

## Volume 35

### The Question

“How do I increase the level of accountability in my organization?”

### A Perspective

In seven years of working with leaders and leadership teams, no one has ever started a conversation this way. What I hear first from leaders are statements like:

- “I’m tired of working late to deal with issues while my team leaves on time.”
- “Our sales have been flat for three years even though our market is growing.”
- “When I’m gone, my leadership team fails to meet and delays decisions until I return.”
- “People ask for a budget, but I don’t think we need one. I want people to use common sense and not play all these budget games.”

As leaders, we feel a lack of accountability, and talk about it in terms of results and frustrations.

Addressing accountability issues starts with leadership. My favorite definition of leadership comes from Ken Blanchard: “Leadership is an influence process. It is about working with people to accomplish their goals and the goals of the organization.” (*Situational Leadership® II*, p. 2.2) How would the conversation change if we saw the problem of unattained goals as a *leadership* issue rather than an *accountability* issue? I heard a quote recently stating that “accountability is a flashlight, not a bat.”

### Your Action Plan

Starting a push for accountability through slogans like “We need to get the right people on the bus” or some sort of forced ranking of A-, B-, and C-players will build fear that will further erode the culture you need to get the work done when you’re not there. Here are some tips that will help you develop as a leader.

**Increase accountability in your day-to-day management:** A common term in management is the concept of “management by walking around.” If you’re looking for a way to make your conversations more productive in terms of building relationships and getting work done via your team, I encourage you to read *The One Minute Manager* by Ken Blanchard. It’s a quick read (around 100 pages) and gives you something you can start practicing tomorrow.

The key actions for you as a leader are to listen, assist in problem-solving, and create clarity about your leadership role in following-up and supporting the outcome. If there is a breakdown, it will point directly to a skill you need to work on as a leader.

**Increase team accountability:** Focus on creating meetings where the most important issues get discussed, and build a culture of follow-up and support. The first part of accountability is getting the *truth* — i.e., the key issues and the opinions from all your leaders attached to those issues — on the table. The second part is ownership and support from both the leader and the team to follow-through on the work.

This two-pronged precept is central to the underlying philosophy — and name — of The trU Group; namely, that the two things leaders must work at every day are building trust (between the leader and the team, as well as within the team), and leveraging that trust to get the truth (in all its forms) on the table.

I recommend reading *Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable...About Solving the Most Painful Problem in Business* by Patrick Lencioni and using that as a guide to change how you meet, debate and create action plans.

**Increase organizational accountability:** I work with high-growth companies and have settled in on a methodology for strategic planning and execution known as “EOS (Entrepreneurial Operating System).” This is the best process I know of to



## *Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive*

address the frustrations of a CEO with regard to organizational accountability. It is outlined in the book *Get A Grip: How to Get Everything You Want from Your Entrepreneurial Business* by Gino Wickman. The key thing to remember is that organizational accountability starts with the leader and the leadership team. If you do it well, your organization will do it well.

I view effective leadership through something called “GAP management.” A strategic plan creates the GAP, an operational plan builds a bridge across the GAP, and weekly leadership meetings allow you to manage the changing conditions in the GAP. More to come on this concept in an upcoming whitepaper I am publishing.

**Do you need help building your capacity to have conversations that foster increased accountability? Are you seeing big issues in reaching your organizational goals and want to talk about steps to addressing them? Are you interested in hearing more about EOS? Contact me. [Scott@thetrugroup.com](mailto:Scott@thetrugroup.com)**

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