

Creating a Culture of Accountability: It Begins With You



Podcast Transcript

Hello, I'm Tricia Bachus with UF Training and Organizational Development. Today I would like to share with you the fundamental step in how leaders can build a culture of accountability in their departments, teams or work units. This is the first in a series of three podcasts related to changing workplace culture for greater results.

Before we begin, let's recap some of the fundamental steps in workplaces where accountability is prevalent. The first is what we will discuss today, which is accepting personal responsibility and expecting it from others whether they supervise us, we supervise them or we work alongside them. The second area is ensuring that there are standards in place so that employees know what the benchmarks are in order to target the execution of their work. Third, is the practice to continually push accountability out to all work units and departments, not just within your own team. And last, the need to be a courageous leader which includes the very important action of holding tough conversations with employees to ensure that the high standards are upheld.

One aspect of personal responsibility is for leaders to understand their role in the culture that is currently in place. Leaders either take ownership to manage their workplace culture or it will manage them.

This means leaders create the climate in which their teams thrive or fail. What do we mean by that? The environment in which employees work is made up of a

collection of experiences that contributes to their belief systems. For example, the belief systems around what they should pay attention to, how they should interact with others and how they should do their work.

Leadership is not a job function. It is HOW you show up in the situations of your work life and influence others to WANT to follow you. Don Shapiro, author of Life is a Fork in the Road, says it this way, “*Leadership is about who you are, not your position or power.*” This is where we begin our discussion today. Wise leaders make wise choices. Making wise choices flows from a confident center within the leader – the assurance that they know who they are, what drives them, and what their daily character will demonstrate.

Let’s look at four components that can help leaders authentically take ownership of their workplace culture:

1. Get in touch with your Personal Global Positioning System – also known as a set of core values. We tend to see things not as they are, but as we are. Values operate as this central compass, driving the decisions leaders make. Values are the essence of a person, a vein that runs through the core of who they are. Once leaders know their values, it becomes blindingly clear whether they are living in alignment with them or not. When faced with a choice, they can ask themselves, “*Does this decision or action fit with my core values?*”

2. Know your Purpose – In Michael Gerber’s book, *E-Myth: Why Most Small Businesses Don’t Work*, he asks readers to do a visualization exercise. “*Vividly picture the day of your funeral. What do you want your eulogy to consist of? What would your lifetime achievements be? What would matter the most at the end of your life? Is it what you are doing right NOW?*” Most likely, if leaders are crystal clear on their core values, they will be able to align their answers very quickly to their personal GPS. Once they are clear on their purpose, it will be evident in their attitudes and behaviors. Purpose bleeds through all that you do as a leader and models for others that quiet strength that operates behind the scenes of your decisions.

3. Choose a Finely-tuned Attitude – attitude is a by-product of character or disposition. It identifies you as YOU to others. It is demonstrated by how leaders behave, and is powered by their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings. The psychologist William James made this point when he said, “*The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitude of mind.*” Wise leaders choose their attitudes carefully because they are keenly aware that employees and co-workers are constantly watching them in order to calibrate their own moods. Leaders who show up with an attitude of personal responsibility exemplify one of the most powerful steps in building a culture of accountability.

4. Establish a Consistent Character. Ed Hess, author of *Smart Growth: Building an Enduring Business by Managing the Risks of Growth*, says, “*The behavior of leaders, coupled with attitudes and beliefs, either enables or inhibits high performance. Good intentions and words are not enough. The best leaders understand that daily behaviors count.*” Leaders who are reliable provide the stability that nurtures trusting workplace experiences. Dependable leaders have a palpable congruence between their values, purpose, beliefs, actions, and words. It really is “walking the talk” and provides a healthy ecosystem for coworkers and employees to feel confident to take risks, to be innovative and to thrive productively. In this optimum climate there are no guessing games, no unpredictable outbursts of emotion, no confusion or distrust, and no mixed signals. Maria Razumich-Zec, General Manager of Peninsula Chicago, says it this way, “*Your reputation and integrity are everything. Follow through on what you say you’re going to do. Your credibility can only be built over time, and it is built from the history of your words and actions.*”

As stated at the beginning of this podcast, there is a demonstrated formula for cultivating accountability in the workplace. Being an authentic leader who makes wise choices before determining actions is our first stop on this journey. We will have two more podcasts in this series related to getting the results leaders intend. We will dive deeper into how experiences shape employee beliefs and how those beliefs lead to the actions needed to sustain organizational results. Leaders who take ownership to embed the accountability recipe into their teams can literally change the game by changing their culture. Stay tuned.