



Leadership and Accountability

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The opposite of accountable is irresponsible, inconsistent, faithlessness; undisciplined... one website even says reckless¹. I would dare say if we asked a leader if they were any of these things, we would get a resounding, "No, I am quite the opposite." If a leader is the opposite of these things, then he or she is accountable.

I have found that when you ask leaders if they are accountable, most say "yes." I believe most say "yes" without understanding the depth of their answer. Or they are accountable only for their specific area of responsibility, and that usually is the numbers (until something happens, that is).

The question we should be asking is, "What about accountability in our integrity, values, judgment decisions, vision for the future of our people, our families and friends?" According to a 2008 Gallup poll², there are seven demands of every executive leader. They are:

1. Visioning
2. Maximizing values
3. Challenging experiences
4. Mentoring
5. Building constituency
6. Making sense of experience
7. Knowing self

These demands of executive leaders show that the need for accountability extends far beyond the bottom line.

The question leaders should be asking themselves is, "To whom am I accountable, and for what?" It is one thing to be accountable to the Board or shareholders, but where does your accountability to your employees, family, friends and even yourself (your health, personal/professional growth, spiritual practices and community give back) come into play? If you do not have accountability set up in these places, the chances are that you are not being effective in them, even if you say they are important.

¹ <http://english.stackexchange.com>

² <http://businessjournal.gallup.com/content/11614/seven-demands-leadership.aspx#2>.

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Below are some steps to follow to create accountability for yourself:

1. Identify your top five values
2. Ask yourself if you are living 100% into these values - not 99%, 100%
3. If you are not living 100% into any of the values listed, remove it from the list (To thine own self be true)
4. Write your values on a card and keep them in your wallet
5. Every time you are questioning yourself and/or a decision you are making, pull out your values card and make sure your decision lines up with your values
6. Share your value list with at least one other person with whom you share a mutual respect, and ask them to hold you accountable for these values

Below are some steps to create accountability for yourself within your organization:

1. Identify how your values line up and show up in your current position
2. Identify how your values can be or have been challenged. Have you compromised your values before? How will you ensure you will not compromise them again?
3. Identify how your values show up in your leadership. Do you move to judgment if people do not have the same values as you and, if so, are you OK with that?
4. Who will be your accountability partner to make sure you are living your values in your leadership at work?

Below are some steps to create accountability for yourself within family and friends:

1. How do I want my values to show up with my family?
2. How have I been inconsistent? Anything I value I should invest my time, talent and money in.
3. Have I compromised my values in the past with my family and/or friends?
4. How will I ensure not to do this again?
5. Who will be my accountability partner to make sure I am living my values with my family?

I could keep going with these lists to include your health, community involvement, spiritual practices, etc.; however, I believe you see the patterns. The important aspect to keep foremost in your mind is to clarify what you want, how your values play into what you want, and then who (including yourself) will hold you accountable to what you have identified.

Accountability makes us better; it makes us more confident. It is important as a leader that we do not only have accountability in the areas the board says we have to have them. A truly authentic leader is accountable on all aspects. According to dictionary.com³, accountable is defined as "responsible to someone for some action; answerable; or "able to be explained". Ask yourself primarily, "Are you accountable to yourself?" Do your actions and behaviors (even those no one knows about) line up

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with how you want to be known? Are there any areas of your life that, if uncovered and revealed to family, employees, board members or community leaders would be unexplainable? The saying, "if a tree falls in the forest, does it still make a sound" is applicable here. If you are out of integrity and no one is to hold you accountable, are you still out of integrity? To a truly accountable, authentic leader, the answer is yes; however, it is too easy to make situations gray or reason them away if we do not have accountability partners/parameters put into place. We are all human and capable of mistakes. My challenge to you is, what accountability partners/parameters will you put in place starting today?

³ www.dictionary.com

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