

YOUR SUCCESS DEPENDS ON YOU! ARE YOU PERSONALLY ACCOUNTABLE?

By Diane Brown, *Talent Journey*

In today's fast paced and economically challenged environment, **personal accountability** is one of the top attributes a successful leader must bring to the workplace. Leaders who exhibit personal accountability stand out from their counterparts both professionally and personally. Additionally, those who are personally accountable experience a sweeter success. The modeling of personal accountability trickles down through departments and communities to the end customer, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Personal accountability is critical to any kind of success, whether in the marketplace, community, or family.

What is personal accountability? Personal accountability centers on the internal willingness to take responsibility for solutions. Accountable people look for ways to solve problems and aren't discouraged from continuing even after initial failed attempts. On the other hand, a person with poorly developed personal accountability will make excuses, assess blame, and focus on what is wrong. They become consumed with obstacles and miss opportunities to take action toward solutions. In simplest terms, the difference between these two levels of accountability largely determines success or failure.

Everyone has been in situations where a system or process has fallen short of expectations. For example, in manufacturing, the wrong part is shipped. Or in research and development, the design worked well during testing but manufacturing wasn't able to reproduce the design on a large scale. In these types of scenarios, accountable people seek solutions. Unaccountable people blame others or circumstances, and often give up finding a solution before the problem is appropriately diagnosed. Problem solvers are able to take a bird's eye view of the problem. In looking for and understanding where the constraints lie, they are motivated and capable of finding reasonable and well thought-out solutions.

Successful Leaders A successful leader knows that personal accountability starts with commitment and ends with persistence. They accept responsibility for their actions even in messy or difficult circumstances. The ability to identify long-term solutions, the goal of personally accountable leaders, culminates in a sustained commitment to the business' objectives. Accountable leaders view mistakes as learning opportunities and use them as a springboard for moving forward. They understand that only through commitment and persistence will their team and organization grow and succeed.

Several well-known corporations have modeled per-

sonal accountability when faced with crisis. In one memorable example, Johnson & Johnson, led by their rock-solid mission/value system, didn't hesitate to implement a total product recall in 1982 when it was determined the safety of one of their products, Tylenol, had been compromised. The result was not only the development of innovative tamper-resistant packaging, but a growing favor from the public. A potentially disastrous situation ultimately became a marketing opportunity. Other more recent examples include Apple Inc.'s decision to provide free service to all its customers when a small number (2%) experienced service problems with their new 3G iPhones. Other reputable personally accountable companies include Nordstrom and The Ritz Hotels. Their commitment to upholding their mission and values, regardless of hurdles and obstacles, puts these companies in a category unmatched by most.

Seeking the HOW A value-based leader has an easier time defining the solutions to issues that inevitably arise. As these examples testify, personal accountability results in appreciative rewards. People and organizations flourish within organizations that consistently do the right thing. This inspires all of us to own solutions, regardless of what stands in our way. As personally accountable leaders, we both model and encourage others to seek the HOW, not the WHO, behind obstacles and issues. The shift in perspective makes all the differences in both obtaining credibility as a leader and finding root solutions to chronic problems. The challenge for 21st century leaders is to stay positive, be courageous, seek solutions, and learn from mistakes. Personal accountability is a sure-fire way to hit your target.

Evaluate your own personal accountability

- Do I ask questions to find solutions or assess fault?
- Am I committed to persistence and success, regardless of the ruggedness of the terrain ahead?
- Can I admit my mistakes and move past them? Am I resilient?
- Do I create an environment where failures create learning opportunities?
- What can I do to help others generate the energy necessary to solve core issues?

About the author: Diane Brown is Founder of Talent Journey (www.thetalentjourney.com). She spent more than 20 years in the financial services and health care industries of Fortune 100 companies. She combines her leadership and strategic human resource background with a passion for helping organizations optimize talent to achieve their strategy. Similar to a winning sports coach, she is an expert in the selection and development of talent & creating a cohesive and aligned team that drives profitability. Diane holds a BA in psychology, master's degree in industrial relations (HR), and is an ACC Accredited Coach.



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