



# HRxaminer

*Examining practical HR issues business owners  
and managers encounter every day*

## Who is Responsible for Accountability – You or Them?



Lately I've been encountering workplace accountability issues from all perspectives. I've been contacted by leaders whose employees aren't taking accountability for their workplace performance and behaviors. I'm encountering employees who don't feel their managers are accountable for their own responsibilities. And I'm speaking with managers who aren't holding their employees accountable for their work.

It creates the question – why is this such a difficult concept to implement in our organizations?

As organizational leaders, accountability is one of our core job responsibilities. We create jobs, define responsibilities, define appropriate workplace rules and behaviors, and expect employees to do the work and behave appropriately. It sounds so simple, but, of course, we're dealing with people and there's nothing simple about it.

So here are some considerations and some realities.

1. **Accountability Starts at the Top:** If you are not role modeling 100% accountability, your likelihood of getting your employees to 100% accountability is slim. Eyes are on you, so you have to walk your talk. When you commit to a deadline, achieve the deadline. If you want respectful employees, be respectful. If you want solid two-way communication, initiate and maintain communication. If you want your employees to focus on the job, focus on yours. Anything less gives your employees an out – if the leader isn't doing it, why should I?
2. **Clarify Performance and Feedback Expectations from Day 1:** Beginning at hire (or start today), you must communicate to each employee what they're to achieve, what results look like, how to share the results with you and others (as appropriate), the immediate/timely feedback you're going to provide, and how they will be held accountable. Then do it.

If you see employees doing a great job, tell them immediately. If you see employees struggling with a task or performance, connect with them immediately, give them feedback, help them succeed, and give them feedback along the way until they're successful.

If someone's behavior and actions don't fit your expectations or culture, do not delay to take action. Discuss what didn't work, what you expect going forward, and the ramifications of their decision not to change. Then hold them to it.

3. **Don't Take Blame or Responsibility for Someone Else's Choices:** Some people respond wonderfully to constructive feedback. Others do not, yet they still must take responsibility for their behavior – not you. It may sound like: "You're micromanaging me." But you're merely holding them accountable.

I always wonder what employees are actually doing when they're pushing you away from watching their job performance? Don't watch me too closely, because I'm actually not working that hard? If I'm focused on performing, then I shouldn't fear what you might see.

It's much easier to blame someone else for one's own failure, than it is to take accountability. So, when you encounter a "blamer," how do you respond? First, evaluate the authenticity of any alleged roadblocks. If they're valid, determine whether you have the authority or influence to remove the block. But it still comes back to the employee. What did the employee do proactively to achieve the expected outcome? Could they have asked you for help, gone to the individual, completed the task differently, etc.? Discuss accountability, solutions and expectations in the future.

4. **Meet Regularly and Document Always:** Who has the time? The real question is: What are the results if you don't take the time? I'm a firm believer in at least a monthly one-on-one with each employee to discuss performance and give clear feedback. We discuss tasks all the time, but do we really give them feedback on our expectations – on the accountability side? Accountability takes structure, time and communication, so create the systems to ensure that you are regularly discussing: employee expectations, actual results and the actions that created those results, what worked and what didn't, new expectations, and the ramifications for failing to meet those expectations.

Once you get in the routine of these accountability discussions, it becomes a simple part of your supervisory partnership with your employees. The objective is organizational success through individual employee and team success. The only way to achieve this is through developing a solid relationship of accountability with your employees.

And sadly, if an employee doesn't succeed or doesn't choose to behave in congruence with your cultural values and expectations, then let them go. That's where documenting each discussion, each meeting, each positive and corrective feedback gives you a clear picture of who is right for your organization.

I frequently hear that "my top performer has an attendance problem or an attitude problem or isn't a team player." Then that individual is clearly not your top performer. Just because they know the job, doesn't mean that their other behaviors aren't impacting your organizational success in some serious ways. So, that's when we need to hold ourselves accountable for creating a positive organization that rewards our truly top performers by not allowing others to bring them or the organization down.

I challenge you to step back and look at your team – whether from a leader or peer perspective. How can you affect accountability?

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## Supervising Smart Series 2018

Our next 2-hour Supervising Smart training session is from 10:00 – 12:00 on Tuesday, April 24th on the topic of:

### Effective Decision Making

- Evaluate decision-making tools and methods to meet your objectives
- Determine when solo vs. group decision-making is the best option
- How to avoid common decision-making mistakes

Location:

Hamline University Minneapolis Campus

1600 Utica Ave S., 7th Floor

St. Louis Park, Minnesota 55416

Fee: Each session is \$70 per person

Registration Link: [Click Here for More Information](#)

Here's the schedule for the remainder of the year:

**4/24/18:** Effective Decision Making

**5/22/18:** Managing Change

**6/26/18:** Values and Redefining the Culture

**7/24/18:** Everyday Management Do's and Don'ts

**8/28/18:** Assertiveness: Finding the Balance

**9/25/18:** Effective Interviews: From Screening to Hire

**10/23/18:** Collaboration

**11/27/18:** Creativity / Creative Thinking

**12/18/18:** Professionalism and Ethics

Feel free to sign up for one or more sessions to save your spot. You can also mix and match attendees so that the right people receive the right training.

Call [952.996.0975](tel:952.996.0975) [email Arlene](mailto:Arlene@ArleneVernon.com) if you have any questions!

## About Arlene Vernon

Arlene has provided HR consulting and management training services to over 500 organizations since starting HRx, Inc. in 1992.

If you're seeking a hands-on, practical HRxpert to assist your organization with employee relations, policy development, strategic HR activities or fun/doable management training, call on Arlene – Your HRxpert.

If you're planning a conference, seminar or special event, Arlene specializes in keynotes, seminars and workshops to meet your talent management needs. And if you're seeking a more lively entertaining activity, Arlene's custom songs and musical-inspirational keynote may be perfect for your organization!

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