



How To Increase Accountability In Any Organization:

Five Proven Ways To Get Extraordinary Results In Any Organization

Leaders are always searching for ways to increase accountability to get the results they need. My advice is to start defining your role when it comes to delivering results. Simply put, the leader's job is to ensure every member of the team wins, and winning is defined as meeting the organization's top objectives. I only wish someone would have explained this to me earlier in my career. The reason this is so powerful is due in part to the inherent quid pro quo. Throughout my career, one of the best ways I've found to help people win is to establish an accountability-based culture focused on producing results, not activities. Here is the seven-step formula you can use to create accountability and achieve extraordinary results in any organization.

Step 1: Establish the organization's top three objectives.

This means the significant few, not the important many. Once identified, objectives must be clear, concise, measurable and obtainable. Notice I didn't say easy!

Step 2: Assign each team member his or her respective objectives. Remember, when combined, they must allow the organization to achieve its top objectives. In other words, the sum of the parts must be equal to or greater than the whole.

Step 3: Ask each team member what he or she needs to win. To help people win, leaders must remove the roadblocks that stand in the way. Do this by having each team member identify a maximum of three things they need to accomplish each objective. Have them put it in writing.

Step 4: Agree on what the leader will do to help. Meet individually with each team member to clarify the roadblocks and agree on what's needed to win and who will be responsible for making it happen. In all likelihood, the leader will assume responsibility. Why? Because you're responsible to people, not for them. Being responsible to people means helping them get what they need to win.

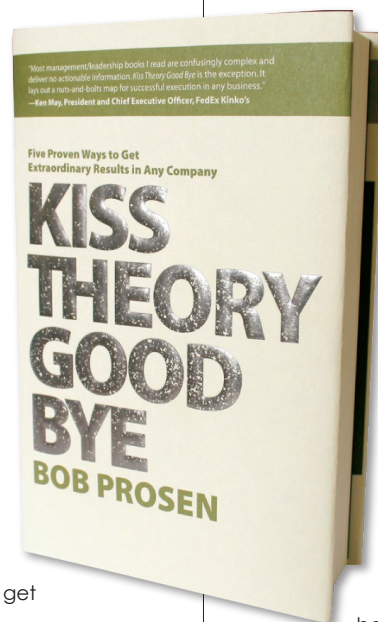
Step 5: Follow up. Each direct report should schedule a 30-minute monthly update using a standard color-coded results report. Results at or above the plan are in green and any area behind plan is in red. Focus the

conversation on what was done to achieve green and if the results will remain green for the remainder of the year. When discussing red results, focus on what will be done to achieve green status, when it will be achieved and any help that's needed.

Step 6: Share lessons learned. Hold quarterly meetings with all direct reports present to discuss lessons learned, identify critical roadblocks and make specific offers to help any team member behind plan. Remember, the leader wins when everyone on the team wins.

Step 7: Reward results. When objectives are achieved, ensure that rewards are disproportionate and highly visible. Those who achieve the most get rewarded the most—and everyone should know that. It's just that simple. Ensure that people at the bottom are either improving their performance or being moved out. No one with poor performance gets to remain on the bottom for more than a year without action being taken.

Effective communication drives results. This means being direct and forthright with people in every conversation, letting them know where they stand, what's needed from them, and when it is needed. Often good leaders can become great leaders by reshaping the way they talk. Here's how it works. When you make a request of someone, take a little extra time to explain why you are making it. Put it in context and explain why it's important to the goals of the business. Then the person can pro-



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vide a more robust solution because he or she understands the purpose of the task and how the information will be used.

Last but not least, don't forget to ask what the person needs to complete the task. This approach removes excuses, reduces rework and is a great way to build relationships. It's also a great way to develop future leaders by increasing responsibility and encouraging decision-making and creativity. By holding others accountable, you are teaching them to accept responsibility. Remember, making and meeting commitments is one of the best ways to build trust. So treat communication as promises and watch how results improve.

Here's an easy way to determine the level of accountability in your organization. Just listen to the conversation going on in meetings. Is conversation directed toward commitment? Are individuals talking about what is important and what will and won't get done? Are they making requests of one another and asking for commitments? Or do conversations stray to generalities, vagueness, rationalization and missed expectations?

Do you have people who constantly talk about how hard they work, how many hours they put in, how little vacation they take, but yet you wonder what they actually produce? If so, most often these people are focused on activities instead of results. They will continue to do this as long as your culture condones this behavior. Ask yourself this important question: Do you care how hard people work, or what they get done? Top performing organizations prefer the latter.

A group is performing well when they talk about actual results, not the activities and hurdles along the way. When team members hold themselves accountable, you hear responsibility in their conversations. They ask one another for help in order to get on track. There are no victims, excuses or concerns over a lack of knowledge. Instead, they are searching for the knowledge and support they need from everyone around the table to reach the company's goals.

Accountable leaders work diligently to maintain company-wide focus on the achievement

of management's most critical business goals and to see those goals become results.

When everyone is focused on achieving the organization's top objectives, every employee should be able to answer yes to the question, "Did my actions today move the company closer to achieving our most critical business goals?"

Take Actions Now

Start getting results immediately by taking these ten actions now:

1. Write down and quantify your top three objectives. How do you know you are achieving them?
2. Send a memo to five members of your top management team. Ask them to send you their top three objectives and the ways they know the organization is achieving them.
3. Send a similar memo to five of your best middle managers. Ask them to send you their top three objectives and the ways they know the organization is achieving them.
4. Compare and contrast the responses you get from top executives and middle managers. What have you learned? What will you do to increase alignment and teamwork, resulting from everyone knowing and delivering against the top three objectives?
5. Write down the three most important ways for you to improve your leadership abilities along with key milestones and dates for achieving them.
6. What are the three most important ways for your managers to improve their leadership abilities? How and when will you communicate this to each member on your team?
7. How can your company or organization communicate better with its employees and with its stakeholders?
8. Who needs to delegate better? How can you get him or her to do that?
9. Do you have the right people in the right positions? If not, what actions are you prepared to take to accomplish this?
10. Does the company or organization make and meet commitments without having to follow up? If not, what actions will you take to make this a reality?

**For more information:
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