

happened. In business we are fast to identify people's failures and missed deadlines and rarely thank them for the everyday miracles of high performance. We look for someone to blame for what goes wrong. We don't "blame" people for what went right. This negative orientation is the focus of most thinking around accountability.

In our model, accountability is about the **positive** actions each of us can take in our daily work and personal lives. It is a way of thinking, acting and investing our energy in ourselves, other people and systems that propel us towards successful results that are consistent with our intentions.

Accountability is **owning** the consequences of our **choices** in delivering the **agreed to results**. This is a neutral definition. There is no distinction about success or failure.

Ownership:

Ownership implies that we possess the responsibility for the consequences of what we think and do that impact the events, situations, relationships, processes and things in our lives. Although we may share that responsibility with others our choices contribute to the outcome of the whole. When we join a team or take part in a meeting we own the results that the whole team or meeting creates. If we act as if the meeting or team belongs to someone else like the facilitator, the organizer or the team leader we are denying our ownership. When we own something we take possession of it and the power to impact results. Examples are:

- Sharing our expectations with other people on the team.
- Influencing another person to change their point of view even if it is uncomfortable for us or others.
- Stepping in proactively and voluntarily when we see someone on our team struggling to make a deadline.
- When something goes wrong, without blaming others, looking first at ourselves and asking; "what else could I have done to have made this go right?"
- Looking first at the system or process to find the answer, rather than blaming others.

These are all accountable behaviors.

If we take on the job of managing we own all that comes with that position, implied and explicit. As managers we are responsible for things like planning, organizing,

motivating, leading, controlling, measuring, analyzing, making decisions, improving outcomes and implementing to create results. Very few management job descriptions mention these basic responsibilities that are implied in the title of manager. When we take on the role of manager we own these functions of management and the results they create.

Ownership creates opportunity. When we own a mistake or a success we look at it with openness to see what we can learn. When we deny ownership and blame others for failures and mistakes we limit our opportunity to learn.

Choice:

Events occur that require us to make a choice; a decision. We always have a choice and control of our thinking, even if we don't like the consequences of some of the alternatives. Not making a a decision or not taking action is also a choice. Viktor Frankl wrote in *Man's Search For Meaning*, that even in the worst circumstances of the Second World War concentration camps people could choose their attitudes and thinking. Some people survived as a result of the choices they made. Some just lived more fulfilling lives while they waited to die. Frankl promoted the idea that we are responsible to choose our attitude in every situation. The alternative is to become animalistic; victims of circumstances; to give into the impulse of the moment. Victims think that other people and situations **cause** their choices. They don't see they are choosing. We have the power to choose how we interpret what we see, hear, touch, taste, smell, and think; we always choose what we perceive. We choose what we want in any situation. And when there is a difference between what we want and what we perceive, we can choose a behavior to close the gap. We always choose our behaviors, even if that choice is from habit or below the level of consciousness. These choices are limitless and we make them thousands of times a day. Turn right or turn left are both choices. Accountability requires that we own what happens as a result of these choices, even when they are impulsive or sub-conscious.

Results:

The last piece of our accountability definition is the anchor, the agreed to results. In our everyday work we agree to all kinds of things. When we accept the job of manager, even though we cannot control people, we take ownership for results like retaining employees and supporting them to stay fully engaged in their work. When we go to work for an organization we implicitly take ownership for the

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