

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE FOR TODAY'S LEADERS

engaging the edges™

Accountability Issue

Featuring tips to increase accountability and support your team.



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fresh perspective

Welcome to the first issue of *Engaging the Edges*, our new digital magazine designed to bring you fresh perspectives on familiar concepts and new discoveries on leadership, learning and life to elevate your experience @ work.

I am a magazine enthusiast from way back. Magazines capture our imagination and attention but require less commitment than a book. The experience is quiet and personal, with often brilliant visuals to go along with the written copy. The immersive, deep dive that you get on one theme via a variety of related stories and information can be thought provoking and memorable. We come away feeling up to date and inspired. That is our intention for the InteraWorks community with this new project.

The theme of this first issue is accountability which is a very prevalent topic, especially these days. Accountability does not mean what most people think it does and is often confused with integrity. Accountability is quite a deep construct actually and is rooted in taking responsibility for actions and outcomes. It requires courage to take on goals and to really take a stand for them along with vulnerability in revealing our results along the way. It is both exciting and fear provoking.

We cannot be in victim mode and blame circumstances when being accountable. Truth prevails in accountability whether we like it or not. There is no hiding, only the glory of achievement and expansion from falling short and pressing onward regardless. Without it, inertia and/or chaos starts to take over for individuals and organizations. We have plenty of both going on right now as a global community.

When I was growing up and in a particularly stressful or confusing situation, my parents always reminded me to simply focus on doing my best. Somehow that allowed me to breathe and step up in a bigger way. I knew that my fate was in my own hands. And that fate was less about the final score than my willingness to own my results and be responsible. Perhaps that is the most powerful definition of accountability, doing our best work every time. What if each of us did our very best today, tomorrow and the day after and so on? What might be possible?

Creating our future is right here and now and, on behalf of our entire team, we are glad you are on the journey with us.

Sincerely,

Laurie Oswald, CEO



content

5

Creating a Culture of Accountability



16

Own This Thing



15

C.P.A.

17

Tips from the Team

19

*Gaining Perspectives to
Build Unity*



21

*Focus on Personal
Accountability*



20

*The Significance of
Black History Month
in 2021*

25

*Recommended
Reading*

*Individual accountability
leads to organizational
accountability.*





agreements and commitments

Journey to Creating a Culture of Accountability

Anne McGhee-Stinson, Managing Partner

Performance Management ≠ Accountability

What makes accountability such a challenging concept and an even more challenging practice? In all walks of business and life we seek to accomplish things that matter to us. There are times in life when we don't need other people to achieve the results we seek. We can do the work alone.

Most often however, we need to work in collaboration with others to get things done. We count on others to do their part and we place high demands on ourselves so that we don't let our team members down.

Fundamentally then accountability means that we are count-on-able. I can count on you and you can count on me! But for accountability to really flourish in our organizations, we must establish systems to support it and conversations that clarify it.

But let's not confuse performance *wince* management systems with accountability. Traditional performance management systems perpetuate a lack of engagement and personal accountability by utilizing an outdated, carrot and stick approach.

This type of reward/punishment approach appeals to the primitive part of the human brain and sets us up for a Pavlovian culture based on habituated behaviors, rather than allowing for authentic engagement and self-directed accountability.

So it's no wonder that organizations continue to report dismal statistics on engagement. Recent data shows that

82% of managers acknowledge they have "limited to no ability" to hold others accountable successfully, while 91% of employees would say that "effectively holding others accountable" is one of their company's top leadership-development needs.

Engaging Hearts and Minds

What is it then that can help us to create a culture of accountability?

We know now that what happens inside the minds of individuals plays a crucial role in accountability, because ultimately it is our underlying beliefs which drive our behaviors.



I recently attended a 10-day personal development course and while the content was very valuable, one of the most remarkable things I observed was how it was conducted. There were no “instructors” per se

.Instead, the day began with a short lecture and suggested “learning targets”; but the learning itself was self-directed. When participants hit a roadblock, they asked fellow participants for help or found one of the many “trainers” who were floating around the room. Mind you, there were several thousand people in the room!

This experience was a profound demonstration of a key underlying truth. It is human nature to want to learn, grow and achieve our potential.

Accountability, therefore, need not be something mandated and driven from on high. Appealing instead to the inherent human values such as creativity, meaning and purpose is much more effective, sustainable, and rewarding.

This stance is supported by a growing field of science and scientists such as Dan Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*; John Medina, author of *Brain Rules*; and renowned Harvard psychologist, Dan Siegel, author of *Mindsight*, among others. Siegel argues that the ability to tune into our own operating belief system is the basis for all emotional and social intelligence and the key to learning, growth and individual development.

“If you want to build a ship, don’t gather your people together and ask them to provide wood, prepare tools, and assign tasks. Just call them together and raise in their minds the longing for the endless sea.”

- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

What this begins to highlight is that authentic accountability begins when our hearts and minds are engaged along with our whole selves.

Agreements & commitments are the building blocks of organizational accountability.

The journey to accountability begins when we engage in conversations in which someone requests something of someone else, or we jointly agree that we will both do something.

Either way, these conversations focus on making agreements and gaining commitments to act in service of the results we wish to create.

So, let’s look a little more closely at what we mean by agreements and commitments.



Making Agreements

When you make a request, or you ask someone to do something for you, it may seem that the responsibility for a successful accomplishment of that request rests on the person you ask. But in truth, a lot depends on how clear you are in making the request in the first place.

When we take a closer look at the four critical elements of making a request, it seems obvious. However, neglecting any one of these elements can easily lead to breakdowns in accountability.

① Who is the requester?

Unclear

“Leadership is unhappy with our customer service scores. They need to improve.”

Better

“I’ve read the customer satisfaction scores and I want to do some follow-up; here is what I am asking of you . . .”

② What is the next action?

Unclear

“The scores are bad; something should be done . . .”

Better

“I request that we conduct follow-up interviews with customers to determine why our scores have dropped.”

③ What is the specific deliverable?

Unclear

“Do whatever you need to do. Let’s just get this done.”

Better

“Based on the interviews, will you please report out the top 3-5 reasons our scores have dropped.”

④ By when is this due?

Unclear

“... soon.”

Better

“Complete the follow-up interviews by Friday and we’ll discuss the results on Monday in our regular staff meeting.”

Have a Commitment Conversation

A commitment conversation is when one person makes a request, and another person promises to act on that request. Sounds easy; but we frequently ignore this step. What most often happens next is that the request is made, and expectations set without the benefit of a committed response! This leads to our organizational energy and creativity being drained by incompletes and uncommunicated expectations. It's a setup for mediocrity because unfulfilled expectations lead to conflicts, resentments and nourishes distrust in teams. It is up to you as the requester to ask and listen for a committed response.

When you do, here is what can happen next:

“I accept.”

If the person you ask to do something understands your request and says yes, they have accepted your request and made a promise to do what you've asked. Presuming that they are honorable, you can anticipate that they will attempt to fulfill their commitment to you.

“I decline.”

If the person says no, they have declined your request and in essence made a promise not to do what you've requested. You are free to make other arrangements or ask them if there is there some part of the request that needs to be modified to make it possible to say yes (i.e., changing the deadline, providing support, etc.).

“I request clarification.”

If the person doesn't fully understand your request, they might say, “I need clarification.”

“I counteroffer.”

If the person doesn't like aspects of your request, they might say, “I cannot complete all the interviews by next Friday. What I can do is about 2/3 of those. Or, we can shift the deadline to the following Friday.”).

“I commit to commit.”

If the person needs time to check on other commitments, they might let you know their response later (i.e., “I will let you know by Thursday afternoon if I can commit to that timeline.”).

It's vitally important to note that in each of the responses above, the person on the receiving end of the request has the real freedom to say “No.”

This is a critical keystone to organizational accountability. Imagine what it is like to be held accountable for something that you have not chosen to be responsible for.

Where does that lead?



“Employees whose managers involve them in goal setting are 3.6 times more likely than other employees to be engaged.”

Research confirms how insignificant today's accountability systems make employees feel. Gallup found that employees whose managers involve them in goal setting are 3.6 times more likely than other employees to be engaged and only 2 in 10 feel that their performance is managed in a way that motivates them to do outstanding work.

Add to that the fact that 70% of employees feel their managers aren't objective in how they evaluate their performance, and it comes as no surprise that 69% of employees don't feel they're living up to their potential at work.

On the other hand, if we say “Yes” when we have the real freedom to say “No” we are now taking personal responsibility for our agreements, actions, and commitments. Our freedom of choice to take responsibility (especially when it is based on our personal values) becomes an intrinsic motivation and our hearts and minds are committed to the task.

This creates ownership in the accomplishment of that task and one thing we know for certain is that people rarely destroy that which they help to create.

Handling “breakdowns” in agreements.

What happens when someone breaks a promise they made to you? How do we effectively deal with the situation? If we try to ‘control’ the actions of the other party, they will either rebel or do the work but from a sense of being compliant, not committed. This approach does not contribute to organizational accountability, the relationship, performance, or quality of work. The challenge is to have an accountability conversation when a breakdown occurs from a stance of mutual learning.

After all, these breakdowns inevitably happen. How can we respond rather than react?

The purpose of an accountability conversation is to reestablish/repair the relationship in mutual respect and lay the groundwork for the future or close the relationship clearly and cleanly.

It is important that you speak from the intention of wanting to simultaneously share your perspective, the impact of their actions, AND be curious as to what went ‘wrong’ for the other party. This will not work if the intention is to blame them for your emotions, judge, punish or demean their efforts. An accountability conversation helps the other party restore their integrity, own their responsibility, and offers the opportunity for course correction, learning and growth.

1

Reestablish what the original intention was and if there were possible flaws or misunderstanding in the original request or promise. This helps to ground the conversation in what the original intent was.

Examples:

- “Thank you for taking time out to meet with me today. I greatly appreciate it. The reason that I wanted to talk with you is that ___ didn’t complete X by Y as we agreed.”
- “My best understanding is that ___ agreed to do X by Y and that didn’t occur ___. I feel certain that the two of us can put our heads together to understand what transpired and come up with some mutually agreeable solutions.”

2

Genuinely listen to what actually happened. This is an opportunity to learn about the other person’s side of the story. You don’t have to agree, but it is important that you hear, and that they explain so that each of you understand what actually transpired. This can be a valuable learning step for everyone.

Examples:

- “I think an important place to start is to identify what actually happened from each of our perspectives before we try solve anything.”
- “What is your perspective of what actually happened?”

3

Clear the air by inquiring, “Why did that happen?” Ok, so here is where the stories, reasons, justifications, and excuses come up. Again, you don’t have to agree, but you may pick up some insight that can inform your ability to coach, guide or mentor them, or even alter something in your request.

Examples:

- “Thanks for sharing that with me. I can see how frustrating this would be for you.”
- “I understand how that could have thrown you off course.”

4

When a promise is broken we want to identify the impact. Don’t be shy in asking for a recommitment as well as repairing any damage done. In doing so, you’re giving the other person an opportunity to repair your relationship. So be sure to ask for something that truly makes it possible for you to renew your trust in them. If you are mature in your interaction, you will not only preserve the relationship, you’ll move forward on what you wanted in the first place.

Examples:

- “I would really like to hear your perspective on this situation. What do you think is the impact of this problem?”
- “Thank you for sharing that. I think the impact of this is _____”
- “I am sure we can agree that because of this impact, it is important that we come up with solutions.”

5

“What did you/we learn from this?” Asking this also helps to restore integrity and reestablish a new condition for future success. It’s an act of generosity to help establish growth and learning as a framework within the team.

Examples:

- “I would like to know what you would do differently next time.”
- “What advice would you give someone who was taking this on in the future?”
- “This situation helped me to see that _____ is the best approach. Do you agree?”
- “What are some things you learned?”

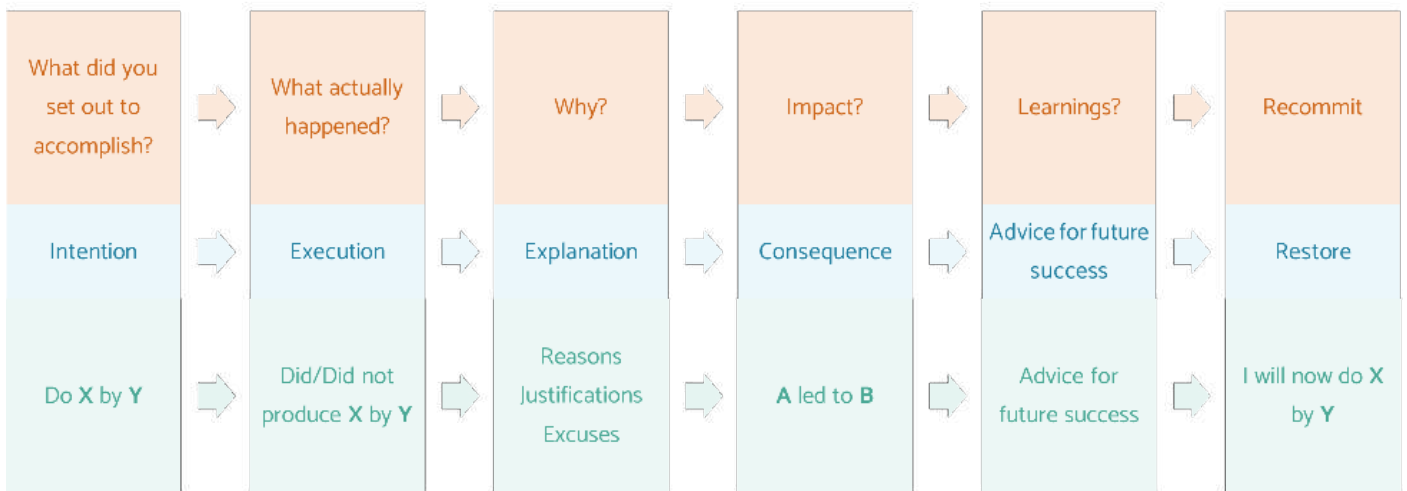
6

We are now able to ask for a re-commitment; one that has a grounding in reality, without the muck of the past clouding our ability to move forward.

Examples:

- “Thank you for your willingness to explore these solutions with me. Let me make sure I am clear on our next actions. You are going to do X by Y date. Did I get that right?”
- “You have agreed to do X by Y date, and I will do A by C date. What have I missed?”
- “I feel really good about these solutions. I am glad that we were able to come up with some really good ideas together. How are you feeling about this process?”

Handling Breakdowns in Accountability

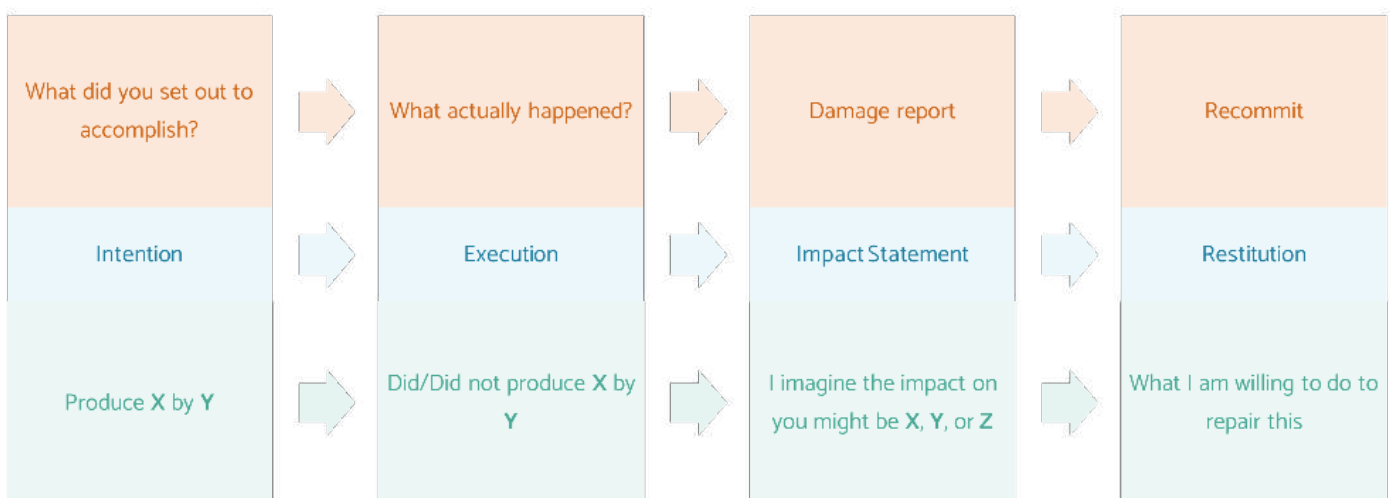


Lastly, after repeated occurrences, it may become necessary to end the relationship cleanly. You can use the data gathered from the accountability conversations and lack of response to indicate that your trust has been broken and you'll look for others in the future with whom to collaborate.

What if I am the one?

There will be times too when you are the one who breaks a promise. When that happens, it is your responsibility to offer an apology and offer restitution and a recommitment. You don't need to wait for the other person to come to you. This is only a slight variation on the model above and it enables you to not only repair the broken promise, but also to preserve the trust in a valued relationship.

Apologies



Commitment conversations are wonderful ways to build trust, accountability, and healthy, productive work relationships.

While it may seem like a lengthy process, each step ensures a stronger working relationship between all parties, the opportunity for growth in a new action, and stronger results. In this way, both accountability and engagement stay alive and relevant in your partnerships with others. It sounds so simple, but we all know it takes practice. It is practice worthy of our efforts though because over time, individual accountability leads to team accountability which ultimately leads to organizational accountability.

A Short, Sad Story

This is a story about four people named

EVERYBODY,

SOMEBODY,

ANYBODY, and

NOBODY.

There was an important job to be done.

EVERYBODY was sure SOMEBODY would do it.

ANYBODY could have done it, but NOBODY did it.

SOMEBODY was angry about that because

it was EVERYBODY'S job.

EVERYBODY thought ANYBODY could do it.

NOBODY realized that EVERYBODY wouldn't do it.

The story ends with EVERYBODY blaming SOMEBODY,

after NOBODY did what ANYBODY could have done.

C.P.A. It!

CREATE PROMOTE ALLOW

There are times in our lives when we might feel at the mercy of another. It's hard to take accountability for anything in those situations. But, sometimes we find that we do "own" a piece of the situation by some action we took or perhaps because we let something slide. If we can take some degree of accountability in any scenario, we can restore our energy and power. Try this simple activity.

Think of a time when you felt like you were taken advantage of.

ASK YOURSELF

**How did I Create,
Promote, or Allow
this to occur?**

Notice how you feel when you recognize your own accountability.

It can be very restorative!



Let's take
a closer
look!





Own This Thing!

Thomas Ramsey, Relationship Lead + Facilitator

As we kick 2021 into full drive, all of this year's hopes, dreams, aspirations, and visions of success are before us. Now is the time to deepen our understanding and unlock the power of revisiting our past.

To be clear, the adage about the past being an indicator of the future is common, trite, and by no means a measure of success for the unpredictable future. There is, in fact, a small window of time for reflection and introspection that when used strategically bears fruit worthy of our attention. As we look back on the past, the challenge is to confront ideals and mindsets that could be the veil blinding us from seeing our breakthroughs.

To own or have ownership, as defined by Macmillan Dictionary, reads "an attitude of accepting responsibility of ownership of the work and enjoy its challenges."

This definition of ownership came up during a Leadership kickoff planning workshop with a client/partner who leveraged our Best Year Yet offering. Their drive for success fostered the courage to stop and reverse the mindset and then own the key issue that would dictate their future progression.

In other words, when you are stuck, you need to first go back in order to go forward. Think about the time when you were young, trying to get the bicycle out of the garage or shed. To avoid deeper entanglement with grown up apparatus and garage gear, you reversed the bike to create the space and make it out of the garage.

Going back to the client/partner, the team's mindset was now illuminated so they could clearly see that which was previously obscure. Their one thing and key issue was a lack of ownership. It was as if they did not have right to demand their vision from "we got next" to "owning the game."

"Own This Thing" is the new paradigm, for this team moving forward, that will be the catalyst of exponential growth. I encourage you to own that one thing in your life that will make you a better leader, parent, friend, community member and neighbor.

You have the exclusive right of
possession and use of your
dreams to change this world.

It starts right now with yourself. For example, with so many parents having a front row seat to their children's education due to remote learning, I have seen more ownership of education than at any time before.

You must know what specifically that "Thing" is in order to say "Own that Thing! I want you to grab the good and the bad, the accomplishment and the disappointment, macro and micro details of the project, relationship, or dream to take back rightful title for its possession and use. Own that Thing in 2021!

what are some ways

Tips from the

“In 2021, I recommitted myself to understanding my higher purpose. This allowed me to focus on our tools, systems, & framework to bring about change in our communities by assisting others in reaching their goals/dreams more than they could have accomplished on their own. I am more accountable with my time as I ‘walk the talk’ alongside our client partners. The time is Now.”

Thomas Ramsey
Relationship Lead + Facilitator

“I stay accountable by scheduling a monthly meeting or call with my good friend and accountability partner. We have been creating our Best Year Yet plans together for more than 16 years. Each month, we go through our Guidelines, Paradigm, Major Focus and Goals, measuring our progress using PRO. By now, we know each other so well, I could probably score her plan and she mine!”

Kris Gleason
Best Year Yet Support

“I start my day my reviewing my larger task and project list and set my intentions. I then break those tasks into smaller actions to help motivate me to complete. If I complete the day’s list – I reward myself (fancy coffee, new book, dessert, etc.).”

Stephanie Rockwell
Director of Operations + Relationship Lead

“As I reflect on accountability, I see the pain it sometimes causes me. When I do something wrong, or I don’t do what I said I was going to do and somebody either calls me out or provides me with feedback – it hurts me – it really hurts me. However, I need to suffer this pain because that is what then spurs me on to learn from the situation. I don’t want that pain again, so it forces me to make changes.”

“I know I am not perfect so this is something I will always be working on – lifelong learning.”

Julio Arquimbau
Relationship Lead + Facilitator

“I use my EDGE system and record what I’m accountable for on paper and Outlook reminders. Conversely, if there is something I have the option to decline accountability for and know that I would not have the bandwidth to give it the attention necessary, accountability could also mean saying no.”

Kim Brewster
Executive Administrator

“My Edge system – seriously, I can’t imagine life without it and how much stuff would drop through the cracks. I might be late on things, but thanks to this I know I’m late and not lost in ‘what am I supposed to be doing’ My heart – it feels terrible to be out of integrity and being accountable is a big part of that. When I need to clean something up, I own it and work to clean it up.”

Aaron Cohen
Relationship Lead + Facilitator
Executive Director, Best Year Yet Foundation

“I make sure I capture it in my EDGE system – ‘If you think it ink it’ and ‘Control Shift K’ will not only make your day, but gives your agreements visibility and by extension gives you greater ability to deliver on what you promise!”

Robertt Young
Facilitator

you stay accountable?

InteraWorks Team!

"I always ask myself as to who would be impacted if I did not do what I am supposed to do. Imagining the possible impact to those affected would compel me to do it ASAP. Basically, I find it difficult to see someone put in a difficult place due to my inaction."

Kathirasan K
Facilitator

"Don't keep all your to-dos in your head. Write them down! I schedule short- and long-term goals (personal and professional) and remember to take a break - get outside - recharge."

Nicole Gilbert
Outreach + Learning Coordinator

"If You Think It, Ink It" is an expression we often say in the EDGE program that continues to both save and haunt me! It saves me because it is by capturing my commitments (to myself and others) in my task list consistently (and regularly reviewing that list), that I am able to stay accountable. The expression haunts me because by nature, I like to give myself more credit and think 'I don't need to write it down, I'll remember that later,' but I have proved myself wrong too many times. After all, it's difficult to stay accountable to things that you are not conscious of. I feel confident that my team recognizes accountability as one of my strengths, and I am grateful that it's the simple act of writing things down that helps me demonstrate it. So next time you think it...ink it!"

Sarah Furrier
Relationship Lead + Facilitator

"Years ago, I was part of a Networking Group that included a divorce lawyer. I was so curious to ask him what he recognized as top issues which later led to divorce in the couples he consulted. I know, a twisted curiosity, but his wisdom has served me well ever since. My colleague answered immediately and shared 2 things. First, he shared that the couples that came to him stopped communicating about the good and the bad. In other words, they stopped communicating about everything authentically. Secondly, they 'sweat the small stuff' in their relationship. They began to get petty about the little things that bothered them. From the time I heard this advice, I have taken it to heart in my own marriage. Given the first nugget of wisdom that he shared, I continue to strive to share the frustrations that are building within me, even if it starts as a minor irritation. I try to remind myself - 'nothing hidden'."

Michelle Santaferarero
Facilitator

"My accountability level is connected to the level of responsibility I take for myself and the consequences of my actions. This is also reflected in our organization. The more awareness there is for circumstances without being a victim to them and the more responsiveness versus reactivity, the more accountability thrives in my experience. Being 100% accountable 100% of the time is an ideal but impossible if you are playing a big game. Approaching accountability with neutrality and curiosity rather than blame helps us all learn and then explore course corrections. It's the journey, not the destination in the end, that is the most rewarding!"

Laurie Oswald
Chief Executive Officer



Gaining Perspective to Build Unity

Michelle Santaferraro, Facilitator

What do you do when you and a co-worker don't see eye to eye? I recently experienced this and could not imagine how my co-worker got to 'that' conclusion. I disagreed with his reaction and the decision he made as a result. It was almost like walls went up between us immediately because we saw things differently. I walked away frustrated and honestly a little irritated. I decided to go back and have a follow-up conversation to get a fresh perspective. Perspective helps us see the world in a different way. When I went back to my co-worker for a follow up meeting, I practiced three new skills in our conversation and found that I came to an entirely different conclusion.

First, when I find myself in conversations that challenge the way I see things, it requires that I stay present. For example, in the second meeting with my co-worker, I had to ask myself, "Am I giving him all my attention and being fully present?" That meant I needed to suspend judgement and more specifically, it meant I needed to listen without trying to think of whether I agreed or disagreed while he was talking.

Secondly, gaining perspective is only possible if I look for the arial view of their perspective. What I mean by this is understanding the broader context of the situation. The Oxford Dictionary describes context as 'the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.' This is something I want to keep seeking out in my discussions - these 'circumstances that form the setting.' With my co-worker, I tested whether I had the details necessary to formulate my opinion and my noble certainties.

More specifically, seeking out the context required that I seek out information to fill in what might have happened before, during, and after this discussion. I did this by asking questions.

Lastly, I find it vital to be willing to put myself in the other person's shoes. I am reminded to ask myself, "Why would a reasonable, decent, and rational person believe this?" This serves me well when a reaction is starting to build inside me and I am coming to my own rapid conclusions. I put myself in my co-worker's shoes by asking three questions:

"What would I be feeling in that situation?"

"What would I be thinking in that situation?"

"What would I be processing given that situation?"

When I applied these three skills with my co-worker, I was able to re-process the entire event. I found that I came to an entirely different conclusion. Taking that time to give new energy to the entire discussion allowed me to put myself in his shoes and reinterpret what I thought were his feelings and possible thoughts as he was experiencing the event. During our conversation, I continued to ponder what I might have chosen as a result of all these insights. This led me to a completely different conclusion where I was able to let go of the outcome - which was truly HIS outcome, after all. I hope, at this time next year, to have my very own recap on relational perspective given the tools I am learning now on gaining perspective.

The Significance of Black History Month in 2021

Thomas Ramsey, Relationship Lead + Facilitator

As I reflect on my personal and professional journey, the word “significant” resonates strongly for me as we celebrate Black History Month in 2021. Black History is American History. With so much to be shared, I would like to highlight the power of reflection, celebrating the now, and recommitting our mindset with excellence for a more perfect future.

As we reflect on the progression from Carter G. Woodson’s inception of a week’s acknowledgement for people of color in 1926, to dedicating the entire month of February since 1947, we have to see the significance. I have both parents to thank as they were excellent role models of how you can contribute while sharing your gifts, talents, and passions within your communities. My mother served as the first black teacher with a contract position within the Phoenixville Area School District.

My father launched and taught classes in the Districts’ first Community Television Station for students to pursue careers in mass communications. The more we understand the breakthroughs of the past, we can then realign our targets, goals and ambitions for tomorrow.

In the previous generation, my grandmother, who just celebrated her 89th birthday, was responsible for leading the civil rights movement in Phoenixville where many men of color were being employed for the first time at the US Post Office and Local Police Departments, and while successfully integrating black families into the social circles at our YMCA. This is where my love of basketball grew, with friendships and teammates, that continue today.

As we remember the legacy of the late great Kobe Bryant, who was a teammate of mine during High School Summer leagues in Philadelphia, PA, the significance of his impact on the world was extraordinary.

From a teammate to spectator, I learned so much from him not just about the game of basketball but how to be a resilient human-being. Kobe’s legacy for family and relationship with his girls has etched yet another high mark on what is possible. I pause and celebrate these significant moments in my life that we all share together.

My uncle Butch who served in the United States Air Force and passed away last month demonstrated that we have one history. As a leader in our family and faithful servant to our Country, we celebrate Uncle Butch and his contributions, knowing that we are Americans, people of color, and citizens of our planet on the right trajectory to excellence.

Finally, we can choose to love and to recommit ourselves to build and strengthen ourselves from the heart. It is not just an intellectual awareness, it’s about a deeper recommitment to elevating the human experience.

Having the self-awareness to stop and think from the heart will be the gateway to success, and this love will be the most significant contribution for my children to witness as I set the stage for them to carry the legacy forward.

You could have all the knowledge and understand great mysteries, but without love we are nothing. This is the day to recommit to a more perfect future.

Unique Ways to Focus on Your Personal Accountability



Stephenie Rockwell, Director of Operations + Relationship Lead

Personal accountability is when you take ownership AND responsibility for goals and outcomes. I once read that, “Responsibility is taking ownership of actions and accountability is taking ownership of the results.” Keeping the mindset of accountability can be difficult, but the cost of not focusing on this area can be much worse and lead to bad organizational habits that weaken clarity about responsibilities and further damage accountability in your organization.

I find that integrity and accountability are often in the driver’s seat of my behavior. I am quick to own my mistakes, I find it easy to look internally at situations and request feedback, and I often proactively address potential challenges and obstacles before starting a project. I also don’t mind over-clarifying roles and responsibilities.

Here are three unique mindsets or exercises that I use to help keep accountability top of mind:

Future Self



If I am beginning a project or starting my day by looking over my actions list, I ask myself this question, “What does future Stephenie think?” This question will instantly give me clarity and helps me keep the big picture in mind. “Should I work on this important project with an unclear deadline or spend 30 minutes on small emails?” Future Stephenie would say the project results matter more than the emails right now. “Should I eat this cake or go on a walk?” Future Stephenie would say the cake will make me feel better at this moment, but the walk will leave me feeling good all afternoon.

This may be a bit silly, but I promise your future self often knows what is best and can help cut the inner dialogue time down to what matters most. It can also be effective to assign an age to future self to gain even more insight. 78-year-old Stephenie feels very different than 59-year-old Stephenie! When I am struggling with a decision, my future self helps me own my actions.

Mirror Game



I find it is easier to blame and much more challenging to look inward when it comes to a mistake or situation. “This

wouldn’t have happened if X had done Y as I asked.” But instead, what I should be asking is, “What can I do differently to help?” or “What actions did I take that contributed to this result?” It could be a lack of clarity, process, or maybe they didn’t feel comfortable asking me questions! Every time you come across a physical mirror or your reflection, use this visual as a cue and reminder. Take responsibility for your part in every situation, and if you don’t think you’ve played a role, then request feedback – because you probably did. When we take the time to acknowledge how we have contributed to problems, we develop personal accountability.

All the W’s



If you are being asked or assigned a task or project, ask all your W’s or get clarity on when you can ask all of your W’s. What I mean by that is: Who, What, When, and Why.

WHO: Who is responsible? Who else is responsible?


WHAT: What is the ask? What is the cost if this task does not get completed? What resources do I need to complete it? What can get in the way?

WHEN: When is the deadline? When will we check-in next? When can I work on this?

WHY: How is this connected to our mission, vision, purpose, or goals? Why does this task matter?

If I am uncomfortable asking these questions in a meeting, I might ask, “Could we spend a few minutes after this meeting so I can ask some questions on the front-end to ensure a successful start?” Or start introducing the concept of all the W’s to your team so it’s acceptable to ask them at any time. Getting uncomfortable and asking these on the front-end is better than being uncomfortable missing deadlines because of lack of clarity on the back end.

Practice these exercises to help build your accountability muscle and you will end up driving better results, impacting change, and reducing your own frustrations. Your future self agrees.

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Establishing structures of accountability outside yourself is key to successfully changing any behavior.

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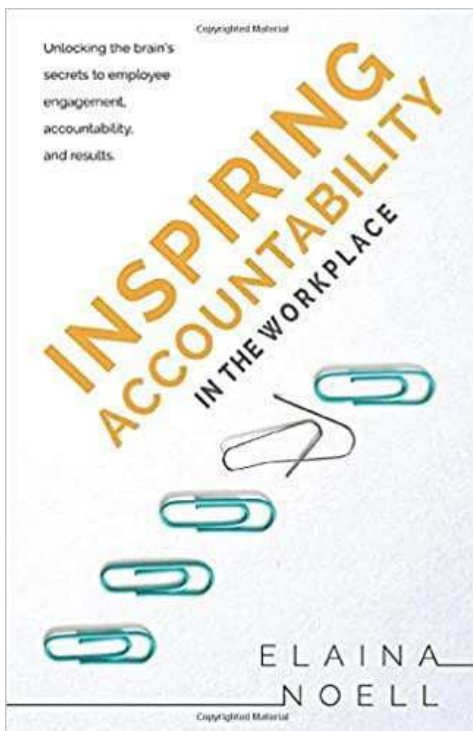
*Currently available for Effective EDGE and Best Year Yet Participants through your Interworks LXP portal. Guides for our other course coming soon!

take it one

Recommended

Inspiring Accountability in the Workplace

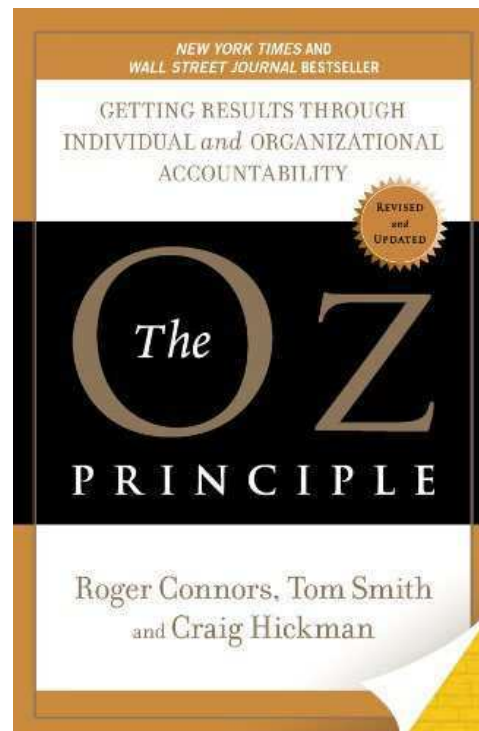
By Elaina Noell



Using a foundation of neuroscience and human dynamics, *Inspiring Accountability in the Workplace* brings a much-needed modern approach to inspiring employee engagement, productivity, and results.

The Oz Principle

By Craig Hickman



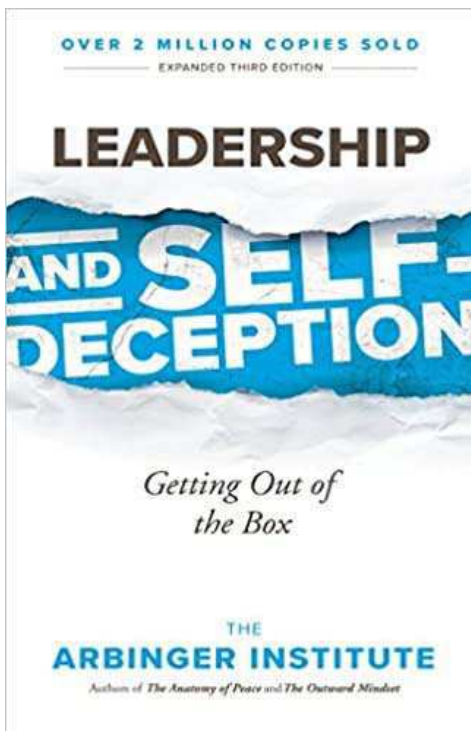
At the core of *The Oz Principle* is the idea that when people take personal ownership of their organization's goals and accept responsibility for their own performance, they become more invested and work at a higher level to ensure not only their own success, but everyone's.

step further

Reading

Leadership and Self-Deception

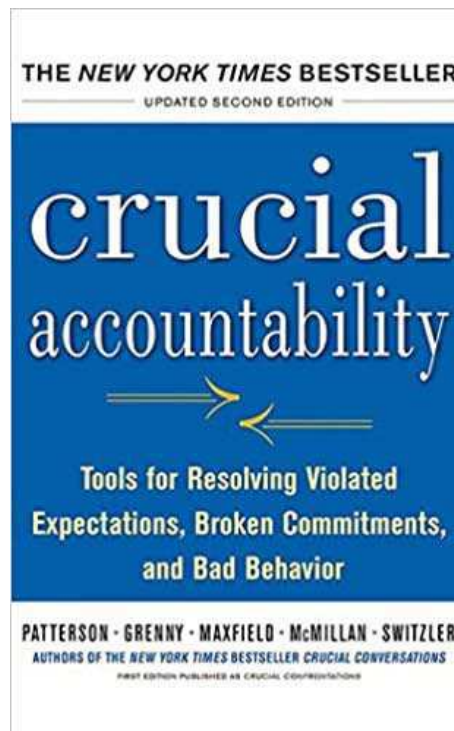
By The Arbinger Institute



Leadership and Self-Deception uses an entertaining story everyone can relate to about a man facing challenges at work and at home to expose the fascinating ways that we blind ourselves to our true motivations and unwittingly sabotage the effectiveness of our own efforts to achieve happiness and increase happiness.

Crucial Accountability

By K. Patterson, J. Grenny, R. McMillan, A. Switzler, D. Maxfield



Crucial Accountability teaches you how to deal with violated expectations in a way that solves the problem at hand without harming the relationship and offers the tools for improving relationships in the workplace and in life and for resolving all these problems—permanently.

*"We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."*

—Aristotle.



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