Being Accountable in Work and Life

**Workshop Objectives**
- Define accountability
- Become aware of your own level of accountability
- Understand the importance of accountability and how it relates to work
- Develop an action plan to become more accountable in current situations

**Making Personal Accountability Personal**
Record your responses to the following questions. Then share your responses with your group.

1. **What is the one problem I’ve found frustrating at work?**

2. **What impact has this problem had on my daily effectiveness?**

3. **Until now, who have I been thinking is responsible for this situation?**

4. **What one thing would I change to improve the effectiveness of our organization?**
# Accountability Assessment

The willingness to be accountable for what you do and what you fail or refuse to do is a crucial sign of character. Accountability means more than just doing your job. It includes an obligation to make things better, to pursue excellence, and to do things in ways that achieve results, further your goals and the goals of the organization.

How accountable are you? Does it depend on the situation or are you always ready to accept responsibility for your decisions and behaviors?

Rate yourself on each of the following accountability characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I communicate regularly and accurately with co-workers.</td>
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<td>2 If I don’t understand something, I seek out information.</td>
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<td>3 I own my own problems and circumstances.</td>
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<td>4 When I make a mistake, I admit it.</td>
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<td>5 I am proactive, often taking the initiative.</td>
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<td>6 I ask for the things I need to do my job.</td>
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<td>7 I analyze my activities and ask, “How is this contributing to organizational objectives?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 I analyze my activities and ask, “What more can I do?”</td>
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<td>9 I stand and deliver when it’s time to report on my actions.</td>
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<td>10 I welcome feedback.</td>
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<td>11 I model accountability for the people I work with.</td>
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<td>12 I readily confront unaccountable behavior in others.</td>
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Based on my responses, I need to improve in the following areas:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Accountability Ladder
G.O.W.I - Get On With It

ON THE RUNG OF
MAKE IT HAPPEN
FIND SOLUTIONS
OWN IT
ACKNOWLEDGE REALITY

WAIT AND HOPE IT GETS BETTER
EXCUSES OR REASONS I CAN’T
BLAMING OTHERS
UNAWARE

On which accountability rung are you standing?

How to Know When You’re “Below the Line” Victim Thinking “The Why”

> You find yourself frequently being sought out by others so they can tell you what someone did to them “this time”
> You find yourself frequently blaming others.
> You find yourself frequently wasting time and energy “boss bashing”.
> You spend a lot of time talking about things you cannot change (your boss, competition, economy, government…)
> Your discussions of problems focus more on what you cannot do, rather than on what you can.
> You find yourself telling the same story about how you were taken advantage of, over and over again.
> You find yourself defensive to feedback and resistant to personal input from others.
> You express your confusion as a reason for not taking action.
> You find yourself with hidden resentment towards others that you just can’t seem to let go of.
### Awareness Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remaining Unaware</th>
<th>Vs.</th>
<th>Increasing Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining my position</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Moving off of my positions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talking</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining my comfort zone</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Being willing to risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining my territory</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Exploring new hunting grounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defending an old position</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Exploring new ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being “right”</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Asking “what if…”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protecting</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating behaviors</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Experimenting with new behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocking feedback</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Encouraging feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Looking inward</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Why is this happening to me?”</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>“What is the learning?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pretending not to know</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Asking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretending not to know</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Seeking clarification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assuming</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Inquiring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reacting</td>
<td>Vs.</td>
<td>Pausing</td>
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### Blaming Others “The Who”

When we are faced with a challenge or frustration of some kind, our first instincts are usually to protect ourselves and look elsewhere for someone to blame.

**“Who dropped the ball?”**

For most of us, these are automatic defense mechanisms, and they come so naturally that we rarely stop to think about how we are reacting in a given situation.

Organizations cannot solve problems, live their missions and achieve results when people choose to blame each other and avoid practicing personal accountability. Finger pointing and blame are the ultimate waste of resources because they take a lot of time and energy, and they accomplish nothing.
**Procrastination “The When”**

When we sit back and wait rather than take action, we are not practicing personal accountability. The cost of procrastination is very high. Time is lost, energy is wasted, issues don’t get addressed and problems linger and get worse.

Questions that begin with “when” lead us straight to procrastination.
- When will they take care of the problem?
- When will the customer get back to me?
- When will the people in the Accounting Department do their job?
- When will someone clarify my role and responsibilities?
- When will the people on my team do what they are supposed to do?

**Personal Accountability: How to Know When You’re “Above the Line”**

- You quickly recognize when you are in the victim cycle.
- You acknowledge the reality of existing problems and clearly understand the consequences of not resolving them.
- You try to broaden your scope of understanding about a problem you face by seeking a greater understanding from other resources.
- You acknowledge when you make a mistake.
- You listen when people offer their perspective.
- You look at what you are personally doing (or not doing), that is getting in the way of your progress; as opposed to solely looking at how others are preventing your progress.
- You test your view of reality with other people when faced with a perplexing problem.
- When explaining your lack of progress, you are quick to acknowledge how you contributed to the lack of results.
The Question Behind the Question
A method of leadership thinking that enables you to practice Personal Accountability by making a better choice in the moment

All Questions Behind the Question:
> Begin with "What" or "How" not "Why" "When" or "Who"
> Contain an "I"
> Focus on Action
> Include: “can” “will” “now” or “today” (What can I do right now?)

Leadership
> We can all be leaders regardless of our position or situation
> True leaders are those whose thinking is characterized by Personal Accountability.

Thinking
> Take charge of our own thinking
> Learning to control our thoughts

Personal Accountability
Asking ourselves questions such as:
> “How can I contribute?”
> “What can I do to make a difference?”

Choice
> Recognize our own power to choose
> We make our own choices, and we’re free to make better ones
The Question Behind the Question

Instructions: In your groups, create an “above the line question” for each of the questions below.

1. When will they take care of the problem?

2. Why doesn’t my boss appreciate all I do?

3. When will the customer get back to me?

4. Why do they make it so difficult for me to do my job?

5. When will the people in the Accounting Department do their job?

6. Why doesn’t my Manager clarify my job?

7. When will the people on my team do what they are supposed to do?

8. Who made the mistake?

9. Why is this happening to me?

10. Why do we have to go through all this change?
Giving Effective Feedback

1. *Communicate your positive intent*
   > Timing
   > Briefly state what you would like to cover
   > Point to a common goal

2. *Describe the behavior*
   > Be specific, brief and to the point
   > Focus on one behavior or action, not the person

3. State the impact of the behavior or action
   > Linking
   > Stating consequences
   > Tone of voice

4. Ask for a response
   > Listen objectively
   > Summarize

5. *Focus on solutions*
   > Determine what to do next
   > If appropriate, ask directly for the change you want
   > Avoid being an expert
   > Manage your own expectations

Receiving Feedback

1. Focus on the content, not on the person
2. Listen calmly and attentively
3. Clarify the feedback
4. Acknowledge the other person's concern
5. Avoid defending or over-explaining
6. Take time out to think about response
7. Welcome suggestions and focus on the future
Levels of Ownership

Owning It

- Buy In/Invested
  - Agree
  - Involved

- Comply/Concede
  - Disagree
  - Involved

- Exempt/Excuse
  - Agree
  - Uninvolved

- Resistant/Resent
  - Disagree

Not Owning It

Buy-In

Source: The Oz Principle, Roger Conners
Finding Solutions

1. Stay engaged in solving problems when things get difficult.
2. Persistently ask: “What else can I do to achieve the desired result?”
3. Take initiative.
4. Challenge your current assumptions and beliefs.
5. Create new interdependent linkages.
6. Consciously work to discover new approaches.

Operating “Above the Line”

Action Plan

The three things I need to do to operate more “above the line” are:

1. 

2. 

3. 

Question Behind the Question

1. What negative, outwardly focused questions do you sometimes ask when faced with challenging situations?

2. What would be a better question (an accountable one) in this situation?

3. What answers come to mind for your specific situation?
Operating “Above the Line”

Action Plan

Giving and Receiving Feedback

1. Describe an opportunity to give feedback.

2. In the space provided, write down exactly what you would say for each of the Feedback techniques.
   a. Communicate Your Positive Intent
   b. Describe the Behavior
   c. State the Impact of the Behavior or Action
   d. Ask for a Response
   e. Focus on Solutions

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Training Evaluation

Today's Date: Organization:
Trainer: Location:

Training Title: Being Accountable in Work and Life
Your feedback is important to us. Please take a few moments to share your assessment of this training program by indicating your responses to the questions listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The information presented was useful.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The materials provided were helpful.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The facilitator was effective at holding my interest.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: