

Disregard Your Popularity; Hold Employees Accountable

In coaching business owners, I have found that too many leaders do not hold their people accountable for reaching established goals or performance standards. In my opinion, such lack of accountability is one of the deadly business mistakes. As a business manager, or self-employed professional, it is absolutely critical that you hold people accountable.

What's currently happening in most small businesses? Meetings are held, issues are discussed, solutions are proposed, and goals are set. Unfortunately, the story usually ends there. Implementation is weak at best. Follow-up and accountability are missing. Ideas, strategies, and tactics never get off the ground. Many promises fall through the cracks. What a waste of time and talent! If you are going to take the time to hold meetings, propose solutions, set goals, then follow through and hold people accountable. This is not rocket science. But, many times the issue is that the business owner, self-employed professional or manager does not have anyone to hold them accountable so the lack of follow-through filters from the top down.

Why? Because owners are not functioning as leaders. They are not monitoring progress on goals. They are too busy with the details of the business to focus on the performance of others or the overall performance of the company.

Moreover, too many business owners try to be liked instead of respected. Holding people accountable can be confrontational at times. Many owners avoid tension, conflict, and on-going performance reviews. Such avoidance is dangerous to your business and the development of your people. Don't be everyone's buddy. Don't try to be popular. This isn't high school. As a leader, you need to be respected, not necessarily liked. Above all else, you are their boss and a challenging coach that demands the best of each player.

Meet with your key employees or managers at least once a month for a one-to-one, good-old-fashioned accountability session. Remind them of your expectations. Help them to grow and improve. Again, when you create clarity of expectations and standards, there is less confusion and more effective delegation and accountability.

Be very careful about letting your employees become your social friends. You need to remain objective to make decisions that are in the best interest of the company. If you want a friend, get a pet. If you want to be liked by everyone, sell your business and get a job!. Trying to please or be liked by everyone is a sure bet for disaster.

Give people the responsibility, freedom, resources, and support required to get important things done. Let them know they will be held accountable for certain results. Continually remind them of your expectations. Monitor their progress and intervene only when necessary. Give them feedback. Praise an employee's progress on goals in public but criticize their poor performance in private. However, in public, feel free to express

your disappointment and frustration to your entire team. Just save the harsh criticism for an individual for behind closed doors.

Here are some basic ground rules for effective accountability:

- Never let committees, groups, or multiple persons be accountable for making things happen.
- Make sure one person/one champion is responsible and accountable for each key assignment.
- Establish goals and clarify due dates for results.
- Conduct regularly scheduled follow-up meetings to gauge progress on goals and hold people accountable.
- If they consistently fail to get important things done, give them different jobs or replace them with new people.

Do not allow poor implementation to infect your business. It's a cancer, a death sentence. You have only two choices; you can establish a culture that tolerates excuses or one that insists on performance. Do you want more excuses or execution of goals? For improved results, you must start leading and holding your people accountable.

People want to be held accountable and challenged. They also want constant feedback on their performance. They want to learn and to grow. They even desire a healthy environment of discipline. All this helps them develop and reach their potential. Accountability is beneficial feedback that shows you care. Make certain your employees feel appreciated and important – they crave it!

As the business owner or professional, who will hold you accountable? You deserve and need the same support and environment of discipline described above. Get yourself a coach, or use a Board of Advisors, and lean on them to provide you with the same kind of support with which you support your employees. Together you will reach your greatest potential.

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