



# Risk vs. Reward

Organizations can create a culture of accountability ... all it requires is dedication and a mindset switch.

By Emily Bowers, BEMA

Routinely answer this question: “Who is doing what and when?” In a culture rich with accountability, this should be easy to answer. In one lacking accountability, it can cause an explosive reaction. Accountability’s presence, or lack thereof, paints the canvas that ultimately becomes a company’s culture. In a world measured by results, is workplace accountability an asset that drives higher performance and production or a liability that distracts employee focus and creates discomfort?

The “Workplace Accountability Study” by Partners in Leadership recently revealed that 91% of those surveyed rank accountability as one of the top development needs they would like at their organization. People crave environments where others are responsible, liable and obliged to contribute at or above generally acceptable levels on a regular basis. The goal is consistent and predictable execution that is pervasive throughout all levels of the company. Organizations that embrace accountability enjoy the benefits of shared vision, collaborative communication and an understood awareness that personal contribution is part of collective success. The rewards of this type of culture are tangible and measurable. Projects are on budget and on time, turnover is low, and employee engagement is high. Organizations that lack it inadvertently send the message that lower standards are acceptable.

Accountability is the equalizer, the all-important utility player that every team needs for ultimate success.

While this sounds like the perfect situation, there is a flip side to be aware of. The perceived risks associated with establishing a culture of accountability are few but

real. Seasoned, long-term, well-liked personnel could decide to leave. And that’s okay. As is the case with any new leadership or management model, some will choose not to conform. Organizations can rest easy knowing those who stay will experience higher workplace satisfaction, and the company will benefit from higher overall productivity. Another risk is challenging tradition. Increasing accountability is likely to put established processes in the spotlight for review and questioning. In the spirit of continuous improvement, this is completely acceptable. However, the cycle of change is uncomfortable for some, and feathers may ruffle.

If accountability is the next step, then leadership, an integrated training plan and time are the keys to implement it. A leadership team with focus and perseverance will be paramount to achieving systematic change. Once a leadership team is aligned, a thorough training plan should be executed. Consultants can often facilitate the process of accountability training successfully because they are far enough removed to ask the tough questions and likely have experience handling similar situations at other companies.

To create systematic change, a training plan should include everyone in the organization. The final investment — time — may be the most difficult. Change requires time to establish alignment, time for training and time for the principles of accountability to affect the team and create movement in a positive direction.

As Henry Evans, best-selling author and founder and managing partner for Dynamic Results, LLC, said, “A culture of accountability makes a good organization great and a great organization unstoppable.”

Organizations that embrace accountability create awareness of personal contributions to collective success.

BEMA