LOWISZ
LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE
A Qualigence International Company

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO ACCOUNTABILITY

Do you have a healthy relationship with accountability?

How would your team answer that?

Is it viewed as a negative?

Is it viewed as something to dread?

If you think of accountability as anything less than a positive action you take as a leader, or if it's something you flat out avoid, chances are your team fears it as well! But when approached correctly, accountability can be turned into a willing sense of ownership for you and your team. Positive accountability ups everyone's game and it is well worth the effort to implement and build into the culture of your business. Embracing and practicing positive accountability is a key element to every successful team and getting there is very achievable.

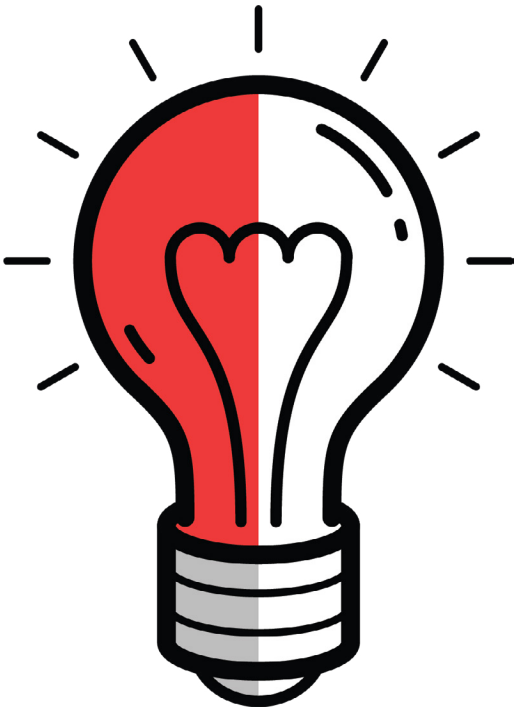
HOW WE DEFINE ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is what closes the gap between what you say you'll do and what you do. It's also the process of proactively checking in with your people, not waiting until the deadline is over, and the goal isn't achieved. Without it, even the best intentions will stay stuck in neutral. For the best results, accountability is applied from top to bottom in any organization. A great leader models accountability and expects it from others. An effective team feels a sense of ownership that brings out self-driven accountability.

WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY CAN DO FOR YOU, YOUR TEAM, AND YOUR BUSINESS

Everyone needs true accountability to get results. Good intentions don't drive success, actions do. The only thing that keeps action on track is accountability–personal and team-based accountability. When positive accountability is done well and a consistent part of your communications and routines, it elevates everyone's performance. Leaders are more respected, resulting in a stronger following. Team members are more effective and engaged. Teams work better together and reach goals faster. Businesses are more likely to be successful in achieving their mission and goals.

THE 5 PILLARS OF POSITIVE ACCOUNTABILITY



1. CLARITY

Getting clear on what is expected

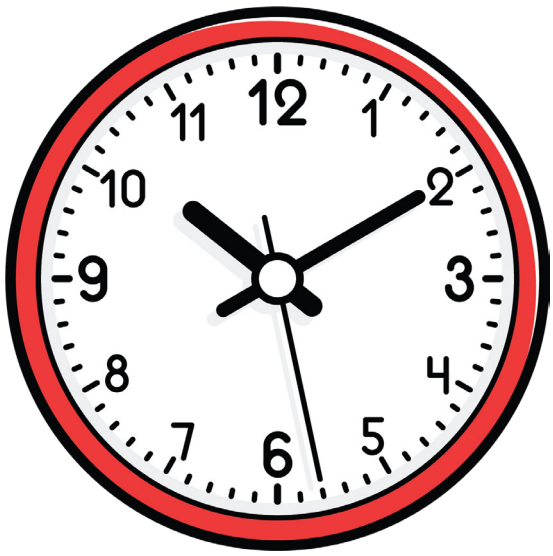
Clarity is kind. Without clear, specific, communicated expectations the road to accountability is already off course. Don't assume others interpret the task at hand the same way you do. Clarity isn't there unless it's meaningful to the person responsible for the work. What are the essential elements that need to be communicated to arrive at the desired result?

What are the tangible markers of success? If a well-meaning person arrives at a different result than you intended, but the expectations weren't clear from the start, attempting to hold them accountable now isn't helpful or fair. Positive accountability starts with clarity.

2. TIMING

Communicating when it is expected

What is the difference between a timeline and a deadline? Imagine the following two approaches. First, choosing a deadline, showing up at the end, and evaluating the results. Second, setting up a timeline with checkpoints along the way to ask questions, offer help, and stay on course, then arriving at the end together. Which approach to accountability are you taking? The deadline is an all-or-nothing approach that can bring about the fear mentioned earlier, making it too late to adjust and achieve the desired result. Who really thrives with this approach? Deadlines are critical in every business, however changing your mindset to a timeline-based approach means you're more likely to arrive at the desired result together. This creates a positive view of the process for all involved. Shared timing is a proactive part of positive accountability.



3. OWNERSHIP

Working with an ownership mindset

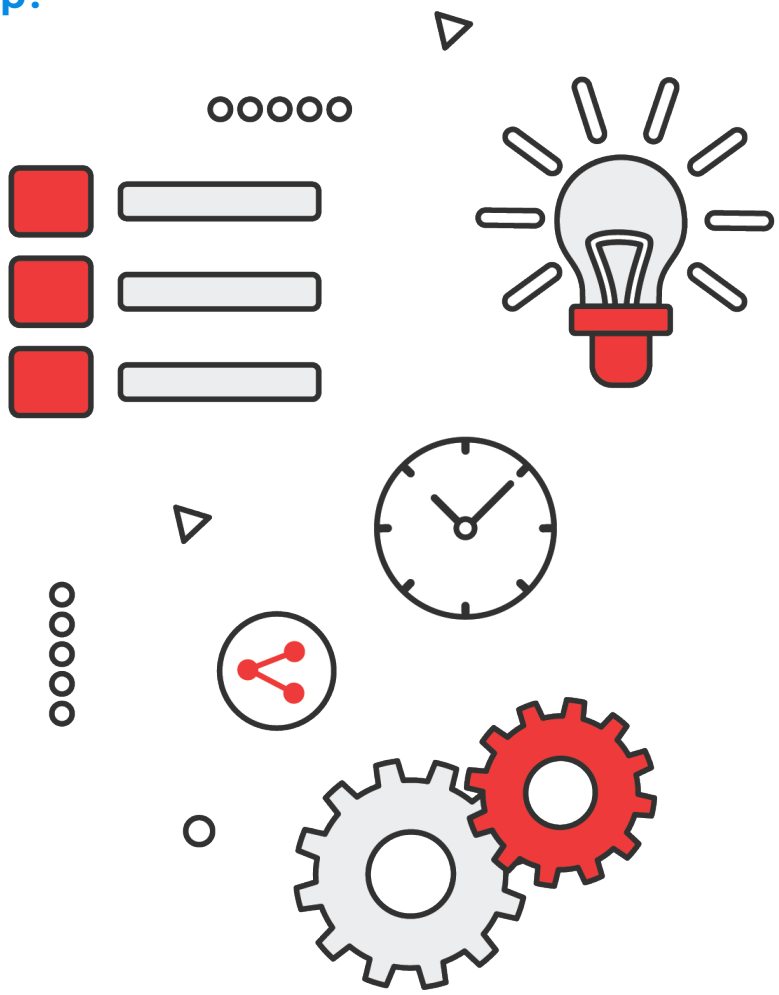
You could say an ownership mindset is the highest level of accountability. It happens when you or your team are so engaged and committed to each other, the business, and the results that they hold themselves accountable and act on their own accord.

How do responsibility, accountability, and ownership compare and how do they occur?

RESPONSIBILITY	ACCOUNTABILITY	OWNERSHIP
What they must do	The obligation to do it	What they choose to do
Assigned	**Modeled**	**Self-Motivated**

Why do teams NOT take ownership?

- Differing definitions of ownership
- Lack of skills or experience
- Don't believe in your approach
- Haven't defined their own strategy
- Afraid to make a mistake
- Being micromanaged
- Leaders try to assign ownership
- Work is not aligned with their personal drivers
- Lack of accountability and support
- Having the wrong people on the team
- We make it easy to not take ownership



What reasons would you add to the list above?

How do you create an environment where a team chooses to do the work and adopts an ownership mindset?

☐ Commonly Accepted Purpose

This applies across the team, not just to individual team members. Does everyone know what it means to win? For each project, team, and business?

☐ Competent People

Hire the right people based on what it means to win. You need people who understand and can achieve the commonly accepted purpose.

☐ Capable Plan/Process

Assemble a clear plan that the team can follow. Make it a repeatable process that results in winning.

☐ Way of Determining Team Performance

Like any sports team, you need a scoreboard to know if you're winning. Business teams need metrics too, not just the individuals on the team. The team should be able to clearly see and understand the scoreboard, knowing how their role affects the overall score. Only measuring individual performance detracts from creating a team that works together to win.

☐ Shared Providence (Fate)

An understanding and acceptance that, as a team, we all win, or we all lose. The most successful organizations focus first on team fate, unlike most organizations who rely primarily on individual performance and individual metrics.

☐ Deal With Problems Together

The best teams work together to solve challenges. They hold each other accountable for performing in a way that helps achieve the team objective. When someone doesn't pull their weight, the team comes together to support the player prior to always involving the leader. This further strengthens their sense of ownership.

☐ Personal Commitment to Results

As part of the planning process, it's important to address the goals of the business, and tie them to what is important to the individual. Understanding the drivers of every member of the team develops a deeper commitment from each person.

4. GUIDING

Teach people to solve problems themselves

Guide, Don't Drive™. A key ingredient to creating positive accountability is the art of guiding with questions and support, rather than driving with directives and fear. When roadblocks or missteps arise, teaching others how to address it themselves is more effective overall than solving it for them in the moment. Taking a positive accountability approach by asking questions, gathering information, and teaching them to find the solution or next step fosters growth and learning. When individuals come up with the solution themselves rather than having it handed to them, they own the solution they created. This creates a sense of ownership.

Try this approach to teaching problem solving –

The Baker's Dozen: 13 Questions to Solve Real Problems

5. RESULTS

Arriving at what you set out to accomplish

You still need to set the bar and reflect on what you achieved or didn't and why. There is valuable learning there. As a leader, you can create an environment where individuals and teams choose to meet their responsibilities, hold themselves and others accountable, act with a sense of ownership, and get results for themselves and the organization.

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MORE RESOURCES

Read: More Free Leadership Guides (5 min)

Listen: Leadership Live Accountability discussion (60 min)

Watch: Micro-Learning Accountability course (75 min)