

Working Remotely: Tip of the Week February 1, 2021

Resolve to Be Personally Accountable

"I was wrong. I am sorry." For most of us, those are hard words to say. Deceptively simple, but hard to do. Remember that no one is perfect. We are all works-in-progress.

When most people think about accountability, they most often look through the lens of how accountable others are to them. But first, we need to look in the mirror and see how accountable we are to ourselves—for who we are and how we act. Notice the number of times we say, "I'm sorry" (in all its forms including, "That's on me," "That was the wrong call," and "You were right").

At the heart of accountability are two key principles: **honesty** and **humility**. With these two "h"s, we become accountable for who we are—and who we are becoming. Accountability is substantially different from responsibility. Responsibility is all in the present. Accountability is after the fact, which means owning the outcome—win or lose.

At work, a lack of accountability can make people seem indecisive, unreliable, incompetent or even dishonest, especially when the stakes are high. The problem is not that people are afraid of making decisions—they're actually afraid of the consequences of those decisions. When it comes to the accolades and taking credit, many people are quick to use: I, me, and my. But when it comes to accountability for failure, it's too often: they, them, and their.

Accountability starts at the top with greater self-awareness. We all have strengths and weaknesses in what we do. In great teamwork, you can use my strengths to help your weaknesses and I will use your strengths to help my weaknesses. In any organization, that's how the best teams come together—it's all about collaboration across differences and unique capability. Just as leaders must improve themselves before they can improve their organizations, accountability is also personal first—then team and organizational.

- Each of us must strive for a **say/do ratio of 1-to-1**. We say what we mean, and we do what we say—honestly and with accountability. A person's word is only as good as their last promise kept.
- **"Ego is not your amigo."** The cost of self-delusion is high. Research shows that people who greatly overstate their abilities are 6.2 times more likely to derail than those who have self-awareness.
- **To improve performance at all levels**, accountability is a surprising secret weapon. On the organization level, research reveals five key factors for achieving superior performance. Three are intuitive: purpose, leadership, and

strategy. The other two probably don't come to mind automatically: accountability and capability—but together, they contribute about 50 percent of organizational performance. The same holds true for individuals—accountability is the all-important foundation. We hold ourselves accountable to listen first—then lead. That starts with taking a total inventory across the organization—listening for what people are thinking, feeling, and experiencing. Only with a total picture, accurately perceiving today, will we become agile—the number one predictor of success. We will “know what to do when we don't know what to do.”

Making tough decisions—the difficult calls that affect others—is never easy. Harder still is living with the consequences of those decisions. But that is what accountability is all about. With honesty and humility, we say, “Whatever the outcome, I own it.” In the end, the accountability we wish to see in others starts with each of us.

Today's Tip is drawn from an email from Gary Burnison, the CEO of Korn-Ferry. For more Tips on working remotely, please visit <https://bit.ly/mc-remote-working-e> and watch for the next tip on February 15, 2021.

Brought to you by Professional Development—ELITE.