

# THE ACCOUNTABILITY FORMULA

## 5 LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

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Accountability is tough in the best of organizations. Have you ever heard these comments in your company?

- "When is John going to get me that report?"
- "What is going on with the marketing report?"
- "When are they going to finish that thing?"
- "I can't believe Mary is so late in making those phone calls."
- "Okay...who dropped the ball this time?"
- "Hey...that's not MY job."

Does this sound familiar? If so, your small business team may be faced with a big challenge with accountability, which results in finger pointing, frustration and broken trust...both with your employees and your customers. Personal responsibility and accountability can put an end to the blame game, saving your business thousands if not millions of dollars by increasing productivity and overall job satisfaction, which results in very satisfied customers.

These five basic approaches can support you in increasing accountability, which are simple, yet they require actually building a culture of accountability for your business.

- 1. Communicate the big picture.** Accountability stands a better chance of succeeding if everyone in your business embraces a larger responsibility for the success of the entire company. Spend time talking individually with team members about how his or her project affects the vision and mission of the business. With this communication, people can make wiser decisions from the context of the "big picture" rather than from the perspective of what may seem to be a detailed and boring task.
- 2. State clear expectations.** If one person on your team does not meet your expectations, the entire team can fail. It is important from the very beginning of any new project to state the expectations clearly and repeat them over and over again until your team really "gets it." These expectations need to be crystal clear, including dates, who is responsible for what, the details of the task and how you want the finished product delivered. If your expectations are fuzzy or confusing in any way, your team can break down, and the fine and very important details can fall through the cracks.

3. **Create accountability work groups.** One of the best ways to achieve accountability is to develop shared accountability among team members. Accountability within the team can be accomplished by what Morris R. Shechtman calls "accountability groups," groups which give team members the permission to speak and listen in a way which is frank and open. This accountability group can include 2-5 people and can then serve as a small unit of people working together to confide in with struggles, weaknesses and insecurities. They can then find creative strategies to work together in the direction of the growth the team intends to achieve.
4. **Move to action.** In order for accountability to work, people have to know that failure of completion will come with certain consequences, including written warnings, loss of a bonus or extra hours served on a week-end to complete the project on the table. Without consequences, your employees won't take you seriously. They will think that they can use blame, justification and rationalization as a way to deviate from being responsible, because you have not followed through on what you said you will do if the tasks are not achieved.
5. **Implement a rewards and recognition program for a job well done.** Employees need to know in a tangible way their efforts are indeed driving the company forward, and it is important for them to share in the fruits of their hard work. The offer of increased pay and benefits (vacations, time off and other perks) can keep accountability and morale high and can motivate employees to continue to strive for high levels of performance.

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