



Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC)
Strategic Design 2.0 Line of Effort
(LOE) to Strengthen our SYSCOM Team,
Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ)

**Improve Leadership Effectiveness through
Accountability White Paper**

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Improve Leadership Effectiveness through Accountability

Accountability is taking responsibility for your work's results, regardless of whether it is successful. Because accountability helps with practicing honesty, accountability as a leader can benefit relationships with team members. Learning more about improving your leadership effectiveness through accountability will help you become a better leader regardless of where you work.

This document reviews how we can bring leadership together through accountability, why accountability is critical in the workplace, the framework to build team accountability (using the 5Cs Model), and the right way to hold people accountable.

Bringing Leadership Together Around Critical Behaviors, like Accountability

Accountability is a critical leadership responsibility. Leaders must prioritize accountability to maximize the effectiveness of their organizations.

While leadership teams generally agree that aligning on their purpose is critical, only 60 percent of organizations' team members reported that they were actually aligned. So, how well do you think your leadership team is aligned in the area of accountability?

For the organization's leadership to be aligned on accountability, they must synchronize their agenda and vision, be thoughtful about how accountability is enforced within the leadership team, focus on how they need to collaborate on accountability, and execute results-oriented accountability principles.

To accomplish this, leadership should focus on four characteristics: Configure, Align, Execute, and Renew..

Configure

Leaders configure their team around a clear mandate and precise roles, understanding which roles drive the most value and securing the right talent for those positions. Leaders must integrate accountability principles between team members to ensure the team is operating effectively and that members can rely on one another to achieve results.

Align

Alignment of accountability within the agenda is crucial to team effectiveness. Leaders must ensure that their team members understand how accountability is implemented when setting priorities and working together to meet mission requirements. Leaders align their teams on a set of core values, priorities, and work structures to forge a distinct team identity.

Execute

Leaders execute under a governance system that allows them to make decisions quickly and effectively, collaborate, and challenge one another. During the execution of any task, project, or program, leaders must set accountability standards for their team. .

Renew

Leaders should routinely evaluate their policies, procedures, and processes to determine if changes need to be *renewed*. Accountability should be central to any evaluation and change

management efforts, with an emphasis on learning from mistakes and providing constructive feedback to team members to encourage continuous development.

Accountability in the Workplace

Accountability is essential to creating a productive environment for employees.

Accountability in the workplace is about employees taking responsibility for and ownership of their decisions, actions, performance, and behavior. It requires building trust and consistently committing to doing the right thing for the organization. Accountable employees take responsibility for their job performance and do not assume their team will pick up their slack. For employees, accountability results in:

- Improved work performance
- Increased participation and involvement
- Feeling more competent
- Higher commitment to work
- Higher creativity and innovation
- Higher morale and satisfaction

When accountability is not enforced, it encourages an environment where a handful of employees will have to carry the weight of the unreliable ones – or worse, have important work that is never completed. As a result, the satisfaction of your employees who do take accountability will consistently suffer over time. Overall, a lack of accountability leads to:

- Lower team morale
- High turnover
- Unmet goals
- Unclear priorities
- Lower engagement

How do you promote accountability in the workplace? Holding ourselves or others accountable for poor work performance or results is challenging. Sometimes, we can feel uncomfortable and try to forgive and forget rather than address the root causes of the issues. However, there are ways you can improve accountability in your workplace to encourage a healthy and productive work environment.

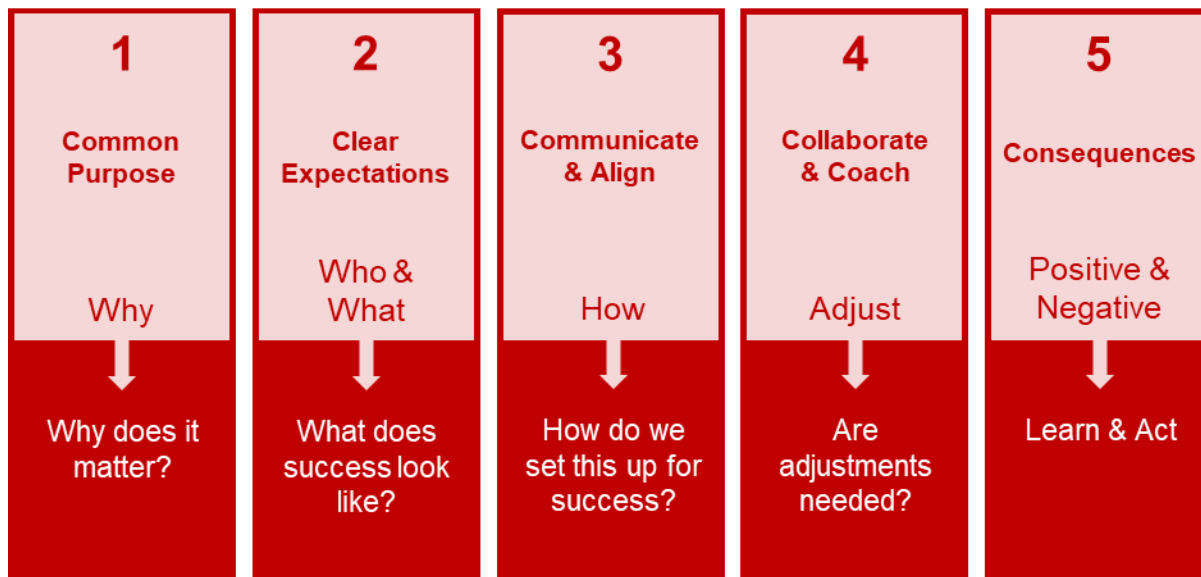
- Make accountability a workplace value: Integrate accountability into your everyday operations by making it a priority. Have discussions about accountability, encourage your team members to share ideas, and tailor what accountability means to your team and how they can implement it into their daily routine.
- Define specific goals: Set specific goals for your team members and hold them accountable for the results. Have visible or tangible metrics to measure against throughout the project so your team understands how their work contributes to overall success. Setting goals is a way for your employees to feel in control of their work and the

results. It is also a great way to learn about your employees' skillset so you can assign tasks accordingly.

- **Provide updates on progress:** Make sure you remember to update your team on their progress often. Whether in the form of employee or customer feedback, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), or even informal conversations, give your team a reason to keep working hard with tangible results. Providing updates is a great way to encourage ownership and responsibility for individual goals and projects.
- **Hold yourself accountable:** Be an example for your employees by showing them your accountability in the workplace. Share what your goals are and let them know that you are just as responsible for their success as they are. Your employees will feel much happier to work with a leader who takes accountability for their success.

5Cs Framework to Build Team Accountability

The *5Cs Framework to Build Team Accountability* can help leaders build and maintain accountability within their team¹. As a leader, it is your job to provide your team with a definition of what it is you are holding them accountable for and increase your communication to improve accountability. The following framework will help you achieve this.



Common Purpose

Connect with your team by helping them understand why you need them to do a particular task. Rather than just telling your team what to do, rally around a common goal explaining what the point is and why it matters.

¹ See: [The 5Cs of Team Accountability](#), Rhythm Systems

Clear Expectations

Let your team know what they need to do by providing clear expectations. Collaborate with your team to determine what success looks like and make sure they understand what you expect from them.

Communicate and Align

Keep your team rowing in the same direction, focused and aligned. Communicate over and over with your team, asking questions and reminding them of the importance of their work.

Collaborate and Coach

Monitor your team's progress regularly to adjust in real time. Coach your team by listening to their concerns; do not just tell them what to do. Your job is to be a resource of support to them.

Consequences

Consequences are often a result of the things that go wrong, but consequences can also be positive. These situations provide valuable teaching moments to show how employees can learn from their missteps and produce better results going forward. Display visible results for your team members, learn from mistakes and provide recognition immediately when things go well.

Workplaces thrive with accountability, which results in lower employee turnover, more efficient team functionality, and flourishing innovation.

The Right Way to Hold People Accountable

Accountability is not simply taking the blame when something goes wrong. Accountability is about delivering on a commitment. It is taking responsibility for the outcome, not just a set of tasks. It involves taking the initiative with thoughtful and strategic follow-through.

Accountability affects all levels of an organization. Senior leaders themselves cannot be fully held accountable unless the people who report to them also follow through on their commitments. Getting angry or publicly shaming people when they fall short is not a productive process for upholding accountability. It almost always reduces motivation, stunts creativity, and negatively impacts performance. So, what can we do to foster accountability in the people around us? Ultimately, it is about providing clarity in five key areas.

1. Expectations

The first step is to be crystal clear about what you expect. This means being clear about the outcome you are looking for, how you will measure success, and how people should go about achieving the objective. It does not all have to come from you. In fact, the more skilled your people are, the more ideas and strategies should come from them. Have an open conversation about expectations, and before the conversation is over, ask a team member to summarize the important pieces to make sure you are ending up on the same page. Specifically, ask your team members for their input on the outcome they are going for, how they are going to achieve it, and how they will know whether they are successful. Writing out a summary is a good idea but does not replace saying it aloud.

2. Capability

What skills does the person need to meet the expectations? What resources will they need? If the person does not have what is necessary, can they acquire what is missing? If so, what is the plan to get them to where they need to be? Based on deliverable timelines, you may need to delegate the task to another team member. Keep a focus on the learning and development of your team members. Increasing the knowledge and capability of your team members allows for maximum flexibility when assigning tasks and achieving results.

3. Measurement

Nothing frustrates leaders more than being surprised by failure. Often, however, unforeseen failures are a result of employees being reluctant to ask for help before it is too late. These situations are easily avoidable by more honest and open communication. For instance, when meeting with an employee to discuss expectations, you should agree on periodic meetings to discuss progress toward milestones with clear, measurable, objective targets. If any of these targets slip, jump on it immediately. Brainstorm a solution, identify a fix, redesign the schedule, or any other action needed to get them back on track.

4. Feedback

Honest and ongoing feedback is critical to accountability. People should know where they stand. If you have clear expectations, capability, and measurement, the feedback can be fact-based and easy to deliver. Is the team member delivering on their commitments? Is the team member working well with the other stakeholders? If the team member needs to increase capability, are they on track? Feedback should also go both ways – ask your employees for feedback about your own performance and if there is something you can be doing to be more helpful to them.

5. Consequences

Once you have followed the four actions above, the next step is to consider which consequences (good or bad) you should pursue: repeat, reward, or reposition.

If an employee has not been able to meet expectations, repeat the steps above if you feel that there is still a lack of clarity. If the person succeeded, you should reward them appropriately. If they have not proven accountable and you are reasonably certain that you followed the steps above, then they may truly not be a good fit for their role, and you should have an honest conversation about more substantial changes that may impact their position on the team.

These five steps are the building blocks for creating a culture of accountability. It is important to recognize that they are only effective when achieved together – all are required to fully enact a system of accountability. It is helpful to distribute the five actions and use them when discussing accountability with your team.

Based on where you are falling short, what adjustments are needed to get things back on track? Itemizing these areas provides the outline for your action plan. Once you make the adjustments, you should repeat the steps above to ensure that your team is in lockstep with your way forward.

Conclusion

To improve leadership effectiveness through accountability, leaders must synchronize on their agenda and vision, be thoughtful about how accountability is demonstrated in the leadership team, focus on how they need to collaborate on accountability, and execute an accountability focused agenda that is results-oriented.

This document highlighted three sets of guidelines to create and leverage a culture of effective accountability.

1. By focusing on the four characteristics of effective teams: Configure, Align, Execute, and Renew.
2. Understanding how to promote accountability in the workplace by leveraging the 5Cs Framework to create a common purpose, set clear expectations, align, collaborate and coach your employees, and apply consequences to continuously evaluate your accountability system.
3. Leaders should use the actionable steps provided to implement the right way to hold people accountable through expectations, capability, measurement, feedback, consequences, evaluation, and adjustment as needed..