



May 2018

Volume 25, Number 7

With one final push through the Spring, we are all looking forward to a summer vacation, and we could all use a little boost in productivity. This month's articles can help you learn to work efficiently as a team and be able to rely on your team members when you need them.

Kristin

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TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY BOILS DOWN TO THIS ONE ELEMENT

The word “accountability” is the latest buzzword going around business. “We don’t have accountability,” executives lament. “We have to hold our people accountable.” Yep, leaders want some of that there accountability...like you can point at it. That you can scoop some up and put it on your cafeteria tray. A person either has it or doesn’t have it. Accountability isn’t a “thing” to be had, bought, traded or conferred. It’s a mindset. A quality. A value that one person has for a specific task at hand.

A request was made. The receiver then agreed to that request or negotiated it to a mutually agreeable task with a mutually agreeable timeframe. Notice: the task is well-defined, understood by both parties, and has a specific due date.

NOW you have something to talk about.

If there is a high degree of trust between the two parties, then accountability is assumed. You know that the receiver will deliver on time and within spec. No worries. No lamenting.

- You trust that they understand the task and due dates.
- You trust that they have the ability (skills, knowledge or experience) to accomplish the task.
- You trust that they have the capability (time, resources) to accomplish the task.
- You trust that they are motivated (willing and eager) to accomplish the task.

The issue isn’t about “accountability.” It’s really all about trust. When there is low or no trust, that’s when accountability comes into question and you MUST “close the loop.”

So how do you close the loop?

- Before you finish your initial conversation, confirm that they truly understand the task and due dates. You might even want to throw in a few milestone/check-in dates if you are particularly concerned about making progress.
- Confirm that they have the ability to accomplish the task.
 - Training – They have received training to perform the task.
 - Experience – They have done this task before.
 - Proven Track Record – They have successfully performed the task.
- Confirm that they have the capability (time, resources) to accomplish the task.
 - Priority – They know how the task aligns with their current work plan.
 - Resources – They have the resources to accomplish the task.
 - Fallback – They know what to do when they hit the inevitable roadblock.
- Confirm their level of motivation to accomplish the task.
 - Interest – Demonstrate an excitement and interest to accomplish the task.
 - Proactivity – They ask probing questions to be clear about expectations.
 - Desire – They give you the sense that they want to take care of it!

When you have a great conversation up front about the task, then accountability flows because the two parties trust that the work will get done!

GET MORE DONE, BE LESS STRESSED – 5 TIPS TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

By Joseph Sherren

This past week at a [Chief Executive Network](#) (CEN) event in Chicago, I was fortunate to see a wonderful speaker, [Stephanie Wachman](#), who presented some great ideas on time management. She really explained in simple terms how to conserve energy, get more stuff done, and be less stressed.

CEN is a member organization that helps chief executives improve their effectiveness and gain competitive advantage. Members are placed in industry-specific, revenue compatible, non-competing groups facilitated by trained experts to share innovative ideas, solve specific problems and uncover best practices.

The process includes members meeting with peers in their industry to discuss achievements and challenges. This enables them to get high-quality feedback with no need to continually brief other members on industry dynamics, challenges, trends, business models, etc.

Participants learn from peers who have gone down that road before, which saves them from making the same costly mistakes. They also get valuable information on how to handle challenges they are currently dealing with. Members come away from meetings with actionable results, which can be immediately implemented.

Prior to launching her coaching company, Stephanie served as an executive director of sales in the office products industry, reporting directly to the president and the board of directors. Her role included managing and training a team of 100 global salespeople and she was responsible for developing products, sales and promotions for retailers such as Walmart, Office Depot and Staples both in North America and internationally.

She was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada where she received her BA in Communications from McGill University. She is the author of *OWN Your Time*; professional time management strategies for a profitable and balanced life.

Although some of her ideas may appear basic, they are timeless truths. Many of us know them, but do we practice them? She believes you must take the time to save time. Stephanie says you should

Ask yourself three things every morning:

- What are the three things I need to complete today?
- What is the one thing I could do to make my day successful?
- Am I committed to making time to think at a higher level every day?

In her workshops you will learn to identify those time saboteurs, prioritize your tasks, improve your time-management skills, and consistently set and achieve goals.

Here is just a sample of some ideas to save time and take control of your life:

- Avoid multitasking; If the truth be known, the brain is technically unable to truly multitask. When it focuses on one task, it is unable to focus on another. A study by the Psychiatric Institute found that distracted workers suffered from IQ reductions up to 14%.
- Just say no to others; Understand that when you say yes to one thing, you are actually saying no to other priorities that may be more important to your success.
- Think strategically every day; If you don't manage your schedule in advance, somebody else will.
- Practice brain dumping; Take time through the day to rest, nap, or meditate. This allows the brain to defrag and opens it up for additional information and reduces stress.
- Choose carefully the meetings you attend; Surveys show that the biggest time burner for workers is attending meetings, especially unscheduled ones.

My question for managers:

What methods are you using to maintain control of your personal time and protect your employees' schedule?

WHEN DOES A PANEL MODERATOR QUESTION GO TOO FAR?

This week, during a reunion panel of Scarface actors, the moderator, Jesse Kornbluth, asked a controversial question to Michelle Pfeiffer (who, BTW, I absolutely adore!). He asked, "As the father of a daughter, I'm concerned with body image, [During] the preparation for this film, what did you weigh?"

The actress, who plays Pacino's character's wife in the film, cocaine addict Elvira, was joined on stage by Pacino, De Palma, and Bauer, who looked visibly uncomfortable. The audience responded with loud jeers and boos, which was followed by immediate backlash on social media. IndieWire reached out to Kornbluth for comment about the event, and he responded via email:

It is true that a gentleman should never ask a woman about her weight. But that was not my question. It is a comment on the knee-jerk political correctness of our time that no one would be shocked if you asked Robert De Niro about the weight gain required for his role in 'Raging Bull' but you get booed — not by many, but by a vocal few — for asking Michelle Pfeiffer about the physical two-dimensionality required for her to play a cocaine freak in "Scarface."

Was this too personal? Too edgy? Too non-politically correct? What, precisely was it then? Everybody (at least in my geeky panel moderation circles) is talking about it.

After the initial boos to his question, Kornbluth did offer a brief clarification, telling the crowd, "This is not the question you think it is." (so what was it?) He did not ask a follow-up question, according to IndieWire.

Pfeiffer eventually responded, "Well, okay. I don't know. But I was playing a cocaine addict, which was part of the physicality of the part, which you have to consider."

Was this an inappropriate question for the moderator to ask? Especially since he was a last-minute replacement (The originally-scheduled panel moderator, Brian Koppleman,

evidently had a long-standing feud with Brian DePalma and was yanked off the program that morning). What do you think? Appropriate or not?

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: NEXT IS NOW – 5 STEPS FOR EMBRACING CHANGE

Many books on "Change" are highly theoretical; whereas [Lior Arussy's latest book](#) asserts that change is highly personal. Whether you are leading changes within your organization, dealing with personal changes, or being subjected to changes either professionally or personally, you can identify with and understand Arussy's five steps to embracing (and succeeding in) that change.

I was immediately hooked on the book with Bill Taylor's introduction (He's the cofounder of Fast Company Magazine) and proceeded to inhale Part One (why change is so problematic), Part Two (the five step method) and Part Three (specific techniques to approach change from a place of strength and flexibility). FYI - Part Three is my favorite part, but it won't make sense without the context of Parts One and Two, so don't skip over it.

Be advised: Next to Now is not a one-time read. You'll want to put this book right beside John Kotter's "Leading Change" and pull it down whenever you are facing challenges, changes, or just need some reinforcement that you are on the path to success.

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