



‘Simon Says’

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Edward George

Did you know...

A key priority in the lead up to the United Nations Summit in September is shining the spotlight on making the UN and its projects more accountable. There is increasing pressure on policy makers to assign specific tasks to specific people as an identified way of improving the likelihood of meeting current and future targets.

Mistakes and poor judgment at work can really cost, but accountability and ownership pay big dividends.

“Everyone talks about it. Leaders want it. Employees are often afraid of it, shareholders demand it and stakeholders insist on it. But exactly what is accountability, and how do you get people to take it?”

Roger Connors, CEO, Partners In Leadership

Business success often boils down to how well leaders enable individuals in their team to focus on working towards the same end goal. A fairly simple concept, but how do we go about establishing, communicating and measuring individual performance expectations that foster positive accountability and deliver results?

Poor accountability takes its toll on your team and your business.

The true value of performance management and what that actually means to different organisations can vary greatly. Typically we see performance hinged on a structured annual appraisal system, supported by and measured against meaningful KPIs and linked to the broader annual and strategic plans. But is that enough? What often seems to happen is that managers and their teams find themselves immersed in the chaos and competing demands of day to day operations and forget to prioritise important time to ensure the team stays on track. The absence of defined responsibilities and a consistent approach to monitoring and feedback means we are potentially exposing our employees to a range of negative cultural and behavioural habits. These can include;

- Appearing to be busy without achieving much.
- Avoiding taking responsibility and reassigning blame when things go wrong.
- Expending effort on work that is tactical rather than business building.
- Adopting a treadmill effort as the norm; given neither defeat nor victory is recognised.

Passing the buck is out and accountability is in. Here are 6 ways to get your team on board and accountable.

1. Create a shared sense of purpose. Define targets and objectives in consultation with your team, including specific parameters around timeframes and performance expectations. You will get greater buy in from each employee who will understand how and why their role contributes value to the collective success of the business.

2. Encourage an environment where everyone is committed to finding solutions and doing their part to deliver excellent results. Share the wins and acknowledge the players through internal communication channels including team meetings, emails and the company newsletter.

3. Identify team strengths and acknowledge weaknesses. As managers we need to ensure the right mix of abilities are assigned to the right projects. Inconsistent effort or a decline in performance may simply be linked to a task mismatch. Organisational efficiency will soar when you get people doing more of what they love!

4. Promote lessons learned and positively encourage your team to ask; ‘Why did this occur and how can we improve?’ When something goes wrong, positively acknowledge full disclosure so your team is assured that they are supported by a culture of no-blame. You will soon realise the tangible benefits and optimal solutions that can come from a proactive approach to mistakes. Review, learn and improve.

5. Be clear and unequivocal about standards of performance if an employee is not taking ownership of their commitments. You can be soft on a person, but hard on the business issue.

6. Practice giving honest feedback often. No one likes delivering negative feedback and tackling difficult discussions but here’s the thing; successful people value regular and honest communication. They have probably self-reflecting by the time you get to them anyway. Naturally celebrate and reward successes.

If the individual members of your team have a strong sense of where they are headed and how they plan to get there, then chances are your organisation is performing well in its chosen markets and enjoying the results. If you feel your team lacks focus and direction, maybe it’s time to have a closer look at how your HR practices can more positively contribute to a culture of ownership and accountability.

Edward George provides comprehensive Human Resource Solutions specialising in recruitment and retention strategies, team building and training, exit interviews and outplacement services. If you would like further information about any of our services, email us at perth@edwardgeorge.com.au or phone us on **9457 4566**.

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