

Sharpen Your Tools

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Accountability Drives Results

How owning your actions improves performance

The lack of accountability within the business community is at an all-time high and has even started degrading revenues. Only 44 percent of employees feel that people in their organizations take full responsibility for their actions, according to Modern Survey.

Is the restaurant facilities industry ahead or behind every other industry in accountability? When something goes wrong at one of your restaurants, what is your instinctive reply? Do you own up and take responsibility, or do you point the finger and blame someone else? The majority of professionals in America are not accountable for their job-related performance. Please repeat after me, "You cannot have performance improvement without accountability." Mistakes, when they are owned, are the key to performance improvement.

The Road to Accountability

If your company is looking to go to the proverbial next level, one simple yet powerful way to improve your company's bottom line is to build accountability into your culture. When you add new facilities without adding new staff, there is no excuse for poor performance.

Before becoming one of the top speakers in the United States, I was an NBA athlete, living the dream of millions of little boys. I was very fortunate to enjoy an eight-year professional basketball career, including stops with the Dallas Mavericks, Utah Jazz and Detroit Pistons. I rounded out a decade in professional sports by broadcasting two seasons for the Minnesota Timberwolves. I not only in accomplished something so special, I was able to be around people who excelled in sports and were consumed with winning.

After a decade of involvement with basketball, at the highest level in the world, I began to notice a pattern. Whether playing or broadcasting, as I interacted with different teams in their locker rooms, at practice or even on team flights, each team had a unique culture. There was a profound difference in the overall culture of a winning team versus a losing team. Amazingly, they were almost the antithesis of one another.

In a winning team's locker room, after a defeat, you often heard players saying "my fault" or "my bad." You could hear the disappointment in their play, as if they lost the game all by themselves. There was this strong sense of accountability. Even though it was a team effort, each player understood how their play directly contributed to the team's results. You could hear a chorus of players consoling each other and taking ownership in a mistake or lack of production that contributed to the loss.

There was always an ownership associated with individual performance and a complete understanding of how it influenced the team results. There was also a strong commitment to perform each and every game.

Conversely, after a victory in a winning team's locker room, you could hear these same players being very complimentary of one another's contributions, instead of taking credit for their own stellar play. They were eager to praise their teammates' contributions as paramount to victory. So, in defeat they took responsibility for their shortcomings, but in victory, "Hey! No big deal. I am just doing my job as a team member." Who wouldn't want to be a part of that locker room culture?

With losing teams, there was a difference in locker room dynamics. Self-serving, narcissistic observations filled the air. Commentary included "I'm the best player in this league!", "I'm glad my teammates got me the ball," "I want the ball" and "I need the ball!" It wasn't the smell of sweaty uniforms, Ben-gay or basketball sneakers that made it hard to breathe. It was the self-aggrandizing commentary that sucked the oxygen out of the room.

When a losing team lost, you would hear, "I need some help from my teammates," "I can't do it all by myself" or "I need somebody to step up and help me." There was a bunch of finger-pointing and blaming and nobody owning their contribution to the loss. I also began to notice cliques and factions based on negativity. Players often privately "threw each other under the bus" or sometimes even publicly to the media. Simply put, it was a bad environment and not positioned for success.

A Culture of Accountability

The bottom line is, each team was trying to win games, but with totally different mentalities. I always hoped and prayed to get a contract offer from a winning team so I could enjoy the culture and my time in the NBA. Either way, you had to take the job based on the team that wanted you the most. However, there was nothing like playing on a winning team and experiencing the culture. The net/net I took away from playing sports and broadcasting, which enables me to take an even deeper look into the culture of teams, is that winning teams have a culture of accountability. Everyone is focused on the results and how they contribute to the overall team's goals. The corporate goal of the team was to win, not to focus on one another. There really is no "I" in team. When you play on winning teams, you don't want to leave. When you play on losing teams, you can't wait to escape.

Fast forward 13 years, and I have observed a new type of locker room: the corporate world. Here is what I have discovered. Winning organizations have a culture of accountability, just like winning NBA teams. Organizations that struggle to survive or continue to underperform have very similar characteristics to those found in losing NBA locker rooms. The simple but powerful lesson is that accountability is the foundation for any winning organization. As your organization's accountability increases, so will results. Accountability improves results by improving culture and naturally improving employee engagement, leading to performance improvement and results!

So, if you want your organization to improve results, attract and retain top talent and become a highly respected brand and employer of choice, it all begins with accountability. Real, sustainable accountability comes from the top down. If your leadership is not committed to accountability, you can't sustain a culture of accountability. Many professionals unfortunately have never experienced a healthy culture and assume that inner conflict, politics and turmoil is just business as usual. What type of culture does your organization have? It's either a winning culture or a losing culture—or somewhere in between. Do you love and respect your co-workers? Do you enjoy work projects and the euphoria of getting the job done? Do you celebrate achievement collectively? Or are you always frustrated or irritated?

I am always concerned when I consult with organizations and I hear their strategic plans on how they are going to grow sales and increase revenue and there is no attention given to their culture. Many business leaders just don't understand how important it is to build the right culture. They have dissention, unhealthy factions, bitter employees and high turnover but want to improve the bottom line and are running on a treadmill, going nowhere fast. I am an expert on corporate growth and continued improvement through the power of accountability. If you want your organization to have a winning culture, look no further than accountability.

Walter Bond is the owner of The Bond Group, a training and development company that focuses on the development and implementation of strong work environments based on accountability. You can visit Bond at www.walterbond.com or email assessments@walterbond.com