hide or if you're giving someone what you feel like is meaningful and helpful feedback, and instead they walk away feeling beaten down, or maybe they even tell you, I feel beat up after that feedback not inspired. And when it's really bad, people will lose their confidence, but also start to hide their mistakes rather than own their mistakes.

So those are three indicators or three things to watch for or to really just ask yourself, do I have high standards or do I have impossible standards?

So hold on a minute, Jayme, right? This idea of continually growing to inspire, continuing to get better, to move closer and closer to perfection, to raise the bar, where does that fit in?

There's a way that you can do all that, where you can set what are very realistic, high standards that inspire growth, creativity, higher and higher levels of performance. I just watched the Super Bowl, which is an extraordinarily rare thing for me, but I saw the winning team afterwards, a couple of the players after the win were interviewed and they were saying, "Hey, we're just getting started again, or We're just getting started here. We're going to get better next year. We're going to win again. We're going to continue to improve our game". That's the kind of having high standard can create that kind of inspired growth and fun with achieving.

So how do you do that as a leader?

Well, first is set a standard, right? And when I say that, it's like, duh, Jayme, but I mean literally write down what is the target, and you can set that beginning standard if you don't have a target already. Base it on historical performance, what have we been able to do or industry standards. Now, if you're a perfectionist or if you're a high performer, "you're going to say, that's not good enough". But I'm saying that's a baseline for you to start the growth process. So if your historical trend is say... we're trending at 10, then raise it to 11, raise it to 12. Give yourself some stretch, give yourself some growth in there, but start with some kind of grounding in historical performance. If you don't have those measurements, then use industry standards and maybe raise the bar a little bit.

Then show how that's achievable. Show people how they can win. Don't just give them a bar, but show them how to get there. Give them a path to success.

Don't hide mistakes, but show mistakes are an opportunity to grow and get better next time, right? This idea of learn and move on. And you do that either by coaching up the person if it's a personal performance mistake or improving the process if it is a process oriented mistake. So looking for ways that not only that you can look at those mistakes, but looking at them productively in a way that raises the bar for everybody.

And last two things. Acknowledge when the target is hit. Celebrate, win. Some atta boys. Acknowledge when the target is hit.

Then last, that's when you raise the bar, right? Hit the target, sustain it for a little while, celebrate, acknowledge and then raise the bar. But do that like a coach at halftime where engage them and inspire them. You show them, "Hey, we're going to get 10% better next year".

Then you do everything I just spoke about - You're going to give 'em a specific measurement. You're going to show them how it's possible. You're going to enroll them and engage them in, "how do we come together and give a little bit more to this goal that has been established? How do we together win and achieve this?"

So staying with high standards can be one of the best things for the company, for the morale, for the customers, for the investors. It's a great thing that will boost and performance.

Impossible standards will take you and your team down the, or I should say, can, take you and your team down the drain.

That's it for this week - thanks so much for joining me for this week's Mindset Monday. I look forward to seeing you next week.