

Holding Yourself Accountable

Building Culture and Skills

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1

Learning Objectives

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Identify key attributes of accountable organizations
- Discuss skillsets and capabilities of accountable professionals
- Determine steps to build an accountable mindset and culture
- Identify certain “tools” for enhancing accountability in your activities and role

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2

What does Accountability mean?

- Merriam-Webster:
 - an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions
- Others noted:
 - Responsibility towards accomplishing business or personal goals
 - Elimination of unproductive or distracting activities
 - Valuing the work or effort performed

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Why is Accountability Important

- For our discussion – let's agree that accountability does impact and influence the following:
 - More effective performance of tasks and goals
 - Better monitoring and measurement of work performance and reporting of value & objectives
 - Improved morale amongst employees & colleagues
 - Minimizing distractions, and better aligning activities with specific goals and roles/functions
 - “Accountability is about taking care of each other”

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4

Establishing Accountability

- One of the key items noted across many items of research of accountability and how to establish it:
- *Recognizing a need/issue around accountability in the workplace and being willing to acknowledge and accept flaws in our own roles or activities in that regard*

Accountability Who's Accountable?

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5

Action Items & Steps

- Ask questions and identify the “current state” for yourself:
 - *Why is it difficult to view ourselves and others as accountable, when/if we perceive that others hold us accountable?*
 - *Do we truly hold others accountable? Do we expect the same from others as ourselves?*
 - *Do we offer excuses? Do we establish goals and direction?*

Accountability No EXCUSES Blame

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6

Action Items & Steps (cont.)

- Are we committed to accountability as a culture?
- Set High and Clear Expectations (goals) for Yourself (and staff/others)
 - Make goals clear and measurable
 - Monitor/report goals and activities
 - ◊ No excuses, and be willing to hear and share feedback without negativity and blame
 - Allow for time in decision making. Decisions should have intention, should have positivity (positive vs. negative reaction/reinforcement), and should be well thought out and planned.

7

Action Items & Steps (cont.)

- Are we supporting the following items? If not, implement skills and plans to address:
 - Providing and seeking feedback and discussion on performance and activities.
 - ◊ Is feedback and communication clear and direct without blame and negativity?
 - ◊ Do we self reflect on time management, results, and our own communications?
 - Establishing clear values and objectives (missions) behind goals.
 - ◊ Are decisions and activities aligned with defined values?
 - ◊ Are guiding principles established to help direct communications and decisions?

8

Action Items & Steps (cont.)

- As important as expectations – are we also establishing clear and communicated consequences/rewards?
 - Much time is often invested in expectations – but little communication regarding consequences/rewards related to achievement or “misses” against expectations.
- Lastly – what are we doing regarding our own development and training?
 - Accountability can be learned to a degree, and there are “skills” to be developed to achieve this. Recognize and accept feedback or self-assessment, and identify training and development plans to drive accountability.

9



Skills of Accountable Professionals & Leaders

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10

Responsibility

- Before diving into skills and characteristics to focus on, let's reflect on responsibility vs. accountability....
 - While these are similar - it's important to understand the difference between accountability and responsibility. Accountability is often described as an external force. It's where you impose consequences for failing to meet obligations or offer incentives if you do meet them. Responsibility is internal. It's being able to be trusted to do what's right when you're not being watched. This is where you hold yourself accountable and reward or punish yourself as appropriate. Moving from accountable, which is an external influence guiding what to do, to being responsible, where you're internally driven for doing the right thing, will set a tone for your team. People will see they need to hold themselves accountable as well.
 - If you're able to help your people see the difference between accountability and responsibility, and encourage them to make that shift, you're going to free up time for yourself and improve the overall climate of accountability of yourself and your team.

11

Courage

- Discussion of skills and characteristics needs to start with a willingness and “courage” to push ahead and lead to drive accountability and responsibility. Are we willing to lead and be responsible and ‘own’ our actions and outcomes, despite what we may perceive around us? If not – training, focus, and implementing of various skills is likely not to be successful. Assess whether you are really able and willing (have the courage) to take those steps.



12

Skills/Characteristics

- **COMMUNICATION** – and more specifically thoughtful and active listening. (surprise????). Direct, candid, and timely.
- Willingness to Change. Being able to adapt and accept feedback without negativity and being defensive is critical.
- Positive Intent. Accountable leaders focus effectively to avoid blame. Focus on “next steps” and how to evolve going forward, rather than overemphasizing past mistakes or “pointing fingers”.
- Messages Based in Results and Metrics. Where possible, having messaging based in data/results helps avoid confusion and “judgment”.

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13

The Importance of Nonverbal Communication

Category	Percentage
of communication is body language	55%
is the tone of voice	38%
is the actual words spoken	7%

Source: Dr. Albert Mehrabian, UCLA

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14

Skills/Characteristics

- No Fear. Make sure your actions and those of others around you aren't based on fear. We must ensure that fear isn't a consideration in communication, performance, etc. The culture must focus in a manner where fear isn't a focus.
- Trust. Ask yourself if you are trusted. Do you trust others? If not – there are issues that need to be addressed, otherwise communication breakdowns, expectation gaps, negativity, etc. are likely to creep in.
- Conflict Resolution. Despite best efforts, some judgment and negative reactions will occur. Effective and accountable leaders have proven traits of effective conflict resolution and ways to drive productive communication even during disagreement.

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15

Where Do I Fit? How Do I Push Forward?

- It's important to understand your own accountabilities, both what you're accountable for and who you're accountable to. In terms of what you're responsible for, obviously your own work, but also your team's work.
- Now be careful, this doesn't mean do their work for them. It means you have to hold them accountable for delivering those results. And if they don't deliver, not only are they accountable, so are you. These shared responsibilities are key, and part of a broader consideration for how to drive a “culture of accountability”.
- So ask yourself the question, what do others expect me to do? What results are they expecting of me personally, as well as from my team?
- Further – assess what results and expectations you are asking from others? Also – think about HOW you are asking

In terms of understanding who you're accountable to and who's accountable to you, there's the obvious ones. There's your team.

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16

Summary

- Not easy. Culture may need addressed, and individuals need to feel empowered so their actions and efforts are sustainable.
- Identify obstacles to taking next steps and driving accountability and responsibility... help alleviate for yourself and others.
- Review goals and incentives/consequences. Are these tangible and communicated?
- Challenge current performance feedback and expectation setting processes.
- Self-evaluation and reflection. Have we prioritized goals and roles for ourselves?
- Do we have trust?
- Pursue training for skills development.

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17

Thank you!

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18