

Smart ways to use personal accountability to create exceptional staff

The extent at which your team holds themselves accountable and strives for excellence could mirror your operation's entire success. Here's how to do it right.



Imagine how much easier your life as CEO would be if every member of your team took personal accountability for the standard of their contribution, and the impact they have on their colleagues and your business. Sounds like a pipe dream, right?

If the demands of your job include managing people who sidestep accountability and point the finger of blame at you, their colleagues or customers, you're far from alone.

Identifying people with the right mindset

Reflect for a moment on the people on your team who do take ownership for their role. How do their mindsets and behaviours set them apart from their colleagues? Chances are these are the people you can trust to get on with doing what needs to be done. Responsible people care about the standard of results they achieve and typically put their hand up when they need help or have made a mistake.

What makes people take responsibility and strive to achieve optimal results can be summarised into two categories. First, the strength of their character and, second, the environment in which they operate. When it comes to creating a cultural environment that inspires and enables people to be at their best, among the most important steps you can take include these.

Be clear in your standards

Begin by creating a clear picture of what successful behaviours look like in your business. While many organisations have documented values, many fail to articulate what each means in practice and why they matter to success. Most importantly, every manager needs to lead by example and showcase the types of approaches that are needed and valued.

The reality is accountable cultures start with respect and decency. Put simply, people are more likely to step up and own their job if they feel they are treated fairly. Ensure balanced focus is placed on values and behaviours that influence not only performance results but also appropriate governance standards, the health and wellbeing of your people and team effectiveness.

Engage in one-to-one conversation with every team member about what is expected of them. Begin in the recruitment process and continue through the probationary period of employment to reinforce how every new team member is expected to align their approach to the behavioural standards of your business.

Inspire engagement in your team

Inspire a sense of emotional ownership of your business by helping people to feel that they belong and matter to success. Share your vision for the future and keep your team abreast of the progress you are making towards turning your dreams into reality.

Avoid the all too common mistake of limiting communications to whole company or team emails. For people to be truly engaged with where you are heading and the role they need to play, you need to influence on a one-to-one basis.

Empower people to do their best work

Among the most common obstacles to creating an accountable environment is micromanagement. How likely someone is to take full responsibility is unquestionably influenced by how much control they believe they have over their work.

When people are given the opportunity to at least contribute to deciding what, when and how their work gets done, they are entirely more likely to hold themselves accountable for the outcomes created.

When people are allowed to be accountable for their own decisions, actions and quality of work organisational performance improves. According to behavioural statistician Joseph Folkman's studies on control and influence in autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire organisations, results show that "the most effective organisations have teams where everyone feels they have influence. When people feel like their voice is heard, their investment in their work increases far more than when they're being told what to do and exactly how to do it."

Invest in learning and value growth

Ensure your people are given every opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills essential to delivering on their role to the standard expected. Take deliberate steps to overcome capability roadblocks that prevent them from taking full ownership and achieving the goals needed.

Expect every leader in your business to adopt a coaching approach to managing people. All too often managers miss vital opportunities to influence learning from experience.

Teach your leaders to seize every opportunity they get to grow the awareness, knowledge, skills and behaviours of the people on their team.



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