

## **Why Accountability, by Mark Samuels, author of *Personal Accountability***

**Accountable organizations** create an environment where people can count on each other to achieve business results with higher quality and fewer resources, and sustain greater levels of trust and morale.

**Accountable organizations** retain top talent, since they have an environment where others can be counted on to support their performance and achievements.

**Accountable organizations** have higher customer satisfaction, since people can be counted on to provide excellent customer service inside and out.

**Accountable organizations** consistently meet their business goals by the measurable improvement of performance execution – “organizational habits”, not just development of their processes, skills, competencies or balanced scorecard.

**Accountable organizations** become the benchmark in their industry by developing cross-functional accountability as their core competence, which eliminates the territorialism/silos that cause wasted resources, project breakdowns and poor customer service.

**Accountable organizations** don't get paralyzed by focusing on perfection. They are quicker to respond to change, because they focus on proactive recovery, which eliminates the “blame game” and keeps them moving and on track.

**Accountable organizations** have effective leadership at all levels, since they are promoting people they can count on to keep performance commitments, surface and solve problems and share information effectively, while enabling others to be successful.

**Accountable organizations** accomplish measurable goals and stimulate innovation and responsible risk taking, since they have developed a “safe” environment that inspires each person to “think outside of the box” to reach new levels of excellence.

**What Accountability IS:** Personal accountability requires that we have the ability, willingness and courage to renew attitudes and behaviors to achieve our desires.

Can you be “counted on” to take the actions necessary to achieve your desires? The first challenge, for most people is clarifying their desires. The second challenge is moving from wishful hoping to action. Taking actions means taking risks. If you force accountability on people without making it safe for them to take the risk involved with action and change, they will reject the idea and become paralyzed. The third challenge is the willingness to allow for setbacks and the ability to learn from any mistakes we make along the way and to persevere until we are successful.

Organizational Accountability is seen in a working environment where people can be “counted on” to keep commitments of performance and agreements to support effective communication in order to accomplish the organization’s or customer’s goals. In an accountable organization everyone is clear on the direction and priorities for success. Accountable organizations have an “interlocking accountability” where leaders are accountable to each other. They develop “proactive recovery plans” in order to keep making progress when a mistake is made or the unexpected takes place. Baseball teams don’t practice between games based on win and losses. Nor do professional music groups rehearse based on the number of people they want to sell tickets to. They practice and rehearse their performance execution, which is what they are completely accountable for.

Accountable organizations are quick to respond to changing needs of customer as well as the external drivers impacting the organization. There is a spirit of cooperation and a drive to be successful. People respect each other and challenge each other in a supportive way to attain the highest levels of personal and team performance.

**What Accountability Is NOT**, there are several misconceptions about what accountability is. Below are some examples of WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY IS NOT.

Everyone wants to hold someone else accountable for the problems taking place in our world, at our jobs, in our communities and at our children’s schools. Accountability is not about pointing fingers or finding someone to blame. It is not about punishing people who make mistakes. It is not to be used as a “hammer” to make people perform at higher levels. It is not a reason for perfectionists to beat themselves or other people up because they could have done a better job. It is not an excuse for bosses to complain about employees or a way to punish a child or spouse. If it were, would you want to be more accountable?

Many people confuse accountability with responsibility. As a parent, I am responsible for feeding my children. As an employee, I am responsible for completing my projects and assignments on time. While I am responsible for doing these things, the way I do them is a measure of something else, accountability.

Accountability goes beyond responsibility. When someone is accountable, they can be “counted on” to complete their duties or responsibilities with the highest level of quality based on clearly defined expectations, desires and or goals. It should be understood that these may be our own expectations based on the level of integrity or excellence we wish to pursue.

Making a family, organization or community work requires that we think about how all our actions will affect other people. For example, while I am responsible for feeding my children, I can meet my responsibility by feeding them junk food or I can be accountable for their well-being by feeding them healthy, nutritious food. I have seen many people be accountable for their performance at work and at the same time negatively impact and even sabotage other people’s performance. Will your organization achieve its goals when people are individually accountable but sabotage the success of others in the organization?

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