

Accountability

ac·count·a·bil·i·ty

1. The fact or condition of being accountable; responsibility.
2. An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions

What is Accountability in the Workplace?

Accountability means having to answer for one's actions. How different do we behave and react if we know we have to explain our actions to someone else? And that our actions will result in reward or punishment accordingly?

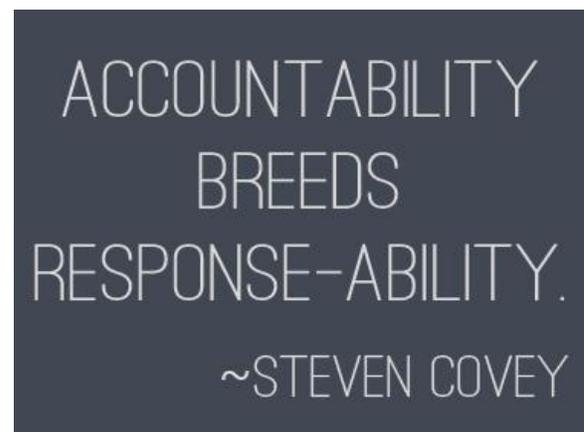
The idea is compelling: if a person knows that she/he will have to explain his/her actions to another person and that those actions will be rewarded or punished accordingly, typically that person will make an effort to act "better." In the workplace it is the difference between owning your job and simply showing up daily.

Ownership naturally leads to more accountability. Think about the difference it makes if a person owns a car versus renting a car. Generally, ownership means more care, thinking long term, pride and identity. Car renters on the other hand may think differently, not care about the resale value of the car, not provide the same level of care, there is no attachment, no personal identity involved. The actions taken with ownership are

different. Ownership involves a very different mindset.

How Do We "Own the Job"?

Taking 100% responsibility for the success of an organization is the first step to job ownership. That means that every single employee regardless of position or level, whether staff, faculty or student is equally responsible for the success of the organization. Long term and short term goals can only be achieved if all work together and share accountability. As teams work together towards the same overall goal they help their workplace to become more accountable, in turn making the organization more productive and efficient. Ownership creates accountability, and for the student more willingness to accept responsibility and account for one's actions.



For Students:

How to be more accountable and own your job

- Know what you are accountable for, understand the goals for your department or office.
- Never blame or finger point. Don't make excuses or complain.
- Ask for support when needed, don't wait till a crisis occurs.
- Take responsibility, and create solutions to problems.
- Be willing to listen to feedback. Others see things we do not. A great way to learn to be more accountable is simply to listen.
- Be willing to give others feedback. Constructive feedback creates accountability.



For Supervisors:

Teaching and Reinforcing Accountability

- Supervisors set the proper expectations for job performance with a student.
- Engage students in the process of setting goals. Allowing input invites ownership.
- Ask for a real commitment from students to accomplish the goals that are set.
- Make sure students know the consequences of not accomplishing tasks and link clearly to goals.
- Provide reward when students do accomplish tasks and goals.
- Make sure that students know they will have to explain actions up close and personal as well as often.
- Measure progress and provide clear feedback. Allow students to adjust behavior before it's too late.
- Focus on actions that students can control.
- Set the bar high and keep it high.
- Use influence when it works, use authority when necessary.
- Separate your role as supervisor from that of friend.
- Be willing to be a role model of accountability.