

Lessons on accountability

IT seems the article *Staff 'fire' their bosses* in *TTG Asia* May 25-31 hit more than a few right notes and trod on a few toes.

So the theme for this instalment is on one of the four key actions discussed in the last article – regardless of our status, we should have accountability at the top of our agenda, yours and where applicable, your staff's.

Accountability is all about being responsible and answerable for your actions, or lack of them. Do you own up, when things go wrong or try and shift the blame?

Are you as a manager accountable? If you are reading this and looking at your boss who avoids being accountable, fire him. If bosses are unwilling to be accountable for what they and you do, that is a fundamental character flaw. Over the past few years, we have seen major news headlines about senior managers in MNCs who believed they were not accountable for their actions, but justice caught up with them.

Do these phrases sound familiar?

- I do not know.
- I was not there.
- I do not have time.
- It is not my job.
- That is the way we normally do it.
- Nobody told me.
- It did not matter.
- Not my problem.

The best one is, "I did not approve that, I only signed it."

Accountability checklist

Being accountable is about taking responsibility and not hiding or turning away when action is required. How accountable are you with your clients, colleagues, peers or subordinates?

- Do you communicate honestly with your people and colleagues?
- Do you seek answers when you do not know something?
- Do you take responsibility for your actions and others who report to you?
- Do you admit your mis-

takes and suggest a solution to remedy it?

- Are you reactive or proactive?
- Do you let your staff know you are there to help?
- Do you encourage your staff to take risks and support them?
- Do you give and ask for feedback?
- Do you challenge unaccountable behaviour in others?
- Do you set goals in consultation with your staff and monitor their progress?
- How do you handle failure?

Consider this which I came across the other day. "People who are unaccountable hide behind their job description. Do you?" That same article went on to say: "Accountability means more than just doing your job. It includes an obligation to make things better, to pursue excellence and to do things in ways that further the goals of the organisation, your people and you. If outmoded or

wasteful tasks are part of your job description, it is your responsibility to do something about it."

So are you an early warning system for recognising problems and solving them in a responsible and intelligent manner? It does not matter where the problem comes from. It might be yours or you might have inherited it. The crucial question is, "What are you going to do about it?" and not "That is not my problem."

Suggestions

If you are truly accountable, here are some of the things you will do.

- Listen.
- Question.
- Invite/offer feedback.
- Give honest, constructive feedback to others.
- Be assertive.
- Ask for what you need to do your job effectively, such as information, assistance and support.
- Do not be afraid to say no.
- Challenge.

Being accountable is one of the fastest ways to earn respect and trust. More importantly, it puts you in control of your life. Responding accountably to life's challenges

'Taking responsibility should be at the top of the agenda'

COACHING



gives you the power to change things. That is the biggest benefit. Think about it.

Being accountable is not only what we do, but also what we do not do. To conclude, accountability's partner is responsibility, you cannot separate the two. We have a responsibility to show:

- Respect.
- Loyalty.
- Reliability (keeping to promises).
- Integrity.
- Judgement.
- Sincerity.
- Truthfulness.
- Honesty.
- An overwhelming responsibility to help our

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staff look for ways to do their work better.

Being accountable and responsible builds respect, trust and integrity. Think about it.



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Carlson

MENTORING



Q About six months ago, I started in a new management role with another company. The timing coincided with what appears to be the annual get-together for various departments. This will probably not get printed as the topic is not in the mainstream. The problem I have is, having been briefed on past events such as this, there is little or no direction on having fun, yet it is themed as a team-building event. It strikes me as a waste of time and money in its current format. I would appreciate your help in giving me some direction that I can take to the boss to get some structure for this event.

Thank you for your question and never presume your letter will not be addressed.

You are not alone in being concerned at how many teambuilding sessions and others are developed without any structure or direction, let alone the next steps.

Do not get me wrong, I have nothing against events that are purely for fun. They serve a purpose, but please do not call them teambuilding because they are not. Your planning should involve raising questions and a corresponding solution, otherwise you may come across to your boss that you are simply raising problems.

First, when discussing with the boss, find out what events were held, as well as the objectives and results? What changed as a result of the event? This will provide you with a plat-

form to raise your concerns about the rudderless direction of the forthcoming event.

Second, ascertain the specific issues to be addressed. If teambuilding is still the preferred route, question specifically what aspects of teambuilding should be the focus, namely:

- Communication.
- Creativity.
- Problem solving.
- Sharing.
- Decisionmaking.

Third, how is the company going to measure its success and over what time frame?

Fourth, who will champion the follow up on the event to ensure learning is reinforced, otherwise 90 per cent of the lessons would be gone in 72 hours or less – a frightening waste of time and money.

Fifth, how do you select games/simulations that will help achieve the objectives? Indoor or outdoor events or both?

Sixth, how will the participants be grouped to ensure the weaker "team members" have the opportunity of working together, under guidance from the facilitators to resolve the issues?

Lastly, how will you solicit feedback on the event?

This should signal to your boss that you are accepting accountability by raising issues and possible solutions. Teambuilding events are dogged by companies who believe you can build a team overnight. Any event should be part of an ongoing programme and not the be-all and end-all. Good luck.

Have a work-related issue or problem? Write to Ray (ray@think8.net).