

The Road to Accountability

“Leadership is taking responsibility while others are making excuses” – John C. Maxwell.

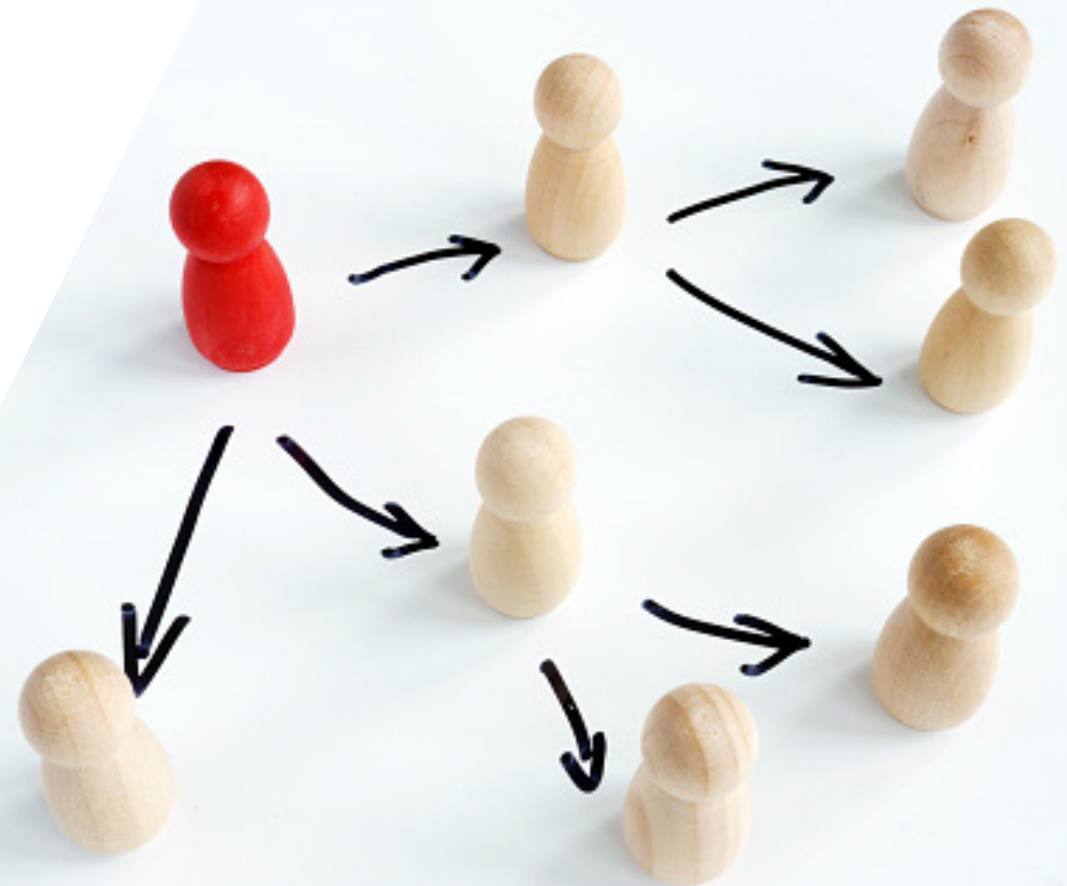


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	2
Chapter 2: What is Accountability?.....	4
Chapter 3: The Importance Of Accountability In Leadership.....	6
Chapter 4: The Five Rules Followed By Every Accountable Leader.....	10
Chapter 5: Five Ways To Demenstrate Leadership Accountability And Influence It In Others.....	14
Chapter 6: Address Conflict To Ensure Performance.....	18
Conclusion.....	21





Chapter 1: Introduction

As a race, we humans have achieved fantastic heights. We've crossed the largest of oceans, climbed the tallest mountains, and reached the highest peaks, we've even been on the moon. One would think that with such remarkable conquests, we would be able to handle simpler tasks – like taking responsibility easily. Funnily though, most of us find it impossible to take responsibility while at the same time finding it much easier to accomplish feats that were once thought impossible. Why are we afraid of accountability? Why do most of us find ownership and responsibility terrifying? Why is it so easy for us to sit back and “play the victim”?

In a workplace scenario, accountability is necessary at every level. Organizations should be accountable for every action that takes place within it and take responsibility for the same. Leaders must be able to take responsibility for those they manage. Team members must be able to take responsibility for their own work. Everyone must be held accountable and responsible for their work. In short, no organization, leader, manager, team member, or employee can escape accountability.



Image Credits: Pixabay





WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LEADERS LACK ACCOUNTABILITY

When leaders lack accountability, there is a massive impact on productivity and quality. As a result, clients' and customers' expectations are not met. When this happens:

- Companies jeopardize their current and future goals.
- Companies encounter different types of losses.
- Companies incur expenses to ensure clients' expectations are met.
- Customer service is put on the line.
- There is an impact on the relationship businesses have with their customers.
- There is a drop in engagement, and more of a blame game going around.

There is no doubt that accountability is critical to both team and organizational success. Here's a look at what accountability is in an organization, what is accountability in leadership, and how leaders, team members, and other employees can embrace accountability.





Chapter 2: What is Accountability?

In short, accountability is accepting responsibility - responsibility for decisions made, actions taken, or even assignments completed. This can be personal or public. For example, a government is accountable for laws and decisions that affect its citizens; an individual is accountable for their acts and behaviours; and organizations are accountable for their products and services.

To be accountable also means being able to admit to a mistake when you have made one.

WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE? AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Accountability is a critical requirement of a successful and influential leader in the workplace. It is the ability to take ownership to ensure all responsibilities are achieved as expected. For this to happen, the leader must have the ability to understand expectations clearly before making commitments.

Unfortunately, both leaders and organizations today lack accountability, and this crisis has reached epidemic proportions. However, that's not to say that accountability cannot be learned. When approached in the right manner, accountability can





be easily obtained and used to optimize organizational performance and accelerate corporate change efforts.

- Accountability requires a significant mental shift. Leaders must be willing to give up a “follower’s mentality” and focus their efforts on productivity and ensuring the expected results.
- Accountable leaders are a boon to companies because they have the ability to quickly identify problems and come up with suitable solutions rapidly.
- Accountable leaders are an inspiration to other leaders to exude the same traits.
- Employees are willing to follow leaders and demonstrate the same traits of accountability when these leaders show examples of such behaviour. When employees are ready to take responsibility for their work and hold themselves accountable as well, there is an increase in productivity at the workplace.





Chapter 3: The Importance Of Accountability In Leadership

Accountability is a critical element of leadership. As Thomas Paine said, “Anyone holding themselves accountable to nobody ought not to be trusted by anybody.”



Image Credits: Pixabay

Accountability builds trust.

The most important result of accountability is trust, and trust is the basis or the foundation in any relationship. Employees and team members trust leaders who are slow to blame but quick to take responsibility for their role when things don't go as planned.

Accountability improves performance

When you hold yourself accountable for all your decisions, actions, and assignments, you can drastically reduce or even eliminate the time and effort you spend on unproductive behaviour and distracting activities.

Accountability promotes ownership

As a leader, when you help your team become accountable for their own actions, you effectively teach them to value their own work.

Accountability inspires confidence

When done right, accountability with a team can increase each team members' confidence and skills.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN LEADERSHIP

Think back to a time when a small decision impacted thousands of people. The decision might have ended in major transitions within the company, decreased profits, or even in employee downsizing. At such a time, two questions commonly arise: who was responsible? And who should be held accountable?

While responsibility and accountability have very similar traits, can be used interchangeably in different situations, and can often be bucketed together, there is very significant difference between them.





1. Responsibility can be shared.

You can share the responsibilities of a project with a colleague, or you can even divide responsibilities between team members.

Accountability, on the other hand, is not shared. Accountability comes down to a single individual depending on the skill sets, roles, or strengths.



2. Responsibility is task-oriented.

Every one of your team members can be responsible for a particular task, and then all the tasks together make up a massive project.

Accountability arises after a situation has occurred. It is about responding to ownership over the consequences. True leaders hold themselves accountable for the results of every project they undertake – even when the tasks related to the project are divided among several individuals.





3. Responsibility is job oriented.

Responsibility focuses on job descriptions and defined roles and processes that are in place to achieve a common goal.

Accountability focuses on the successful completion of tasks assigned to you and being able and willing to take responsibility for everything that happens as a result of actions taken.





Chapter 4: The Five Steps Followed By Every Accountable Leader

Accountability is a trait that must be demonstrated at every single organizational level. Accountable leaders understand the importance of two-way accountability and act accordingly. But that is not the case in most organizations according to the Workplace Accountability Study:

According to the study, 85% of professionals surveyed missed clarity on the company's expected results. In comparison, 93% were unable to take accountability for the desired results, and 84% blamed their leaders' behaviours as the most critical factor influencing responsibility in their organisations.

True leaders have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibility. They set individual performance goals, have standards to measure their success, and have a desire to fulfil responsibilities. Here are the five basic rules of accountability that these leaders follow.



Image Credits: Pixabay





1. Leaders take full responsibility for their decisions

Positive results depend on the right decisions. Right decisions rely on specifics of (i) who is accountable for carrying out those decisions (ii) when they must be implemented (iii) who will be affected by them (iv) and who must be informed about them.

Effective leaders take the time to review their decisions regularly. There is a review mechanism in place to review decisions. This mechanism helps leaders to track their decisions and gives them enough time to amend any poor decision before damage is caused.

2. Leaders take responsibility for communication

Effective leaders take the time out to communicate every one of their decisions and make their action plans precisely understood. They make their message clear, and their expectations understood. If a misunderstanding arises from their message, they focus on their role in the miscommunication rather than play a blame game.

This type of leader takes ownership of negative results. They take responsibility of positive performing individuals they are surrounded by and don't tolerate nonperforming individuals.





3. Accountable leaders always think and say, “we” and not “I.”

A whopping 82% of professionals who took part in the Landmark Workplace Accountability Study failed to make others accountable at the workplace.

With no sense of trust or team-work, employees find it impossible to align themselves to their leader’s authority proactively. A leader cannot get positive results from making their employees “obey” them. But holding them accountable will.



4. Accountable leaders run productive meetings

An accountable leader understands the importance and value of time. That is very evident in the way they carry out meetings. These leaders are very aware of the importance of resources like time. They start and finish their meetings on time, and ensure each meeting is based on honest communication and aims at higher productivity, so every session ends with better results.

Every meeting is articulated around a clear purpose and followed up diligently with a summary of work assignments and deadlines.





5. Accountable leaders turn problems into constructive feedback

Over 80% of professionals who took part in the Landmark Workplace Accountability Study said that feedback in their organizations was something that was received on when things went wrong. Constructive feedback is necessary at all levels and stages. Things can always be done better, and accountability is more of a process through improvement until perfection is achieved.





Chapter 5: Five Ways To Demonstrate Leadership Accountability And Influence It In Others

Whether they realize it or not, individuals demonstrate accountability every day. They deliver on commitments and exhibit behaviours that confirm they can be relied on to achieve results. When there are clear expectations set on individuals, and they have the proper skills, knowledge, and resources to perform, they are likely to demonstrate higher levels of accountability. When their leaders demonstrate accountability, employees can see the difference between “results” and “effort” and learn how to deliver both.

Here are five ways to demonstrate leadership accountability and influence others to do the same.



1. Lead by example

When leaders demonstrate accountability through their actions, what they are doing is setting the pace for performance excellence and leadership. They show those around them – team members and employees how to be accountable for doing what they say they will do. The following leadership behaviours





can set the pace for the rest of the organization.

- Discipline: staying on track and completing tasks without getting distracted by desires or other priorities.
- Integrity: Being honest about deliverables, commitments, and timelines, and apologising when things go wrong.
- Execution: Achieving execution excellence while also mastering new skills and behaviours.



2. Develop accountable leaders

Leaders must be trained in specific skills and competencies that help them understand what it means to be accountable. The skills and competencies will also require them to exhibit behavioural skills that help demonstrate accountability.

When leadership development programs include programs on accountability, leaders at every level will learn how to deliver on their commitments and understand the importance of being trustworthy and reliable in the eyes of their subordinates.





3. Communicate and share information

Sharing information and knowledge rather than holding it to one's self is another important part of accountability. Individuals who share information and help others influence others to develop these desired behaviours and practices.

For leaders, sharing information and knowledge is also vital to communicate the necessity and importance of results – which is not the same as efforts.



4. Build individual understanding

Over-committing and under-delivering are most common in organizations.

By building an individual understand, these problems can be avoided. Individuals must be made to understand what is expected of them and the resources and support that is available to them. That will help them understand what they are going to be accountable for. Some tools that can help individual understanding are:

- Mentorship and coaching
- Multi-rater assessments
- Team meetings





5. Require Accountability

The intention must lead to actual results. Individuals must understand the requirement to demonstrate accountability. Leaders must set clear expectations and ensure that there is an agreement that a particular task/commitment is doable and the goals are obtainable. Finally, leaders must insist on individuals delivering the committed goals.

Leaders can go a step further and help by providing support such as regular checkpoints to review progress, give timely feedback, and provide additional resources or support if they are needed.





Chapter 6: Four Ways Employees Can Show Accountability At The Workplace



1. Create a personal mission statement

It's not difficult to get so caught up with work that we forget why we are there, what we want, and what we value the most. Manage yourself by finding a way to integrate your values into your work. The company that you work for might have a mission statement, but it's essential that you write your own personal mission statement.

Your mission statement could be something like: Work diligently toward financial independence and give selflessly. Whatever your mission statement, it must convey your core values and define why you do what you do.



Image Credits: Pixabay





2. Set micro-goals

We are all adept at setting long-term goals like five-year goals or ten-year goals. While these are excellent to help us expand on our mission statement, these goals are useless unless we have a strategy to achieve them. You can manage yourself better if you set yourself micro-goals. A micro-goal is a single action that serves as a pathway or building block to a larger goal. For example, setting up an important client meeting to build a better relationship with a client could be your larger goal, while getting together all the elements for the meeting are the micro-goals.



3. Use lists to prioritize your workday

From simple to more complex plans, lists are a useful tool to help you prioritize your day. However, don't make your list so large that you find it impossible to complete. This will leave you feeling overwhelmed and defeat the purpose. A small to-do list of five or fewer items is ideal. If a particular task is not important enough to be on your top five, leave it off the list. As you complete activities, you can add more items to your list.





4. Make yourself accountable

Leaders and managers want to make sure that you do your work and require updates on how much work you perform and how well you perform those tasks. You don't have to be a leader or manager to be accountable. You can manage yourself by holding yourself accountable for how you spend your time.

Review your to-do lists for the following week on a Friday night, write down your accomplishments, schedule a time every week to reflect on your week. You can use these to hold yourself accountable even outside the workplace.



5. Reward yourself

Excellent managers understand the importance of rewarding their employees for a job well done. They understand that reward for success is far more effective than punishments for failure. Rewards also make us work harder to get something we desire. No matter what your goals are, always reward yourself after you have achieved them.





CONCLUSION

Accountability is critical to workplace success for the organization, leadership, and employees. Accountability keeps everyone on their toes and ensures that work gets done on time, deadlines are kept, and quality is met.

Good leaders are those that hold themselves accountable for the projects they undertake. When something goes wrong, it is the leader who takes responsibility for what went wrong. But that's not all – when there is a problem, as well as taking responsibility for it, a good leader tries to understand why the problem arose and then takes steps to amend those problems.

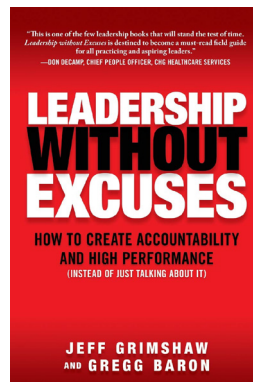
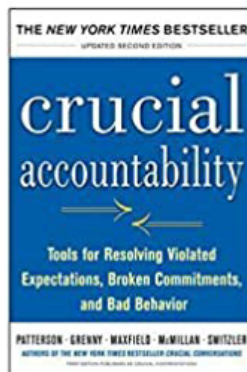
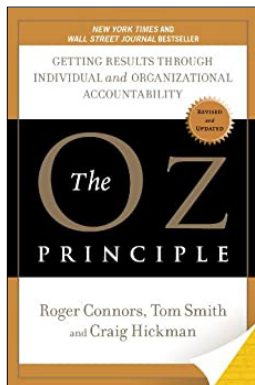
Leaders are not the only ones to be accountable. Everyone in the workplace must be held accountable for the work they do.

Once we all learn to take responsibility and hold ourselves accountable for our work, the workplace becomes more productive and prosperous.





A few books that we recommend:



www.focusu.com