



## Responsibility vs. Accountability.

### Description

Great leaders own everything! No one asks them to – they just do.

Responsibility means I am supposed to do something. Accountability means that I own the results even if I was not expected to do it (whatever “it” is).

The President of the United States is ultimately accountable for the things that go on under his administration even though there is **NO WAY** he will know even a fraction of what his staff is doing at any given time. He is not responsible for their actions, the person who does the action is. However, we do expect him to be accountable for the way things are done.

We believe that Effective Accountability does not live at the very top but rather it is positioned at the most appropriate level; close enough to the people who are responsible for the task so they can help create real accountability for the work. This is why we create teams so we can build groups of accountable people to reach our goals.

However, we often see that people mistake the effort they do (responsibility) as releasing them from owning the results (accountability). This is where great leaders need to focus their efforts to model and teach real accountability.

It's not ownership of the effort; it's ownership of the outcome.

### The Story of the Broken Motor (based on a true story).



The Purchasing Agent has been **RESPONSIBLE** to do the task of ordering a replacement part. However, she knows the production line will be down 11 days and that customer delivery deadlines will be missed. She is not being **ACCOUNTABLE** to help our team get production back online faster. She

did the task but missed the opportunity to be accountable for our success.

You hear of the long delay to wait for the part so you ask her to see if there are other places to find this motor. The Purchasing Agent discovers that there is the exact motor we need eight hours away at another machine shop that we partner with. She asks them to ship us the motor and tells you it will be here in three days. Again, she is RESPONSIBLE to do the task but we are still going to have a three day delay.

Great Leaders Own It. Always.

You on the other hand are accountable to meet delivery deadlines so you get in your car and drive all night to get the motor and bring it back so we are up and running the next morning. You took the RESPONSIBILITY to get the part because you are ACCOUNTABLE to meet the delivery expectations of your customers.

## **Teach Your Team to Be Accountable**

By giving someone the task to do something they become responsible for the task but you can also teach them the idea that they should also be accountable for what this adds to the desired outcome. This makes peoples jobs less of a robotic effort because there is meaning behind the work. This is where we get fully engaged teams who deliver the results and not just activity.

Take the time to empower your team by letting them understand how their work contributes to the Vision, Mission and Purpose of your company. They are not just doing a task, they are part of the final outcome of creating Raving Fan customers, fully engaged employees, and dedicated investors.

Make sure your team accepts the idea of being accountable for the things they are responsible for. Create a Clear and Compelling story of the WHY of their efforts and make sure they understand it and accept it before you send them off to do the work.

Remember that communication is not what is said; it's what's understood. Ask your team what it looks like to see success from their efforts so you know they see the bigger picture.

I know this takes time to do but you will either tell them upfront what it looks like to be accountable for the results of their work, or you will take time to fix it later once it holds us back from moving forward.

Robert Hunt

### **Category**

1. Uncategorized

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