

Personal Accountability

What is one of the main reasons organizations succeed or fail? I believe it's the ability and willingness of a company's leadership and its employees to be accountable.

If marketing only gave us what we needed, we could really make sales happen. It's the teacher's fault my son failed. It's my manager's fault...if my employees...if only my wife/husband/children/neighbors...and on and on it goes.

In order to become accountable we first need to become aware of what accountability means and then take an honest look at ourselves to see how we measure up. The hardest part is what comes next; deciding to do something about it. It's like looking in a mirror and noticing you have some spinach stuck in your teeth. You can choose to remove it or simply walk away from the mirror hoping nobody notices.

Personal accountability can be defined as the ability to be responsible for the consequences of one's own decisions and actions; taking responsibility for these decisions, and not shifting focus or blame on poor performance somewhere else, or on others. This derives from an internal responsibility to one's self to be accountable and this internal willingness to own up will tend to be exhibited outside in one's actions.

The inability to accept responsibility is not a new phenomenon. Remember the story of Adam and Eve? Adam told God, it was this woman you gave me and then Eve blamed her disobedience on the serpent. Today too there is a societal eagerness to shift the blame on anyone and anything in order to avoid taking responsibility.

Like a disease that gets progressively worse the inability to accept responsibility for one's actions and be accountable has a progressively deteriorating affect on our lives and the organization as a whole.

A person who is strong in this capacity of personal accountability will not try to make excuses for a bad decision and will normally make every effort to try and identify the cause of that bad decision. Their focus will be more on correcting the problem to ensure future success than on protecting themselves.

On the other hand a person who is weak in this area can indicate a person who is more concerned with appearance and image, than with results and success. They will seek to place blame for a bad decision on any factor which does not lie solely with them, for doing so would detract from their abilities in the public image. Achieving goals and success can be important to this person, however their self-image is often fragile and protecting it is much more important than correcting the problem.

Think how the atmosphere and morale of those in attendance at some internal meetings would improve if in those meetings: there was a focused and concerted effort to find out how to fix the consequences of someone's mistake, learn from it and put into place methods or processes that would prevent it from happening again?

Unfortunately, we are sometimes more interested in protecting our own reputations than fixing the problem. Then there are those individuals who work really hard to make sure that everyone knows that it was the other guy who screwed up. How short-sighted those actions really are.

Thinking win/lose (you win they lose) is one sure way to lose the endorsement and trust of those whom you so desperately want respect from.

Bottom line, we are obliged to make a personal decision about accountability. You are accountable for which choice you make.



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