

intentions of the overall organization. When people are aligned around these common and overlapping targets the organization thrives and grows. When they are unaligned people and groups are frequently moving at cross purposes and not achieving all that is possible.

The "We" actually starts with an "I". The first step in activating the "We" is that each individual in the organization acknowledges and commits to the fact that they are working and living in an interdependent environment. No one person can deliver the organizational results on their own, nor can any single department. Collaboration is required. In a truly accountable organization any decision people make includes a consideration of the impact of that choice on the organization and other functions, departments and individuals.

Julie is a Vice President of Information Services (IS) in a small manufacturing company. Frequently department heads and individuals come to her with "emergencies." They usually involve processes that have been initiated at the department level that have failed to deliver what was expected. She is asked to "immediately" help people overcome the problem or create a system or a "fix" to achieve the purpose of the process. Julie has no hesitation to help other departments and individuals; after all, they are her customers and her reason for being there. Her frustrations arise because most of these "emergencies" could have been avoided if the IS department had been consulted early in the planning stages of these new processes. In this way she could skip the mess of cleaning up a bad situation under the pressure of time while interrupting other planned activities for her group.

In Julie's company, people frequently seem to be excluding each other. The attitude communicated is, the fewer people involved, the more independence we can have in making our choices for the good of our department. Company needs and the impact on others are not a concern for some of the people in this culture.

After many frustrating days and nights Julie finally puts the "I" in the "We" and broaches the subject at a Leadership Team Meeting with the other high ranking executives in the company. She proactively leads the discussion to initiate a new attitude in the organization, not just about Information Services, but about cross functional cooperation in general. The CEO and the President both welcome the conversation. Julie comes prepared with examples of interdepartmental opportunities that have been missed, many not involving her department. She proposes a solution for all of them. She knows that a shift or change in culture takes deliberate action. The four actions she suggests are simple and a good start to bridging the gap:

1. Each time people plan a meeting, a project, a new process or a change in an existing process, operating rule or principle they will take time to deliberately consider what other departments and individuals should be invited to participate. They will also do some risk management, examining what might happen if those other people and entities are not involved. They will then extend an invitation to

other people letting them know why it's important that they attend and should be involved.

2. Every meeting and discussion with workers will include some consideration of and focus on the Sweet Spot of Accountability. Asking the question: What is the impact of our decisions and actions on other individuals, departments and functions and the impact on the overall organizational vision, strategies, goals and intentions? Make the implicit explicit. Get people actively and habitually thinking about their part in the Sweet Spot - what success looks like for all involved.
3. At each monthly Leadership Team Meeting, the executives will review their actions and the improvements that have been made as a result of this cross functional and interdepartmental dialogue taking the measure of their successes and failures, learning from their mistakes and planning adjustments to and making commitments for their future actions.
4. Deliberately share throughout the organization both success stories and lessons learned in writing and in verbal exchanges.

Julie points out to the group that by implementing these four habits of consideration, discussion and review a shift in the organization's culture will come about, particularly if the Leadership Team models and leads these actions. She asks that each executive formally agree to participate in this initiative. After some discussion, they come to agreement. The CEO and President give it their full support.

Julie took initiative. She saw a need to act on her own to create a "WE" space in the thinking of the Leadership Team. She did not need permission from her bosses to take on this role. She acted on her own with the courage and conviction of her beliefs. After all, she is as accountable for the overall results of the organization as any other person. Nothing that goes on within the company is unimportant to her, even if it is not related to Information Services. She is committed to the Sweet Spot, the overall success of the organization, and to putting the "I" in "WE".

The "WE" dimension of accountability includes many factors. Some of them are:

- Continuously create the "WE" by focusing on collaboration.
 - Individual with individual.
 - Individual with team.
 - Team with team.
 - Team with organization.
 - Individual with organization.
- Align around common vision, outcomes and standards.
- Identify and make clear explicit agreements.
- Measure the right things.
- Fail forward - learn and improve.
- Own every meeting together.

Inc.and the authors.

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