



ACCOUNTABILITY

I always thought accountability was about doing what you said you would and doing it as good as or better than expected. In running my own business for close to 12 years, I have had to learn the hard way; not everyone shares my view of accountability.

Some people think they are being accountable by showing up for work everyday. Other people think they are being accountable by trying hard or meaning well, even if they do not do what is expected or needed. Even others think and behave in a way that puts the ownership of accountability on the manager. "It is their job, they didn't follow up with me and it is their fault I did not get my work done." Statistics indicate that 30% of all business failures are due to employees not doing what they said they would do and therefore resulting in loss of business, clients, reputation, etc. Additionally, frightening statistics are that 40% of all retail shrinkage is due to employee theft. With those types of statistics hanging over our heads, as well as having to face the highly competitive marketplace day in and day out; it is our job as business leaders to cause breakthroughs in accountability amongst our teams.

I have been taught there are two ways to view accountability. The old paradigm: Accountability – is doing what you are told. An employee might think, "I'll do what I'm told so I don't get in trouble; or I'll do just enough to keep from being called out."

Or, a more empowering new paradigm – 'Count-on-able' is a way of being. It is who a person chooses to be. They can have a dominant, influencer, conscientious or steady personality type and communication style, they can be low or high on mental acuity, they can be creative or rigid, they can be slightly disorganized or a real power planner...and what really matters...above all, is that they possess a powerful relationship with who they become in the workplace. People know they can count on them: consistently, reliably. When there is work to be done, that 'count-on-able' person is the one who does it.

The question is – how do we reverse the 80/20 rule? How do we cause 80% or more of the employees to practice being 'count-on-able' and cause the other 20% to get better or get out? The truth is that changing a culture doesn't happen overnight. Having employees see the difference between being 'accountable' and being 'count-on-able' takes time.



Resources for People in the People Business

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There are a few systems that I have learned and have taken on that have made a difference in my workplace. One is having action items at the end of each meeting. The employees verify what they are taking on and ask for clarification up front. It is their responsibility to take astute notes, to follow up, to ask questions, and to be count on able to complete the assignment that they have taken on, by when they have said they would. Do people fall in the hole? Yes, however, if the same person continually falls in the hole then it is time to take action, and have that employee choose to get better or choose to exit.

Below are some tips from my executive coach on ways of being 'count-on-able' that I can drill down to my employees who choose to take it on:

- You can count on me to manage the project and each detail in it, so there are no holes left open.
- You can count on me to proof and edit my work, and deliver it to you as you are the "client," not the editor.
- You can count on me to look ahead and anticipate problems, issues and head those concerns off at the pass, so you don't have to.
- You can count on me to take the responsibility or project and own it, be proud of the outcome and be fully responsible for the outcome. So you can focus on higher-level strategic issues.

So, it is definitely a paradigm shift. What I can share with you is that this paradigm shift also results in a culture shift. For me to become fully engaged in leading my talent acquisition, assessment consulting and recruiting company, thereby taking it to the next level, my employees will have to develop themselves in the realm of being count on able. I know some will and some won't.

In conclusion, to create a culture of 'count-on-ability' is a leader's job. To lead a no excuses culture, to hire right, to reward positive behavior, and not tolerate disempowering or irresponsible behavior – like it or not, for better or worse, that is the leader's job. And...that ain't easy.

Best of success in building a 'count-on-able' culture.

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