

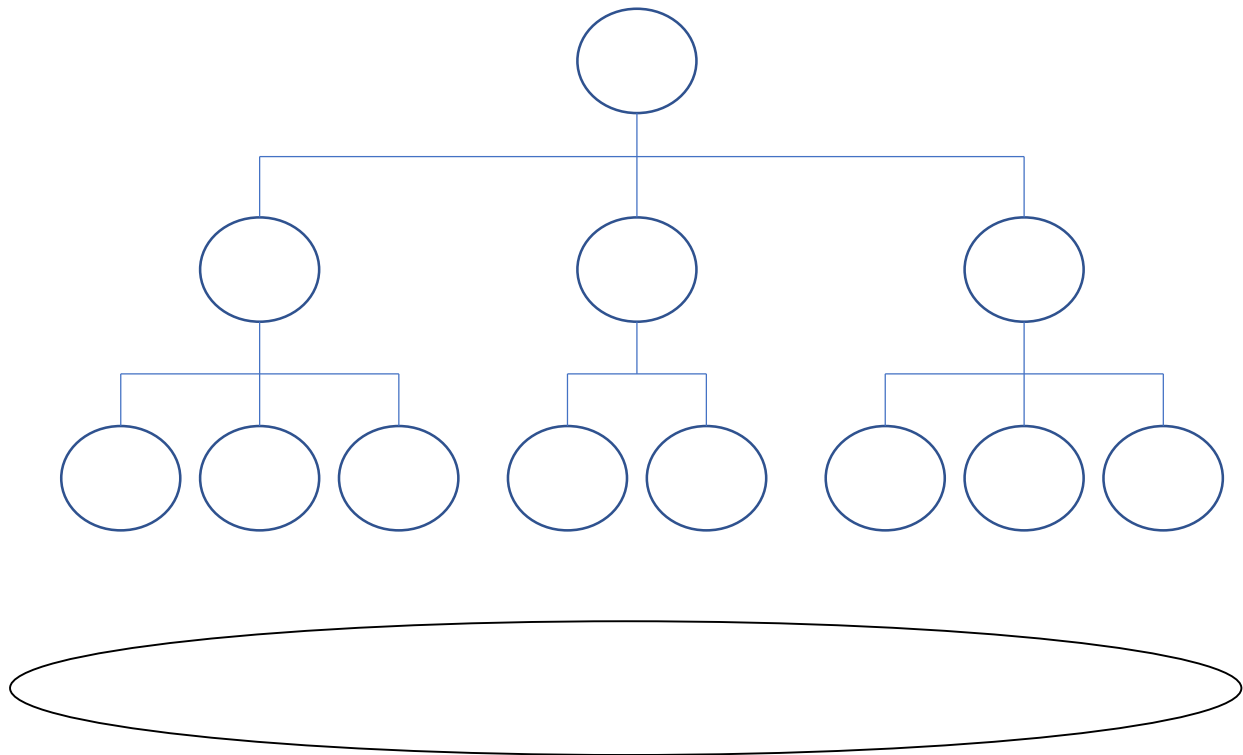


Creating and Leading Accountable Teams



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ORG. STRUCTURE & ACCOUNTABILITY



Accountable teams/individuals take the necessary (different) actions to achieve the desired results that are *not* currently being obtained.

~ KEY TAKEAWAYS ~

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- The traditional hierarchical structure is created because it makes it easier for the leader to maintain control and manage accountability. Under this model, leadership assigns different accountabilities to different positions and it then becomes their job to tell their reports what to do and “hold them accountable” for doing it.
- By separating responsibilities and accountabilities into areas of expertise (e.g., departments or divisions), it also makes it easier for the leader to know where to go when the desired results aren’t being achieved.
- However, this structure is not designed consistently with the way work flows through an organization. The separate departmental accountabilities lead to silos and interpersonal friction.

HOLDING SOMEONE ACCOUNTABLE

- The process of “holding someone accountable” involves setting clear expectations, making sure they have the tools and resources necessary to achieve those expectations, establishing metrics and goals, and then coaching, training, and motivating the employee until the desired results are delivered. Continued failure on the employee’s part invariably leads to some form of ultimatum from the leader and sometimes termination of that employee from that position.
- The notion of “holding people accountable,” however, is a myth. What it really translates to is “I (the leader) am taking the accountability from you, and I now have it.”

LEADER-LED ACCOUNTABILITY vs. TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY

- There are two ways in which accountability can be managed in the organization: by the leader or by the team.
- If a leader manages the accountability, they have a higher level of control which helps them minimize their anxiety. However, they can also end up exhausted because so much is on them. Meanwhile, the team has less anxiety but ends up feeling unempowered.
- If the team manages the accountability, the leader loses control (and the feeling of importance) but ends up with more time and is no longer the constraint. Meanwhile the team has higher levels of anxiety that comes with having more accountability and responsibility, but is increasingly engaged and empowered.

PREREQUISITES FOR TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY

- If you are going to have your teams manage a higher level of their accountability, then as a leader you have to become comfortable with losing *some* control.
- In addition, you have to require a higher level of adulthood from your employees. The good news is that most employees want to be adults they just need to be put in an environment that allows for it.

BEST TEAM EXERCISE

A. What was the best team you have ever been a part of? _____

B. What made/makes that team so special?

"To counteract fear and to make the individual strong to face whatever the future holds, there is nothing so important as a fully accepted belonging to a group whose fate has a positive meaning to them."

~ Kurt Lewin

"Reality always wins; your job is just to get in touch with it."

~ Wilford Bion

CHARACTERISTICS OF FUNCTIONAL and ACCOUNTABLE TEAMS

FUNCTIONAL TEAM REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Clear and fully accepted purpose. (Challenge question to ask your team “What do you think this team, as a team, is accountable for?”)
- 2) Measures that tell the team if that purpose is being achieved or not.
- 3) Competent people and capable processes.
- 4) High degree of *shared fate* (the *experience* of what happens to one, happens to all).

ACCOUNTABLE TEAM REQUIREMENT

- 5) Deal with their *real issues* together. (A real issue is any issue that affects a team’s ability to achieve its purpose or goals.)

ULTIMATE SUCCESS

- 6) Individual commitment to each other’s success (We > I).

Some examples of things you can do to build a shared fate on a team:

- a) Get the team, as a team, to become accountable to the teams’ set of metrics
- b) Move their workspaces next to each other
- c) Make the work meaningful to everyone
- d) Create a common enemy
- e) Shared negative consequence for failing (e.g., one person late for practice, everyone runs)
- f) Compensation (it can also inhibit it)
- g) Having difficult conversations together
- h) Going through tough situations can create shared fate (e.g. Covid)
- i) Cross training and equalizing work (e.g. the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team)
- j) Situations where “failure is not an option” creates a shared fate
- k) Dealing with real issues together as a team and less in one-on-one conversations
- l) Having to achieve really high expectations
- m) Making it hard to get on the team
- n) Shared set of values or doing something that is meaningful to everyone
- o) Pizza on Friday

~ KEY TAKEAWAYS ~

NON-FUNCTIONAL vs. FUNCTIONAL vs. ACCOUNTABLE TEAMS

- Teams fall into three categories: non-functional (also known as a work group), functional or accountable. Of these three, non-functional is by far the most common.
- You can best tell which category your team falls into by observing it during high pressure or high anxiety situations. A non-functional team will start to avoid their issues, talk behind each other's back, and will prioritize their own needs ahead of the team. Functional teams will avoid these behaviors but will often become very leader dependent to get them through the tough stuff. Accountable teams, on the other hand, will rise to the occasion, take ownership of their real issues, and work through them together. As a result, they will become stronger, more resilient, and better able to handle future challenges.

FUNCTIONAL TEAM

- A functional team starts with a clear purpose. A team's purpose is defined by what the team is accountable for achieving. It is different than the company's purpose and the expectations that are set for the individual team members. A team must have a crystal-clear purpose in order to succeed and it is ultimately the responsibility of the leader to decide what the team is accountable for.
- The team must take ownership of the metrics which determine whether they are successfully achieving the team's purpose.
- In order for a team to function it must have competent people and capable processes: clearly defined roles and responsibilities, good communication, good problem solving, and clearly defined levels of authority around decision making.
- The engine that drives all teams is the existence of a real and meaningful shared fate. Without a meaningful shared fate, the team will break down under pressure. More importantly, the team members will not have the incentive to address their real issues together as individual success is not tied to team success.

ACCOUNTABLE TEAM

- All that separates an accountable team from a functional team is that the team takes accountability for achieving the team results. In other words, when expectations are not being met, the team members start doing something different until the desired results are achieved. This is different than a functional team where it is typically the leader who steps in and takes the accountability.
- The degree to which a team deals with their real issues as a team is also the same degree that they will be an accountable team.
- Only when a team starts working through their real issues do they start to develop the trust and commitment to each other that will lead to high performance under even the most difficult circumstances.

REAL ISSUES

- A real issue is any issue that affects a team's ability to achieve its purpose or goals.
- Most teams have issue stack (a build-up of real issues over time that have not been dealt with as a team).

REAL ISSUES AND THE FEAR OF SEPARATION

Bion's Theory of the Herd

- 1) Humans are pack animals.
- 2) Individual action is a myth. All action is taken within the context of a group.
- 3) Groups do not need to be present to influence an individual.
- 4) **Connection to a group is a requirement for human survival.**



Implications of a Herd

- a) Individual behavior in a group setting is driven by our *fear of separation* from that team.
- b) Sometimes the fear is being physically separated from the team but more often it is fear of being mentally separated from the team (being deemed a non-team player, judged, thought less of, etc.).
- c) There is a one-to-one correlation between high levels of team performance and low levels of fear of separation (or high levels of psychological safety).
- d) Minimizing fear of separation can only be achieved by ensuring that the group is comfortable and effective at dealing with their real issues together.

THE FIVE WAYS A TEAM CAN ADDRESS REAL ISSUES

- 1) _____
Anxiety: _____ Fear of Separation: _____
- 2) _____
Anxiety: _____ Fear of Separation: _____
- 3) _____
Anxiety: _____ Fear of Separation: _____
- 4) _____
Anxiety: _____ Fear of Separation: _____
- 5) _____
Anxiety: _____ Fear of Separation: _____

Pairing takes place whenever an issue that affects the team's ability to achieve its purpose is addressed by anybody less than the full team. For today we will use a simplified definition, pairing takes place *whenever you talk negatively about someone and they are not present.*

"A confrontation is a search for a truth. When you confront someone, your job is to share your truth and to understand their truth. Together you can then arrive at a truth. The key is you can't go in assuming you already have the truth."

~ Pat Murray