

DEMYSTIFYING ACCOUNTABILITY

A new look at accountability in the virtual workplace

Accountability is both an individual concept and a team concept. It says, “I’m holding you to a standard and giving you permission to do the same for me, so we can grow stronger together.” It should not be defined solely as a punitive term, though that’s how many leaders introduce it to their teams — when they’re performing poorly, or there is a need to find someone to blame. Positive accountability is an opportunity to build trust, and strengthen important relationships.

But, the fact is, accountability is slipping today, in part, due to the challenges inherent in managing virtual and blended workplaces.

There is ample evidence to point at, to prove teams are getting failing grades, ranging from an over-abundance of micromanagement, to poor communications and unclear expectation setting, to undertraining of teams and the erosion of cultural touchstones which are key to keeping people engaged. Moreover, conflict is everywhere and is largely going ignored, or at the least, unresolved.


WHAT CAN LEADERS DO TO RE-BUILD POSITIVE ACCOUNTABILITY, IN LIGHT OF ALL THE BARRIERS?

TALK

The single biggest factor in teams that are underperforming and those who are really gelling right now in these unusual times, is the communication patterns of their leaders. Establish regular feedback and intention-filled communications to individuals and teams.

TIE

Leaders must determine three to four meaningful, measurable, and memorable Key Results for the whole organization. Every person should know them inside and out, such that all priorities and initiatives are framed in terms of those results.



...accountability is not simply about taking the blame when something goes wrong. It's not a confession. Accountability is about delivering on a commitment. It's responsibility to an outcome, not just a set of tasks. It's taking initiative with thoughtful, strategic follow-through."

– PETER BREGMAN



TARGET

Employees are more than KPI's — they need to be valued — and part of that valuing is showing them why they matter and how they're connected to the bigger picture. Make sure you explain how they fit in, and how important they are by tailoring and targeting their goals.

TRACK

Start with re-imagining what accountability will look like for your team. You may need to decouple 'punitive measures' from accountability. Positive accountability means recognizing teams and individuals for their good work and encouraging everyone through tracking that is motivational and inspiring.

TRUST

Trust is integral to unlocking performance potential, and it starts at the top. High levels of positive accountability equate to high levels of trust, and vice versa. Try building trust with more empowerment initiatives — like decision-making permissions.



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