

“Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

Albert Einstein

It's probably safe to say most of us have experienced this kind of insanity at one time or another. That's why it is so important to occasionally take a big step back to be sure we are making the right changes, at the right time, and in the right way - to get the improved results we want.

Changing and/or shifting our corporate culture is one of 'right' changes that can be a game changer. It's one of the most difficult, yet powerful, drivers of actualizing those desired improved results.

In [Change the Culture, Change the Game](#), Tom Smith and Roger Connors write: “Either you manage your culture, or it will manage you.”

In simple terms, “culture” refers to how people think, act and get things done in your company. It is comprised of three components:

1. Experiences, which foster beliefs
2. Beliefs, which influence actions
3. Actions, which produce results

Research shows that the right culture champions high levels of performance and ethical behavior. When organizations design and support a culture that encourages outstanding individual and team contribution, they achieve amazing bottom-line results.

“Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish.”

Sam Walton

Employee accountability and engagement are the driving forces behind achieving great results. Employees become engaged when they see how their participation contributes to your organization's success,

and when they can describe their role in outcomes and desired results.

So, what is Accountability? Really.

Accountability is often viewed as something negative that happens to you when things go wrong. But true accountability is achieved through a step-by-step process that **makes things go right**.

Accountability is usually defined as punishment for mistakes; but in reality, it's a **powerful, positive and enabling principle** that provides a foundation to build both individual and company success.

The way we hold one another accountable defines the nature of our working relationships, how we interact and what we expect from one another. With positive accountability, people embrace their role in facilitating change and take ownership for making progress.

“Accountability breeds response-ability.”

Stephen Covey

When people adopt a sense of accountability, they recognize that their participation can and will make a big difference. They go the extra mile because they know what to do, and they know how their job and their actions will drive results. . People crave this kind of meaning and fulfillment and it adds energy to their work. Accountability is the single biggest issue confronting organizations today, especially for those engaged in big change initiatives. When you build a culture of accountability, you have people who can and will achieve game-changing results.

Here's how to get there...

- **SEE IT** - In order to see what needs to be done, you must take responsibility for reality. Because reality frequently changes, you need to stay alert and be flexible. There's no hiding behind what used to work. When you see something, you must rise to a new challenge. This means obtaining others' perspectives and candidly asking for and offering feedback. You must be courageous and relentless in your pursuit of acknowledging reality.

- **OWN IT** - Accept being personally invested in outcomes. Be willing to take risks and learn from successes and failures. Align your work with what the company needs. Link where you are and what you've done with where you want to be and what you're going to do.
- **SOLVE IT** - Obstacles can always get in the way of achieving results, so apply persistent effort. When thwarted, find another way. Keep asking, "What else can I do so this gets resolved?" You must learn to overcome cross-functional boundaries, limitations and "no" responses.
- **DO IT** ("*do or do not, there is no try.*" Yoda)
Focus on top priorities, overcome obstacles, do what you promise to achieve, and avoid blaming others. Work to sustain an environment of trust for all participants, even those who are unwilling to help.

In a culture of accountability, people step forward to become part of the solution—often when they begin to see others doing it. Managers should seize every opportunity to model this behavior with their own attitudes and actions, which will create a trickle-down effect.

“Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge.”

Plato

The payoffs for positive accountability are better performance metrics, but perhaps more significant is what people report internally. When people participate more fully in their jobs, they create meaning and fulfillment. Work becomes more pleasurable. And when people start achieving better results, they are most likely rewarded in tangible ways, as well.

When to Change the Culture

Connors and Smith point out that, by definition, your culture produces your results. You cannot expect your current culture to produce new results. It may not be a bad culture; it simply isn't what's needed if you want different results. Shifts in culture are required anytime you want people to think and act in new ways to achieve new outcomes.

Most of the time, they don't involve a total transformation, but rather a transition to new cultural norms.

Remember that cultures are powerful, and persistent, and that people are entrenched in their habits and work routines. If you want to achieve new or different results, you will need to create a new culture. To do so, you must define the needed shifts in the way people think and act so they can create new experiences that will translate into new beliefs and actions.

To accelerate a change in the culture, start by defining the new results you wish to achieve. Everyone in the organization needs to be focused on and aligned with the desired new outcomes. Culture changes one person at a time.

Your people must believe that new results are obtainable. Only then can they change their thinking and actions.

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