

LEADERSHIP / MANAGING EMPLOYEES

6 Actions Even the Least Confrontational Managers Must Take to Hold Employees Accountable

Few people enjoy confrontation, and nobody likes the few who do, but it's your job to speak up for the good of the company.

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I have worked with leaders, managers and supervisors across the country. One of most common liabilities they share is an inability to hold their direct reports accountable. Shockingly, in my career, I have worked for several managers who never held me accountable. Ever.

Bill Owens, attorney, author and former governor of Colorado, once said "True leadership lies in



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"I don't know how."

If you are in a leadership role, the work needs to get done by other people. The only way to get work done by other people is if you set expectations and hold them accountable for results. It's hard work requiring focus and clarity. It's not-so-comfortable with difficult people, but accountability is an essential leadership competency. Here are six actions for holding people accountable.

1. Follow up on expectations when you say you are going to.

Too many leaders say it but don't do it. Once you have concluded a meeting with someone, you should immediately put a follow-up date on your calendar and have them do the same. If you don't follow up it sends the wrong message it looks like what they are working on isn't important.

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2. Be consistent with accountability.

Accountability requires consistency -- don't enforce one time but then not another. If someone is late 10 mornings in a row with nothing said, then a few weeks later they are late and you say something, they are confused. What are they going to be held accountable for and when?

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3. Hold people accountable for both actions and results.

This concept is sometimes confusing for managers. In the world of business, results are what matters.

know there are standards and the standards were not negotiable.

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5. Hold people accountable in writing.

When setting accountability, make sure you tell people what the expectations are but also document them in writing. Documentation eliminates any confusion and makes everything more explicit. It is hard for someone to deny an expectation if they were told verbally and in writing.

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6. If someone consistently fails, fire them.

In most cases, managers wait way too long to let someone go. If you have followed all the steps from coaching to counseling to written warnings, fire them. Termination sends a strong message of accountability to the rest of the team.

Termination is the ultimate act of accountability. If we don't terminate people who are not performing, it is unfair to those who are performing consistently. As Colin Powell once said, "If you don't fire people who are not doing the job, after you have counseled them and after you have brought them along, then you are hurting the whole organization."

To be clear, I am not suggesting being difficult, mean or nasty. Be firm, friendly and fair but insist people be accountable. You will earn respect, reward responsible team members and most of all, you will get results.



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