

# How Did That Happen?

Holding People Accountable for Results the Positive, Principled Way

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## Overview

- Successfully holding others accountable to deliver on expectations and doing it in a way they feel good about requires real effort and skill.
- Book lays out a two-part, stepped method that yields predictable and satisfying results...
- But most people don't take the time to follow logical steps consistently – expecting your people to fill in the blanks and move forward despite lack of clarity.
- You resolve issues as you go and troubleshoot along the way... and find yourselves asking the question How did that happen?

## Accountability

- Definition: to effectively form, communicate, align, and inspect the fulfillment of an expectation in a positive principled way that enables people to achieve results now and in the future.
- Accountability Fallacy – when people fail to follow-through there's something wrong with them

### Accountability Truth

- Accountability Assumption – people are doing their very best in any given circumstance to fulfill my expectations
- Accountable Truth – when something goes wrong, there is usually something wrong with what I am doing.
- The better question to ask is “How did I let that happen?”

### Top Five Reasons People Don't Hold Others Accountable

- A fear of offending someone or jeopardizing a personal relationship.
- A feeling that they lack the time to follow-up effectively.
- A lack of faith that the effort will make enough of a difference.
- A worry that my holding someone else accountable, they may expose their own failure.
- A reluctance to spark any potential retaliation

### Accountability Styles

- Coerce & Compel
  - Advantages:
    - Takes action when things go wrong
    - Exercises persistence in follow-up
    - Doesn't give up easily
    - Ensures frequent, regular reporting
    - Communicates high expectations
    - Stays focused on the task at hand

- Disadvantages:
  - Intimidates others
  - Overreacts to bad news
  - Tends to 'force' things to happen
  - Willingly sacrifices relationships
  - Resists a people-oriented approach
  - Lacks sufficient trust in others
- Wait & See
  - Advantages:
    - Strongly supports people
    - Emphasizes giving people freedom to succeed or fail
    - Places trust in others
    - Steps in with great caution
    - Builds strong loyalty and support in others
    - Thoroughly thinks through intervention before action
  - Disadvantages:
    - Avoids a proactive approach
    - Strikes people as disengaged
    - Makes false assumptions that things are happening
    - Does not follow-up often enough
    - Tends to err on the side of not intervening
    - Sets low expectations.

## Summary

- Best Accountability Style blends elements of Coerce & Compel with Wait & See
- The Accountability Connection means - every time you hold someone accountable you create an experience – positive or negative – that impacts your relationship and your effectiveness

## How Did That Happen?

- Circular Model
  - Outer Ring – Establishing Expectations – Four Steps:
    - Form Clear Expectations
    - Communicate Expectations
    - Align Expectations
    - Inspect Expectations
  - Inner Ring – When Expectations are not Met – Why? Four Solutions:
    - Motivation
    - Training
    - Culture
    - Accountability

## Step 1: Form Clear Expectations

- True or False?
  - You wonder why the people you depend on 'just don't seem to get it.'
  - You are often disappointed with results and ask 'how did that happen?'
  - The people you work closest with are not able to articulate what's most important to you with any degree of certainty.
  - You assume people already have the vision of what needs to be done, and don't take the time to form specific expectations.
  - You often have to re-explain and clarify what you really want.

### Expectations

- Definition - a strong belief that someone will or should do something.
- Key Expectation – an expectation that must be achieved and will require the commitment from everyone to do what needs to be done to deliver the result.
- Effective expectations being with a clear statement of what you want to have happen.

### FORM Clear Expectations

- FORM Checklist
  - **Framable** – the expectation is consistent with the current vision, strategy and business priorities
  - **Obtainable** – the expectation is achievable in terms of current resource and capacity constraints
  - **Repeatable** – the expectation is portable and can be clearly repeated through the expectations chain.
  - **Measurable** – progress toward achieving the expectation can be tracked and fulfillment can be measured

## Step 2: Communicate Expectations

- Most Common Mistakes
  - Delivering 'marching orders' without making directions clear enough that people fully understand and accept them.
  - Assuming people only need one explanation
  - Failing to form an expectation clearly before communicating it to others
  - Excluding any explanation of 'why' you want something done
  - Asking people to do something, but not clearly explaining when you need it to be done.
  - Failing to describe the resources available to help.
  - Issuing such specific instructions about what and how to do it, that people don't 'own it' themselves and think outside the box to ensure the result.

### WHY – WHAT – WHEN

#### WHY?

- Make the why compelling
- Spark the imagination and strike a nerve

- Leaders spend 95% of their effort on What-When and only 5% on Why – reverse that for alignment
- Six ways to craft a compelling why
  - Tailor it to your specific audience.
  - Make it short, simple and clear.
  - Be candid, forthcoming and honest so people believe it is genuine.
  - Make it a dialogue, not a monologue.
  - Create 'the hook' that catches people's attention and gets buy in.
  - Frame it in a strategic context (how it fits into the big picture).

## WHAT?

- Expectations using the FORM checklist
- Boundaries discussion
  - What are the acceptable and unacceptable practices in our culture?
  - What are budget, time, resource constraints?
  - Have we clarified existing priorities and their impact on this expectation?
  - What external factors must we keep in mind?
- People often do not clearly understand boundaries, even when you think there's no chance of confusion
- What is the support available?

## WHEN?

- Specific timeframe – deadline
- Origin: Civil War prisons – line on the ground, if you step over it, we shoot you
- Not recommending you shoot people, but be clear on the when
- Communicate Expectations with clear Why – What – When

## Step 3: Align Expectations

- Compliment vs. Complete Alignment
  - Compliment – people decide to move together, not because they agree, but because complying with what you want seems to be in their best interest. Gets 'hands and feet' moving, but not 'hearts and minds.' Rules organizations today. Doesn't generate the investment and ownership needed for success
- Complete Alignment
  - People talk about the importance and positive impact of what they are doing.
  - People give it 100 percent.
  - People invest and work to get the job done with an obvious sense of ownership
  - People speak with conviction about the importance of what they are doing
  - People think creatively to overcome obstacles
- Alignment – Final Thoughts
  - Moving the boulder (Tiger Woods – loose impediment at the Phoenix Open)
  - Answer the questions – Is it clear, needed, achievable and linked? Move past compliance in your organization
  - Best alignment story – Apollo 13. Gene Kranz's team...

## Step #4: Inspect Expectations

- Definition: To assess the condition of how closely key expectations are being fulfilled, to ensure continued alignment, to provide needed support, to reinforce progress, and to promote learning, all in order to bring about the delivery of expected results.
- Reasons People Don't Want You to Inspect
  - They think it means you don't trust them.
  - They want to be empowered and not second-guessed.
  - They don't want to disappoint you and fear they can't live up to your standards.
  - They want full credit for their responsibility.
  - They take pride in not needing your time and attention.
  - They don't think your inspection will add value.
- Be sensitive to these natural concerns. Develop a mutual agreement upfront about how the inspection process will occur.
- LOOK Model
  - **Listen** – for the 'heart and mind' by asking the Right Questions:
    - Focus on the issue, not the person (they do not get personal, and they do not contain sarcasm)
    - Are designed to help people succeed, not to reveal their failures.
    - Are candid and designed to get to the real issue.
    - Help create an environment where people feel respected, professional, on task and successful.
    - Avoid an egocentric emphasis – with more attention on the questioner than the issue.
    - Do not belittle or scold (individual issues handled privately).
  - **Observe** – and stay close enough to see what is happening.
  - **Objectify** – follow-up with concrete plans & dashboards, reports, update meetings, e-mails, etc.
  - **Know** – what is going on by staying engaged.

## The Four Solutions

- Effectively establishing expectations in this way will minimize the number of key expectations that go unmet
- Second half of the answer includes strategies for dealing with surprises
- Not just about 'right people on the bus'
- Skillfully managing unmet expectations is key to any organization that aspires to greatness

## Dealing with Unmet Expectations

- Three Choices
  - Lower the expectations to accommodate people who are not delivering
  - Replace those people
  - Engage them in an accountability conversation to help them produce the results you want
- Best option is number three

- First make sure expectations were clearly established using each of the previous steps
- Then apply one of the four solutions
  - Motivation
  - Training
  - Accountability
  - Culture

## Solution #1: Motivation

- Hands & Feet
  - People are more tactical
  - People are in 'tell me what to do' mode
  - People are less creative & don't speak up
  - Success defined by time and effort
- Heart & Minds
  - People are strategic and tactical
  - People show initiative
  - People are creative at solving problems and push back
  - Success defined by results

### Capturing Heart & Mind

- Enroll people in your 'Cause'
  - **Define it** in the form of a story with a plot, setting and characters
  - **Sell it** by becoming a storyteller who persuades people to buy in – address the Why questions
  - **Re-sell it** by reinforcing the story with evidence and retelling the story over time
  - **Celebrate it** – not just the ultimate success, but milestones along the way

### Cause Killers

- You stop promoting the cause and telling the story.
- You act out of sync with the cause
- You don't celebrate successes along the way
- You don't encourage creativity, input and involvement from others
- You let other causes dilute the effort
- You don't dialogue and address questions

## Solution #2: Training

- Providing the right people with the right training at the right time can make the difference between success and failure
- Identify lack of competencies and level of coaching/training needed

### Effective Coaching

- Feedback lessons
  - Feedback doesn't happen unless you make it happen.
  - People tend to stop giving feedback over time.
  - It is easier to give a appreciative feedback than constructive feedback.
  - People do not act on feedback without follow-up.

- It is easier to filter feedback than to accept it.
- People fear constructive feedback because it seems like criticism
- Organizations underestimate the difficulty of getting people to give and receive feedback

### Show Them

- Fast Training Model
  - Describe it
  - Demonstrate it
  - Do it
  - Debrief it
  - Do it again, but better!

## Solution #3: Personal Accountability

- Sometimes people fail to deliver because they do not take sufficient personal accountability
- The authors book, The Oz Principle focuses on this
- The truly accountable person doesn't ask 'Who can I blame for this problem?' but 'What else can I do to achieve the result?'

### Steps to Accountability

- **See It** – face reality and hear the perspectives of others
- **Own It** – make the connection between their actions and the current situation
- **Solve It** – personally and constantly asking 'What else can I do?'
- **Do It** – following through on commitments, take action, make progress, achieve results

### Below the Line of Accountability

- 'The Blame Game' – justifying unmet expectations by chalking it all up to things beyond their control
- Below the Line
  - Wait and See
  - Cover Your Tail
  - Confusion/Tell me what to do
  - Finger Pointing
  - Ignore/Deny
  - It's not my job

### The Accountability Flow

- Traditionally, top-down where those in authority positions assume responsibility for generating accountability.
- Bottom-up focuses accountability on the individual at every level.
- 360 degree accountability means holding your boss, subordinates, peers, other team members and even vendors and suppliers accountable

### Accountability Paradoxes

- Success Paradox –performers use coercion, which doesn't develop personal accountability

- Consequences Paradox – accountability is about punishment when something goes wrong (negative), not something everyone embraces to get positive results
- Shared Accountability Paradox – the ability of others to do what they say they will affects your ability to fulfill expectations

## Solution #4 – Culture

- Create a culture of accountability to manage unmet expectations
- Definition – a place where people think and act, on a daily basis, in the manner necessary to develop successful solutions, find answers, overcome obstacles, triumph over trouble and deliver results

- Best accountability culture

### Accountability Cultures

- Culture of Abdication – people avoid taking accountability as much as possible
- Culture of Intimidation – forced accountability creating ‘tell-me-what-to-do’ mode
- Culture of Confusion – not clearly defined, so accountability by surprise.
- Culture of Complacency – people do what is expected narrowly (‘it’s not my job’)

## Organization Integrity

- Organizational Integrity lies at the heart of producing results and maintaining relationships of trust and respect
- Three Core Values:
  - **Follow Through** – I do what I say I will do – make every effort to meet deadlines & commitments
  - **Get Real** – I get to the truth and acknowledge the way things really are
  - **Speak Up** – I say what needs to be said, no matter what