

ACCOUNTABILITY:

What's the Purpose?



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Imagine a time when someone made you a promise but didn't follow through, leaving you feeling angry, upset, frustrated, and probably defeated. Or consider the frustration of a coworker who is consistently late to important meetings. These situations stem from a lack of accountability. By definition, **accountability means taking responsibility for actions, behaviors, performance, and decisions. It's more than just accepting responsibility or blame; it also involves owning work duties, setting goals, and following through.**



Accountable employees are proactive, communicate honestly, and own their mistakes. They trust their teammates and collaborate to get things done. Accountability increases commitment to work, boosts employee morale, leads to higher performance, and aligns with a healthy work culture. It is a vital component of high-performing teams and fosters an atmosphere of trust.

Healthy accountability turns mistakes into opportunities for growth rather than reasons for punishment. However, letting emotions drive conversations about accountability can lead to defensive responses, reduced motivation, and a lack of trust. So, what can be done to foster a culture that values accountability? The answer begins with communication.

1. Clear Expectations:

Be crystal clear about the process or outcome you expect. Communicate how success will be measured and what others need to do to achieve it. Start with open, honest conversations and ask the other person to summarize what they heard to ensure understanding.

2. Clear Measurement:

Nothing is more frustrating than unexpected failure. Avoid this by having ongoing discussions about expectations and agreed-upon targets. If a target isn't being met, address it immediately to prevent surprises. SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) can help.

3. Clear and Honest Feedback:

Regular feedback is critical to fostering accountability. If expectations and measurements are clear, feedback becomes fact-based and easier to deliver. Schedule regular feedback sessions and prioritize honesty over niceness when necessary.

Employees mirror what they see. If a supervisor takes accountability and admits mistakes, employees are more likely to do the same. When accountability is part of the workplace culture, it leads to higher productivity, staff satisfaction, retention, and a place where people want to work.