

FOCUSED FEATURES

CREATING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

From Webster's to Wikipedia, the definitions of most words vary only slightly. Yet, we all know that certain words have more impact and connection in their use than others. Take the word "accountability." When we use this word in a business setting, accountability is best summarized by saying "the buck stops here." To be accountable means being held answerable for accomplishing a goal or assignment, as well as, taking ownership of failed performance.



Being accountable is not intended for those who wish to blend in to their surroundings, be anonymous or point fingers in the direction of others when things don't work out as planned. In a time when it is so critical to strengthen the skills and commitment of every staff member within your company, using a word like "accountability," along with implementing a process to develop, demonstrate and measure it, will quickly bring leadership out into the open.

GIVING PERMISSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

When you implement a process of accountability with your staff, be prepared to back it up. Make sure you are providing the right tools. Training, mentoring, coaching and a method of measurement will let the staff members know they have your full support.

When you make staff members accountable for something it means that you, as the business' leader, also need to give them permission to **be** accountable. But, before you can go through that ceremonial process, the individuals you expect to be accountable need to know exactly what they will be accountable for and what you expect of them.

This may sound a lot simpler than it actually is. Many business leaders find it difficult to clearly articulate their expectations of others. Not taking time to put expectations in writing and convey them with clarity can quickly lead to misinterpretations, misunderstandings, frustration and failure.

Passing on the "authority" of accountability does not mean "abdicating" authority. You need to remain connected and part of the team in order for the process to be successful.

By letting your staff know that you have faith in them, will be available for their questions and that you are willing to listen to their ideas, they will become more eager to present solutions instead of relying on you for all the answers.

Once you have handed over the "keys" to accountability, identified what your staff members are accountable for and your expectations of them, they can apply their knowledge, skills, expertise and common sense to develop the method of achievement. It then becomes the staff member's responsibility to give credence to the process and create their own path of achievement.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

"Accountability means people can count on one another to keep performance commitments and communication agreements. Accountability can result in increased synergy, a safe climate for experimentation and change, and improved solutions because people feel supported and trusted." - Mark Samuel, Author, Speaker