

Chosen Accountability

By Michelle Braden, CEO of MSBCoach, LLC

“Accountability breeds response-ability.” Stephen R. Covey

I find it interesting that when we hear the word “accountability”, we tend to cringe. What is it about this word that elicits such a response? If I say, “Who are you accountable to?” to an executive, more often than not I get a strange look and long pause. Many seem to want to answer, “No one.” However, that is not the politically correct answer. The truth is, we are all accountable. This accountability only increases as a leader “moves up the ladder”.

The definition of *accountable*, according to the on-line Business Dictionary, is “answerable for one's conduct, discharge of assigned responsibilities, or performance.”¹ In other words, accountability is being liable or answerable. This is exactly what a leader should be. Leaders are liable for their own actions and behaviors as well as those who report to them. The more people you have reporting to you or are responsible for, the more accountable you are.

There is another form of accountability that is crucial to a leader's personal and professional success. I call this “chosen accountability”. Chosen accountability is when a leader purposefully and intentionally chooses to have a group of people around them to hold them accountable. Usually a leader's accountability group is small and made up of people where there is mutual trust and respect. A leader's chosen accountability group is most successful when the accountability is reciprocated by all in the group. Leaders in the chosen accountability group share their values, strengths, weaknesses, vulnerabilities, passions, motivations and drivers. This information is shared with the intent to hold one another accountable to what they have stated as important to them. For example, if a leader said he wanted to take better care of his health and began to gain weight and stop working out, the accountability group would have permission to “call him out”. A chosen accountability group is not a “judge me group”. The purpose is to hold each person in the group accountable to his or her own values, passions, and drives, but not to hold that person accountable to someone else's principles.

Leaders benefit greatly when they have a support team around them that hold them accountable and focused. To reach the full benefits, a leader needs to create a support team/chosen accountability group outside of the boardroom. This support team is people who believe in you, know you personally as well as professionally, and have permission through trust and respect to call you into alignment when necessary. No matter what our position, we all need and profit from this.

Alfred Alder said, “It is easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them”. As leaders, we want to live up to our principles. The only way to do that is with accountability.

¹ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/accountable.html#ixzz1vbdIYaVH>

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