ACCOUNTABILITY
Competency Development Guide

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Accountability Defined:

Accountability is defined as an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.

Accountability can't happen without agreement and ownership. It's not about pointing fingers or discipline.

Three keys to developing accountability:

1. Clear expectations
2. Create clarity. Does everyone understand the expectations?
3. Create ownership

Three barriers:

- Organizational structure
- Evolving processes
- People avoid it

There's truth in the old saying, "Success has many parents, but failure is an orphan." When we know what must be done, when it must be done, and the level of quality that is required, we can be accountable.

Expectations can fall into two categories, behaviors and results.

Behaviors refer to what people actually are doing—how they interact, communicate, complete their work, and conduct themselves as a member of your team.

Results are all about what must be accomplished and achieved—that is, what work must be done and what success looks like.

Accountability - Empowerment = Blame

Empowerment - Accountability = Low Performance

Accountability + Empowerment = High Performance

Image Source: www.sidewaysthoughts.com

"Great leaders help their team members be accountable for the work they must achieve. Instead of checking "up" on a person, they check "in" to see how things are going and how they can be of help. These leaders are supportive, work to remove barriers, and empower individuals to do the work they are capable to do. They create the vision for what's possible, and connect individuals to the larger goals."

SOURCE: Kevin Eikenberry, Remote Leadership, Keys to Remote Accountability

Supporting Behaviors

Setting Expectations. Clear roles, leadership and metrics. Remove as many unknowns as possible. To be accountable people need to know if they are on track. Do you have agreed upon expectations and goals?

Teamwork. A sense of ownership for team results. Focus on team processes and roles. Do you have process champions?

Decision Making. Freedom, support and control to navigate competing priorities

Continuous Learning and Improvement. What's working and what isn't? What did you know, what did you think you knew and what did you do (or not do)?

Feedback. Actively seek feedback to improve the process and add to your knowledge.

Integrity. Do what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it.

Discussion Questions to Become More Accountable
What would be most helpful to you to become more accountable?
How can we share accountability?
How do we monitor accountability?
How do we manage accountability when new people join the team or someone continually makes mistakes?
How do we deal with people who don't care and have a poor work ethic?

Recognizing and Changing Your Mindset

FACTOR	CORPORATE MINDSET	ACCOUNTABLE MINDSET	VICTIM MINDSET
Locus of control	You believe your control is defined by your formal authority and the corporate framework.	You believe you can control your destiny and your environment.	You believe you are shaped by events around you, over which you have little control.
Self-efficacy	You will focus on performing well within your defined area of responsibility	You will have confidence to perform well in a variety of situations and will be confident about taking on new challenges that will let you learn and grow.	You tend to avoid new, difficult and challenging situations and work in a stable, familiar role.

SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR STATEMENTS

To identify competency skill gaps consider outlining key supporting behaviors that are important in your organization.

You can assign a basic Likert scale to each behavior statement (examples outlined below) and have the employee and the employee's manager rate proficiency.

CARING ABOUT DIRECT REPORTS:

Monitors workloads and shows appreciation for extra effort.

Treats direct reports equitably.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:

Initiates and participates in casual conversation.

Develops rapport with a variety of people.

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Engagement without accountability creates entitlement, and entitled workers, in turn, will come to expect to receive something from their employers for putting little or no effort into their jobs.

If employees aren't accountable for what they do every day, we are sending the message that people aren't responsible for their own success. People often believe that to change their lives, they need to change their circumstances, and then they would be happy. But that's flawed logic."

SOURCE: Cy Wakeman, keynote speaker for the April 29 general session of the Society for Human Resource Management 2014, vTalent Management Conference & Exposition

Recommended Resources from The BizLibrary Collection

Cutting Edge Communication: Understanding Accountability

Discipline and Accountability for Results

Supervisors Success Secrets - Secret #2: Ensure Accountability

Remote Leadership: Keys to Remote Accountability

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SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR STATEMENTS

EMPOWERING OTHERS:

Allows others to make mistakes and take risks to learn and grow.

Gives others the freedom to have control of their tasks and duties.

Provides guidance and support for others as they take on new challenges.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE:

Adjusts work activity and desired outcomes based on changes in business strategy.

Establishes means of measuring performance and objectives.

RESULTS ORIENTED:

Seeks and gives performance feedback to others.

Pays attention to quality and quantity of performance.