Creating an Environment of Accountability

Today’s employees are accountable for managing ever-increasing expectations, with less time and fewer resources than ever before. This session will challenge your mind-set around the concepts of personal responsibility, self-empowerment, and personal accountability, and it will show you how to improve personal and organizational productivity through a three-step process: claiming ownership of a task, taking personal action to complete the task, and answering for the outcome. Getting individuals to step up and meet their professional commitments is a clear way to achieve business results.

Session Objectives

- Understanding the benefits of an accountable environment
- Recognizing barriers to accountability
- Identifying appropriate ways to address accountability challenges

My Personal Learning Objectives

“Individuals carry their success or failure with them; it does not depend on outside conditions.”
—Ralph Waldo Trine, author (1866-1958)

This presentation is based on The Accountability Experience, one of the many leadership development programs offered by FlashPoint. Linda Galindo, the developer of The Accountability Experience, is the author of The 85% Solution: How Personal Accountability Guarantees Success—No Nonsense, No Excuses (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).
Building the Accountability Case

*Creating Quality?—The Background*

The field supervisor, under the direction of the farm management seed production group, puts a team together to develop a quality initiative for their crops. He tells them to identify ways to improve quality throughout the farm field production and make recommendations for implementation.

The team works hard creating focus groups, attending meetings to gather information, interviewing employees, doing open lunches, having discussions with management, and benchmarking. In addition to their regular jobs, members of this team put in an average of five additional hours per week on this project.

After six months, the team conducts an in-depth presentation for the farm management seed production group with graphics, charts, and many proposals that outline what can be done to improve quality, complete with implementation recommendations and plans.

The seed production team commits to review and meet again with the team in a month. Nothing happens. Two months go by and no meeting is scheduled. The team leader contacts the field supervisor, who says that the implementation plan was excellent but not feasible at this point.

Within the next few months, morale plummets and several people on the quality team leave, including the team leader. Many good foremen production personnel also leave. It is generally understood that the quality team initiative is the source of the discontent.
Building the Accountability Case, continued

Creating Quality?—Your Perspective

Decide whether you agree or disagree with the statements below and provide your responses in the space provided. Be prepared to discuss your rationale in your response.

1. The team members were individually responsible for the failure of the quality team and drop in morale.
   
   AGREE   DISAGREE

2. The field supervisor was accountable for ensuring the success of the quality team.
   
   AGREE   DISAGREE
Building the Accountability Case, continued

3. The quality team leader was accountable for ensuring the success of the quality team.
   
   AGREE  
   DISAGREE

4. To some degree, management control is necessary, even when dealing with empowered employees.
   
   AGREE  
   DISAGREE

5. The farm management seed production group was ultimately accountable for the entire situation.
   
   AGREE  
   DISAGREE
The Accountability Cycle

Defining Terms

### Responsibility

*Responsibility* is a before-the-fact mind-set of personal ownership and commitment to a result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Responsible Language</th>
<th>Language of Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We should . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone ought to . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why don’t you . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Self-Empowerment

*Self-Empowerment* is taking personal action and risk to ensure an agreed-upon result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Empowered Language</th>
<th>Language of Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They wouldn’t let me . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, but . .</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I tried . .</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Accountability

*Accountability* is a personal willingness, after the fact, to answer for outcomes produced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Accountable Language</th>
<th>Language of Accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He should have . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If only they had . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But she didn’t . .</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Self-Assessment Interpretation

What It All Means

Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>1–5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Divide by 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Accountability</td>
<td>6–10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Effectiveness</td>
<td>11–15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Organizational Structure</td>
<td>16–20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERALL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overall Results

4.25 is the benchmark overall result that indicates a mind-set of responsibility and accountability that will lead to high performance.

If your score is 4.25 or above . . .
Your results indicate that you are likely a very valuable contributor to the organization and have a high-performance mind-set.

If your score is 3.90 to 4.24 . . .
You are most likely a valuable contributor to your organization. “Fine-tune” your approach and model personal and collective responsibility and accountability for others, which can elevate the level of accountability in the entire organization.

If your score is 3.50 to 3.89 . . .
You are ready to deeply consider the concept of accountability. Strive to keep your focus on yourself and be willing to commit to a mind-set change that will lead to increased performance.

If your score is less than 3.50 . . .
You are currently experiencing frustration with your job, your team, and your organization, and you may feel unable to make an impact. You may see life as a series of events that happen to you, as opposed to understanding that you can have a good deal of control over the circumstances in your life.
Self-Assessment Interpretation, continued

**Personal Responsibility**

Personal responsibility is a “before-the-fact” mind-set of personal ownership and commitment to a result. 4.25 is the benchmark result that indicates a mind-set that will consistently take up-front ownership for results.

**If your score is 4.25 or above . . .**
You most likely clearly understand your role, your goals, and the goals of the organization.

**If your score is 3.90 to 4.24 . . .**
You are likely very clear on your role, your goals, and the organization’s mission, and you are willing to take responsibility for your success at work. You may also take on more than you can do.

**If your score is 3.50 to 3.89 . . .**
You most likely are willing to “own” your role, and you feel largely responsible for your own success at work.

**If your score is less than 3.50 . . .**
You sometimes may not take full ownership of tasks and projects, and you use a variety of reasons outside yourself as excuses. Learn more about the definition of responsibility, use a clear agreement form, and avoid the use of the word “we” when describing who owns a task or project.

**Personal Accountability**

Personal accountability is a personal willingness “after the fact” to answer for outcomes produced.

**If your score is 4.25 or above . . .**
You willingly answer for your outcomes and results—good and bad. You also feel accountable for the organization’s outcomes (that is, collective accountability).

**If your score is 3.90 to 4.24 . . .**
You likely answer for the outcomes of your tasks and projects and do not make excuses or blame others when things go wrong. Be sure to reflect on the results of agreements and what was learned.

**If your score is 3.50 to 3.89 . . .**
You often answer for outcomes and results. However, you are probably not comfortable holding coworkers accountable for their agreements with you and others.

**If your score is less than 3.50 . . .**
It is somewhat likely that you make excuses or blame others when things do not turn out as you had expected. Learn more about what accountability means.
Self-Assessment Interpretation, continued

**Team Empowerment**

This category measures preference for working with others versus working independently when given a choice. It measures how likely anindividual is to coach others, delegate, and hold others accountable.

**If your score is 4.25 or above . . .**

You have a strong need for working with teams/groups. You most likely have excellent collaboration and learning skills.

**If your score is 3.90 to 4.24 . . .**

You have a very clear preference for working in a team/group environment versus working alone. You likely need a great deal of team interaction to sustain your energy.

**If your score is 3.50 to 3.89 . . .**

You most likely have no clear preference for working with teams or working individually.

**If your score is less than 3.50 . . .**

Given a choice, your prefer working individually over working with a group. If your work requires that you work with groups, use the clear agreement form to ensure that you understand everyone’s roles and expectations for each project.

**Perception of Organizational Culture**

This result measures how you respond to what is going on around you. The assessment items associated with this result ask for responses about “management,” the “organization,” and the environment. However, how individuals perceive what is happening around them says as much or more about them as it does about what is happening around them.

**If your score is 4.25 or above . . .**

You are very supportive of the culture and could mentor others to work successfully within your organization.

**If your score is 3.90 to 4.24 . . .**

You see the culture as generally healthy and empowering for you.

**If your score is 3.50 to 3.89 . . .**

Your result indicates some frustration with culture. Be careful not to “externalize” when things go wrong.

**If your score is less than 3.50 . . .**

Your result indicates deep frustration with the culture. You may find yourself frequently blaming the organization or other people for things that are not going well. Practice turning around your negative thoughts about the culture.
### Clear Agreement Form

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the TASK? What is the task or project I am taking ownership of?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. What is the OUTCOME/DELIVERABLE? Consider:  
  - Level of detail?  
  - Format?  
  - Measures or standards?  
  - Customer/end-user of information, product, or service? |   |
| 3. What ACTIONS will I take to accomplish the task, project, outcome, or deliverable? Consider:  
  - Others involved?  
  - Authority needed?  
  - Assistance needed?  
  - Resources needed? |   |
| 4. What are the BY WHEN’s? What are the deadlines for this task, project, or deliverable? |   |
| 5. What are the STAKES associated with this task, project, or deliverable? Consider:  
  - Benefits of completing?  
  - Consequences of not completing?  
  - Who will be impacted? |   |
## Sample Clear Agreement Form

Owner: Janice W.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the TASK? What is the task or project I am taking ownership of?</td>
<td>Identifying a new on-demand printer for new product brochures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is the OUTCOME/DELIVERABLE? Consider:</td>
<td>A written executive summary of three possible supplier choices, including a brief profile of each company, relevant services offered, costs, and pros and cons of each choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Level of detail?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Format?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Measures or standards?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Customer/end-user of information, product, or service?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What ACTIONS will I take to accomplish the task, project, outcome, or deliverable? Consider:</td>
<td>1. Work with production to update supplier criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Others involved?</td>
<td>2. Network with colleagues to identify suppliers of choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Authority needed?</td>
<td>3. Collect information on suppliers: websites, phone, face-to-face meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Resources needed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the BY WHEN’s? What are the deadlines for this task, project, or deliverable?</td>
<td>1. By 10/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. By 10/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. By 10/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. By 10/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What are the STAKES associated with this task, project, or deliverable? Consider:</td>
<td>Cost savings due to shift to just-in-time printing will free up dollars for more product testing, increasing quality and customer service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Benefits of completing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consequences of not completing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Who will be impacted?</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Your Clear Agreement with Yourself

Review your workbook, assessment results, and notes you’ve taken. Consider what you’ve learned and what you want to accomplish as a result of today’s preview session. Use this modified version of the clear agreement form to take responsibility for getting the most from this learning experience.

Clear Agreement Form

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What is the learning OUTCOME I am taking ownership of?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. | What ACTIONS will I take to accomplish this objective? Consider:  
  • Others involved?  
  • Authority needed?  
  • Assistance needed?  
  • Resources needed? |
| 3. | What are the BY WHEN’s? What are the deadlines for accomplishing this objective? |
| 4. | What are the STAKES associated with accomplishing this objective? |