

ACCOUNTABILITY IS A CHOICE

Driving Accountability

When leaders in some organizations speak the phrase “hold people accountable,” that message often gets translated by the receiver as “who can we point to when this thing goes south?” When blame and shame are the primary items on the menu, is it any wonder that people will avoid accountability if it is “driven” in this fashion? In some organizations, accountability is different; team members act more like great performers who want the chance to have an impact when the outcome is on the line. **They “choose” to be accountable. Why?**



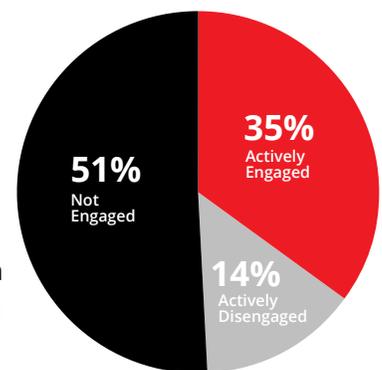
Culture Creates Mindsets of “Want To” or “Have To”

Carol Dweck is a noted psychologist at Stanford University. In her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, she describes the difference between Fixed and Growth Mindsets. People who operate with a Fixed Mindset are concerned about scarcity and fear of making mistakes. Criticism is usually negative and typically dwells on what people did wrong and what they should have done. Those who operate with a Growth Mindset think in terms of abundance. They look for

occasions and environments to learn. They are willing to take appropriate risks because they view mistakes as an opportunity to learn and improve. They know that things can go wrong and, when they do, they can understand what to do better “the next time.”

Engagement: An Outcome of Culture

The Gallup Organization in 2018 reported that 35% of all employees are actively engaged, 14% are actively disengaged and the remaining 51% are “not engaged.” When people work in a culture in which they are undervalued, they approach their tasks with the limiting belief that their effort doesn’t make a difference, and they feel that they “have to” do their work as described. The result: disengagement – leading to reduced revenues and lower outcomes. When leaders in an organization develop a culture that values and recognizes a Growth Mindset, people within the enterprise operate on liberating beliefs. They know that their work matters, and, consequently, they work on a “want to” basis. When organizations operate within a growth mindset, people do not fear blame and shame. Consequently, constructive cultures reinforce clarity, resulting in engagement and improved revenues and performance. According to Gallup, compared with business units in the bottom quartile, those in the top quartile of engagement realize substantially better customer engagement, higher productivity, better retention, fewer accidents, and 21% higher profitability. Engaged workers also report better health outcomes.



Vision Drives Accountability

George H. W. Bush famously said that he didn't have "the vision thing." While he was most likely being modest, his comment underscores one of the three key things leaders must do – Envision, Inspire, and Align. Vision is a vital tool of leadership. Leaders use it to paint a vivid description of what things look like "when the picture is fixed" – the objective having been already achieved. Psychologists refer to a Vision Statement as "a few short phrases that galvanize as to action." For example, during the Desert Storm War for Kuwait in 1991, General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described what the United States intended to do – "to eject the Iraqi Military from Kuwait." He said, "Our strategy in going after this army is very simple. First, we are going to cut it off, and then we are going to kill it." Simple, clear and direct. One can easily see how others would be inspired to contribute their talents in the prosecution of this plan.



Be a Leader Who Drives Choice

When leaders provide absolute clarity along with an inspiring picture of the end result, those responsible for its execution are able to see how their efforts matter in its pursuit. As we have seen, when people believe their efforts matter, they become engaged. In this Growth mindset, they will choose to be accountable for the execution of tasks and programs. Once they have chosen, their energy will be aligned and active, leading to better outcomes. This frees leaders to focus their energies toward planning and anticipating larger challenges instead of monitoring and driving compliance. **The choice is yours.**