

# Personal Accountability

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## MASTERS

MAKING YOU THE EXPERT



First of all I would like to wish you all a belated Happy New Year! I hope you have a successful year, alongside achieving your vision for 2011.

### *A word from Gloria ...*

As we settle in to this year it's poignant to note that setting New Year's resolutions are something we have either tended to do, continue to do or decided never to do again. Whatever the case is for you personally - underlying that precept is personal accountability, and it seems timely that this is my focus for this newsletter.

Personal accountability is something that has an impact on all of us, whether we recognise it or not. So what is it? How does it show itself? How does it impact you personally? Does it affect other people? Is it apparent in your place of work? These are questions worth considering as personal accountability may be more relevant than you think! What you need to consider is – has this become a feature of your workplace?

To find out more, read the article, and see where you think you and your Company lie in this regard. Please note; you may recognise people at your work who strongly exhibit lack of personal accountability, by the way they give many justifications/reasons as to why the responsibility for incomplete work couldn't possibly rest with them. This could be an opportunity to really think about how often people at work do stand up and take responsibility for a missed call/deadline/meeting etc. Are you (as someone at the top) personally accountable yourself, or do you tend to join in the name/blame/shame game that thrives in industries just like yours in NZ?

Food for thought isn't it?

Enjoy the months ahead, as it won't be long before we will all be complaining about the cold weather!

Kind regards  
Gloria

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## Latest Article

This focuses on Personal Accountability. It is something that is apparent in every individual, within every team inside every Company and Corporation in this country. It is easily recognised and not always because people have the attribute! It can be developed, but it needs to be unmasked first. You will always be able to tell the people who have this in spades; conversely you will always be able to see the lack of it in people who don't. What is difficult is seeing it in the people who lie in between – that could include the majority of people you work with! What can we do to build this, so it becomes part of our culture within and is recognised as an attribute worth having? These and other pertinent thoughts are discussed in the article.

## New Workshop

This workshop aims to resource participants so they can begin to recognise their personal accountability or lack of it from the moment they walk through the door. It also provides the tools to build on and develop the skills needed to embrace personal accountability on a daily basis. Inherent in this skill building is managing the motivation, communication and personal performance needed at work. Relevant tasks and challenges are introduced and worked through so each participant is able to customise the experience to fit their specific needs. An experiential self-assessment procedure is implemented to help reinforce new skills taught. There is an added module available for senior executives responsible for building accountability in others.

## Competition

This month's competition is simple to enter. All you do, is email us at [info@mastersofcommunication.co.nz](mailto:info@mastersofcommunication.co.nz), list the month and year the Masters of Communication Newsletter on Stress was written ( in the subject line).The correct entries will go into a draw for a meeting with me, on improving Personal Accountability in the Workplace. This will be held in March. The winner will be notified on Friday February 25th.



## Personal Accountability

Have you noticed how some team members always justify/ignore their underperformance? Or never admit responsibility for a project failing? How about those who constantly blame anybody/everybody else for a deadline missed?

If you could relate to these questions – Congratulations! You have just recognised the typical symptoms people with little or no personal accountability show.

People who have personal accountability are able to recognise, accept and take full ownership of tasks/projects that squarely fall into their area of responsibility. This includes any results they contribute towards or create. When something doesn't work out, or deadlines are not met, these are the people who look at themselves first to see how they affected the end result. They do not blame others or the situation; rather they think about their input and focus on avoiding the same mistakes in the future.

Conversely you will know people who don't. These are the people who tend to waste valuable time and effort by uttering excuses, 'passing the buck' and ultimately avoiding any blame for the mishap/missed deadline or a project that has gone wrong. These people also engage fully in the name/shame/blame game. They very quickly point the finger at someone else who worked on the project – with no hesitation at all.

By now, you will be recognising people you; either know personally, or work with closely. My sincere condolences in advance if you are in a relationship with them!!

So what can we do to elevate personal accountability (as a skill) to a higher level within your organisation? Perhaps begin by recognising how this manifests in your place of work.

The following questions give a simple lead in from a 'self' viewpoint, which builds some awareness and can position you nicely to observe where others in your teams lie on the continuum.

- When things go wrong do you naturally look to yourself first or immediately blame others?
- When you realise you are at fault, do you own this fully or start to justify your position?
- Do you take action to 'make this right' or do you focus on other's underperformance?
- Do you intuitively know you are wrong and own this or do you project blame as soon as possible?
- If you see someone else is at fault do you publicise this or take them aside to discuss further?

It is helpful to note what your responses were. This microscopic look at your own personal accountability, will start the thinking needed to take action to improve/work on your own areas for improvement, so that you can be more effective at managing your teams' ones.

Now let's look at the scenario where someone in your team doesn't have personal accountability.

This needs to be dealt with and quickly, because it can become contagious. The good news is that when most of the team are personally accountable – there tends to be more of a focus on moving ahead to perform at top levels. This is an important skill that helps everyone in any workplace including yours.

Some potential spinoffs for you if your Company/team develops this skill further are:

1. They will become more adept at identifying the right action to take.
2. There will be a zero tolerance for blame being projected onto others.
3. There will be much less/no procrastinating.
4. They will minimise/delete the 'poor me' mentality from any task.
5. There will be more encouragement given towards tasks performed.
6. There will be more personal responsibility taken to achieve targets and results - instead of focusing on how much others may/may not be contributing to the project.
7. There will be a tendency to interact more effectively with those around them.
8. Challenges and deadlines will be accepted in a more positive light

If you don't believe in personal accountability/don't rate it as necessary in your place of work, you could be doing yourself and your team a disservice, because the following happens when Personal Accountability is **not** part of the Company Culture.

- Team morale is lowered leading to reduced productivity.
- Poor organisational performance dominates; leading to
- Lowered motivational levels, underperformance and ultimately an increased attrition rate.

So, what can you do to help build this very important skill so that your employees/team members are functioning at high levels, feeling motivated and working as a cohesive unit? Some ideas might be:

- Hold meetings and conversations about the importance of personal accountability with your team members.
- Lead by example by demonstrating personal accountability in your actions and behaviours at work.
- Challenge others on their lack of personal accountability.
- Create opportunity for individuals to 'grow' their personal accountability.
- Create an incentive scheme based on personal accountability – there are a myriad of ways to do this. (Contact me for further information)
- Organise a workshop on personal accountability for your team. (See outline below)

For the people who exhibit little/no personal accountability, recognise that their rationale is to blame others for a job poorly done because it is easier than owning their part in it. A common factor is their inability/unwillingness to see if/how they did contribute. A way forward would be to work with them one on one, alongside publicly giving acknowledgement to individuals who do 'own' the problem, or accept partial responsibility for it. This can potentially 'grow' the acceptance that getting it wrong is okay as long as it doesn't happen regularly and is learned from spontaneously.

When working one on one, it is very important that you **Do Not Make It Your Problem**, and allow them to accept the problem belongs to them. This is an instrumental first step in growing personal accountability. The following could be a good lead in for the one on one approach:

- Arrange a formal meeting to discuss the issue further.
- Ask what the problem is/is there a reason for this/what has led to this etc.
- Ask what they are prepared to do about it.
- Make them accountable by following up - e.g.,
- Call a meeting for a week's time to comment on the difference/not that you have noticed.
- Be available to them - regarding this (open door policy works best).
- Acknowledge progress made early on – what we give energy to grows.
- Do not allow it to build up again, at the first sign of slipping back to old ways – **manage it by:**
- Not bemoaning the fact it is happening again, and taking action.
- Dealing with them the way you would a recalcitrant child.
- Offering guidance/support if the situation is not changing through continued mentoring or calling in an external professional.

If you have a more serious issue, i.e.; the Recidivist offender - you will need to mentor them strongly and consistently through this. They will not change/ see no need to change unless you 'make an issue of it' and take them aside to change their thinking on it. Beginning with pointing out that what they failed to do was always part of their job description is useful; another possible step would be to discuss with them how their lack of motivation/integrity in accepting their responsibility is unprofessional and therefore disappointing. Showing them that 'being wrong' or not meeting targets is 'human' but if this continues – they will need to work with you on (for example) smaller/weekly targets as opposed to monthly. This could be productive in shifting the 'failure' part of personal accountability which could be a contributing factor for its existence in the first place. A possible rationale for this could be that no-one wants to be seen to have failed/not come up to the mark in some way, we all want to be seen as at least capable of, if not bigger than, better than, more able than.... and what happens if that doesn't manifest can be feelings of guilt, hopelessness, being stuck, anger and ultimately leading to ..... don't care attitude = lack of personal accountability.

As you can see, I could write another article on the whys and wherefores of personal accountability being the issue it is in our workplaces today, but what is important in this article is simple. You must manage the problem by following through and holding people to account for their actions/lack of them – otherwise where is your personal accountability?

Please contact me if you would like my involvement in assisting you with team member/s who lack personal accountability.

By Gloria Masters

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**Course Overview: Establishing and Building Personal Accountability**

The Personal Accountability workshop investigates the crucial role personal accountability has in the workplace, in terms of liability, subsequent motivation, communication and productivity. This incorporates a range of self-assessment exercises designed to position participants where they need to be - to effect best placed performance at work. Inherent throughout the day is customised, experiential tasks and challenges designed to improve their personal accountability skill set. With increased awareness of their own accountability, participants leave the workshop more congruent, skilled and ready to start back at work fully accountable and proudly so.

**Course Topics**

- The role and benefits of Personal Accountability (PA) in the workplace
- The 5 Key Components of PA
- Self-awareness = Movement
- 3 Steps to Identifying/Working with limiting Responses
- PA Management
- The Dynamics of PA
- The Impact of ownership
- Strategies for Managing PA
- Utilising Positive Self-Talk
- Building a Support Network

The following components are added for Senior Management attendees responsible for building Personal Accountability in their teams.

- Relationship Management
- The 4 essential skills to building PA in others
- PA Coaching
- Role of the PA Coach
- 10 habits of effective PA coaches
- Creating an Accountable Environment