

5 Tips to make Accountability your friend

In more and more situation in life and at work we hear the word “Accountability”. Many people outside of the accounting world take it to be synonymous with “responsibility”. For a lot of us it means that we are responsible for the results of our actions.

William Reyes in his book “Leadership Accountability in a Globalizing World” (2006), stated: ” In leadership roles, accountability is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies including the administration, governance, and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for resulting consequences.”

What does this really mean for our daily life and work?

I like to look at it in a way like a bank account. Not an ordinary bank account, but one that I am managing for someone else. When I make a commitment to do something, it is like taking the other persons money and putting it in the bank account and promising to take good care of it, not waste it, grow it if possible, and make sure it is safe. When the other person likes to check in and find out what has happened since I made my commitment, they can look at the account. In return I can account for what I did and explain why I did it.

You might ask yourself: “How does that work when we are not talking about something tangible, like money, or providing a product, or completing a simple task?”

Here are 5 tips you can apply and use immediately to make sure your accountability will always be seen as something that puts you in a positive light:

1. When making a time-related commitment, make sure that you can keep the deadline you committed to – this is a fundamental behavior that sounds simple but is often violated. When you first check that you can do what you promise, it builds trust, improves the way people judge your dependability, and makes you a goto-person when things need to be done on time. Rather use a little more time and complete your commitment than trying to be fast and asking for an extension. Time is accounted for very similar to money, so don't let your time-account go into the red.
2. When committing to something tangible, make sure that you and the person or team you are making your commitment to have a full understanding what it is you are going to do or deliver – way too often we don't make sure and then work off a premise that is not shared. This leads to frustration and insecurity. Spending a little extra effort on making sure what exactly it is you committed to and what the expected outcomes is allows you to meet and exceed expectations. A little side-effect is that you are seen by those you engage as someone who cares because you make the effort to fully understand and find agreement before you jump into action

3. Be as precise as you can – often we are in a hurry or we believe we have a reasonable understanding about the things needed to move forward. That leads to promises, commitments, promises and acceptance of tasks that are poorly defined or cover a substantial amount of work, subject matter, problem, etc. As with many things in life,

delivering on time, on budget, meeting expectations, etc. is also a matter of frequency. If you do something all the time and it appears to others as if you have to give something all the time, they see you as dependable, accountable, and they like you. The best way to achieve this reputation is by accepting rather smaller, very precise tasks. Don't agree to plan the whole party – even if that will be the ultimate outcome. Instead, first agree to find a suitable venue and secure it. Then agree to find a suitable band and book it. Then agree to find a suitable caterer and agree on a menu, - and so on. Deliver each time as promised and your account will be growing by leaps and bounds

4. Be open and offer, don't wait to be asked – if you are clear in your mind what you can do, what you like to do, what you are good at, what's easy for you to do or achieve or provide, offer it when the opportunity arises. That way you get to do what you know will make you shine and keep your commitment and promises. If you wait for others to ask you for help or assign you tasks, you leave it to them to make assumptions about what you might be good at or what you might be able to do. Just because you did something in the past that was meeting expectations does not mean you loved to do it. For others it will remain in their mind as something that you did well and they keep asking you to do it again. If you like to avoid it and have fun while completing your commitments, offer what you know you do well.
5. Don't be afraid to say no or seek help – When asked to do something you know you don't like or aren't good at (hopefully it's not so bad that you hate it), don't muddle your way through it and end up delivering a mediocre result. Stick to your guns, improve yourself in what you are good at and become an expert, a guru, a wise advisor or mentor. It is much better to be really good at something than average in a lot of things. For accountability and your own sanity, it's so much better and easier to do what you know well and keep expanding your abilities, than doing what you hate or know you struggle with just because you refuse to say “NO!”

Following these 5 tips will help you to have very positive experiences with accountability and soon people will come to you and ask: “How is it or how do you always get your stuff done on time, within or beyond expectation and you even keep a smile on your face doing it?” Give them these 5 tips and they will enjoy fulfilling their commitments as much as you will.

There is more to accountability than 5 tips, for sure. These are a starting point. If you like to learn more, feel free to explore the CLP Program at www.InnovisionGlobal.com or contact us directly at Harry@InnovisionGlobal.com

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