

Conversation About Accountability

*Taking personal leadership
and employee engagement
to the next level*

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With very few exceptions, most leaders today would be quick to acknowledge that their teams could be more engaged. Not surprisingly, many would also readily admit that they have made more than a few attempts to boost team engagement, often times with only minimal impact. To be sure, boosting employee engagement requires far more than a single initiative or program. Well respected research from such giants as Gallup, Mercer and Blessing White confirm that sustainable increases in employee engagement require among other things; executive buy-in, leadership clarity and a systematic approach that holds everyone accountable for engagement.

While much has been written about the systematic approach to bolstering engagement, the resulting tidal wave of data and complex solutions often result in an engagement paralysis for some leaders and organizations. Add to this the rapid pace of change and the overall white-water pace of business today and it's no wonder that many well-intentioned engagement initiatives have fallen flat on the road to implementation.

At the root of engagement is a personal accountability mindset which acknowledges that doing a job well and with a good attitude is not only a reasonable organizational expectation, but also one that enhances job satisfaction. At an even deeper level, personal accountability involves a range of behaviors that despite rapid change, ambiguity or even full buy-in, allows the individual to view their role as an integral part of the organization's success. Helping employees to see their role in this light not only creates greater ownership and accountability but also increased purpose and motivation, both drivers of engagement.

While writing my first book, I uncovered many insights about personal accountability and the behaviors that encompass a personal accountability mindset. Through multiple conversations with teams and leaders, I identified 10 core behaviors that encompass the personal accountability mindset. They include:

1. Accepts responsibility for own performance, success and development.
2. Displays confidence in decisions and commitments, even under pressure.
3. Is proactive in demonstrating initiative and in honoring commitments.
4. Takes responsibility for knowing what's expected of them.
5. Focuses on finding solutions more than finding problems.
6. Demonstrates energy and persistence in tackling challenging assignments.
7. Supports leadership directives even when not in full agreement.
8. Encourages co-workers to excel in their work and lends support when needed.
9. Takes pride in doing good work and in being a positive role model.
10. Never contributes to the rumor mill.

Another important leadership insight that surfaced in my accountability conversations was that due to the leader's vast range of influence, they need to consistently demonstrate a very high level of accountability. Given that we as leaders are called upon to inspire and motivate our teams, it's no wonder that accountability starts with us.

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Demonstrating accountability and bolstering engagement both start with dialogue. Making the time to begin this dialogue with your team or peer group may very well be the first leadership step toward increasing the impact of any engagement initiative.

Five More Things You Can Do Now to Spark the Accountability Conversation:

1. Engage your team in a conversation about the personal accountability mindset to define what it means to them and also to expand the list of actions and behaviors. Consider asking them to define what role accountability plays in team success and job satisfaction.
2. Initiate a conversation with your leadership peer group to assess how well you each demonstrate the accountability behaviors. Consider asking each peer to identify one thing they can do *more of* and one thing they can do *less of* to help foster personal accountability.
3. Link each person's role and contribution to the key goals of the department and organization. The more each employee understands how their efforts impact the greater good of the group, the more likely they are to be engaged and to find meaning in their work.
4. Hold a discussion with your team about their view of engagement and what they think are the key actions and behaviors that support success for the group and organization. Identify the top 3 shared motivation drivers of the group. Involving them helps to build a common language, clarify purpose and increase their ownership.
5. Download the free ***Navigator Inventory, Building an Accountability Mindset*** assessment from the WorkChoice Solutions website and ask your entire team to complete it. Initiate a follow-up conversation around what the scores mean to group success and satisfaction and include a discussion around how the group can help boost the team's overall score. [Click here](#) to download the assessment.

About David A. O'Brien

David is President of Connecticut based WorkChoice Solutions, a trusted provider of leadership and team effectiveness training, coaching and consulting services founded in 2000. He works with a wide range of corporate, nonprofit and public sector clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational effectiveness. His first book, *The Navigator's Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. His second book, *The Navigator's Compass 101 Steps Toward Leadership Excellence* will be released in June of 2015. To learn more about the scope of David's work in helping leaders and teams to be more effective or to arrange for David to speak at your next conference or other special event, please visit WorkChoice Solutions on line at: www.workchoicesolutions.com or call him directly at 860.242.1070.

