



# Boost Employee Accountability and Ownership

Six critical and little known secrets to empowering your employees

BY LESLIE CUNNINGHAM

MANY LEADERS, from large organizations to small businesses, often feel uncomfortable holding their employees and team members accountable for results.

As a leader, I have discovered that to hold others accountable, I must also hold myself accountable. That means I am actively looking at my results, or lack thereof.

I view the world of results as a big mirror that reflects my own real intentions, both conscious and unconscious. Because I am highly committed to winning, I am keenly interested in my blind spots. I look at what's working and what's not, giving each due consideration.

When I'm being accountable, I am holding nothing back. I am living in the question, "In what way am I showing up that's creating these results I'm seeing in my business?" In that question, I include everyone and everything in my business AND my life.

In other words, when results are not occurring in the way I wanted, I am looking at my own unconscious way of showing up and interacting in my business. I want to see how these beliefs, assumptions, assessments and attitudes are contributing to difficult situations or challenging individuals/employees.

Being accountable is taking ownership of difficult situations with people or circumstances, even though I may have had nothing to do with the origins. Claiming ownership lets me master and overcome situations with which I am confronted.

## ♥ LOVE YOUR WORKFORCE

HERE ARE SIX LESSONS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT BEING A POWERFUL LEADER WHO HOLDS OTHERS ACCOUNTABLE

### 1. FOCUS ON CLEANING UP YOUR OWN ACT FIRST.

I reflect and identify those areas in my business and personal life where I have broken agreements or promises. I make a list of relationships where I experience a loss of energy, where I haven't claimed ownership over how I am contributing to the strained relationship or challenging situation.

For instance, when an employee says they'll do something by a certain time and I notice they didn't, integrity is

missing on my part — and I experience a loss of power as an owner, manager or team member. It's then I realize my power comes from operating with integrity.

People's lives are often run by their own reasonableness: "I was late because of the dog, the bridge or the traffic."

Integrity at its core means honoring one's word and commitments. Integrity is the willingness to do what you said you would do. It includes communicating if I am not going to deliver on a promise; taking responsibility for the consequences of my broken promise; and helping clean up any mess I made because I did not honor my word.

### 2. HONOR YOUR WORD AND COMMITMENTS.

When I say, "I couldn't because..." I've given my power to the circumstances, explanations, reasons and excuses. One way of honoring my word is to create an extraordinary vision or future for my business that inspires me and makes a difference for others — and then commit to it. Then I declare what is possible, take action and account for my results. Instead of allowing circumstances to limit what is possible, I do this over and over until my vision is accomplished.

### 3. RECOGNIZE THAT PEOPLE WANT TO AVOID ACCOUNTABILITY.

We avoid accountability because we are afraid of failing; of looking bad; of being judged by others. We're afraid of being punished if things don't turn out. It seems easier to keep our head down and wait to react to what shows up. We explain why we shouldn't be held accountable to doing what we said we'd do. When I operate as my word, however, I give up the excuses I used in the past. Instead, I am actively measuring my results over time.

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BY KARL STERNS, KMS MARKETING SOLUTIONS

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BY WILLIAM KENT, PH.D., CEO AT TEAM HORNER

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#### 4. INSPIRE OTHERS WITH A FUTURE THAT CREATES DESIRED RESULTS.

Powerful leaders inspire their employees. They share their vision in a way that allows people to own that vision for themselves. Their invitation asks, "Are you willing to commit yourself to creating a new and different outcome?" Support team members by being the vision in action, and structure their schedules and circumstances in a way that expresses the shared vision. Intentional leaders use the accountability and measure results over time, encouraging team members to live out the vision.

#### 5. COACH TEAM MEMBERS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE.

I am powerful when holding others accountable. When we think

of holding others accountable, we assume it means babysitting them — knowing they don't want to do something, and that they will resist. Having all my attention on the results does not achieve the results. What causes the results is my willingness to BE the vision. And if, as a team, we said we would do 10 things and only did three, I'm still committed as a leader even though we missed the mark. When my team doesn't hit the bulls-eye, I ask myself, "Who am I being as a leader that led us to miss the mark?" and then to coach my team members from the perspective of, "Who are my team members being that led them to miss the mark?"

#### 6. I EMPOWER TEAM MEMBERS WHEN THEY DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH ON THEIR WORD.

Powerful and effective leaders are coaches at heart. My job is

to maintain clarity, and stay clear of my beliefs and judgments around successes and failures. My team's game is win/lose. My game is to develop individuals into being high performers. I can't afford to get stuck in the ups and downs. I'm putting my team in a classroom every time they don't win. Before I say anything to them, I say to myself, "I'm committed to empowering this person." Which is vastly different than the typical approach of "I'm committed to making this person wrong." As a coach, I am standing in the commitment of not being disappointed when my team doesn't achieve their results. Instead, I'm committed to them, growing and



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