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ChoiceWords

Thoughts on Leading Accountability

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Dear Stephen,

In this issue of the ChoiceWorks information letter, *ChoiceWords*, we are making two announcements: one is an offer for a free webinar on organizational accountability and the second is the grand opening of our website.

Our main article focuses on Performance Reviews and how they drive Accountability. We also explore some important questions in our Effective Question Column.

Please provide feedback so we can give you what you want that adds to your professional and personal life.

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Free Public Webinar:

Jill and Steve Morris, co-authors of the book *Leadership Simple, Leading People to Lead Themselves*, will be co-hosting with Jennifer Zamecki, a free TTI Webinar next Thursday, October 20, 2011 on the topic of Accountability in Organizations.

The difference between good and great organizations leads back to personal and cultural accountability. Learn from the experts on how to develop skills for leading accountability, teamwork, and ownership in your own organization. The

results from learning these simple principles can yield increased productivity, decreased conflict, and more job satisfaction. If you would like more information about what Jill, Steve, and their partner Deb Turner can accomplish for you and your company, please visit our [website](#).

Title: TTI Public Solutions Webinar: Being a Personally Accountable Organization

Date/Time: Thursday, October 20, 2011 at 1:00pm-2:00pmPDT

Register by [clicking here](#).

Cost: FREE!

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Website Grand Opening:

Check out our new [website](#). It contains many resources focused on accountability and other leadership topics including past newsletters, articles, videos and information about our programs and ideas. The site offers FREE assessments you, your peers and family can use to appraise yourself, your organizations and your cultures. Don't miss out on this expanding source for great content and please let us know what you think about the site.

Social Network:

To receive current information on upcoming events, promotional offers, and tips/quotes of the week from ChoiceWorks Inc. - become part of our Social Network by linking to us at the following locations at Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter and at our blog. We will keep our social network contacts with you to a minimum because we respect your time and attention.



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Featured Articles:

Accountability: Performance Reviews

The Effective Question: Have we defined systems and processes to support accountability, engagement and success?

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Accountability - Performance Reviews

Shocking as it may seem, many organizations have failed to recognize that leadership is accountable for creating the systems and processes to support people's success. We are not talking about electronic or manufacturing systems and processes. No modern, growing organization can operate without them. In this newsletter we will focus on one of those systems that supports people to grow and deliver the required results; the performance appraisal system.

Performance Appraisal Systems:

We define a system as a collection of processes that generates more than one result and impacts many people and/or other systems. In most organizations there is a system of performance appraisals. Managers are asked to review the performance of the people they lead at least once per year or more often. Some organizations have a complex interactive system where the person may review their own performance while their boss does the same. Then they sit down face to face comparing perceptions; the manager listen to the employee's review of their employee's performance and then the manager shares her view of the employee's performance. The manager and the employee may be guided by a form that asks them to rate the employee on several specific activities, behaviors and results.

Self-Evaluation:

The employee could also use a process of self-evaluation like the one we prescribe for many situations. For instance the person could ask themselves:

- Here is what I was expected to produce, do, change, and create.
- This is what I produced, did, changed and created based on my smart goals and metrics in the following areas:
 - 4 1 The results I created with other people...those that reported to me and my peers, bosses, customers and suppliers.
 2. The processes and systems I managed partially or from end to end including the inputs and outputs of those processes.
 - 6 1 The structures I worked in, led and followed in regards to the organization, my department and myself. This includes the big

organizational vision and strategy and how all other goals and strategies rolled up into this big one.

4. What I've learned and practiced that supports my job performance.

5. The strengths I used to achieve success in delivering on the key accountabilities of my job.

6. The impact of my efforts on department and company success.

- These are the areas in which I want to grow and what I'd like to achieve in the future.
- Overall, I would rate my performance as (poor, fair, good, excellent or on a scale of 1 to 10)
- These are the alternatives I can think of for these improvements. This is what I will do by when.

Medical Organizations Example:

In medical organizations physicians are rated on measures like quality, patient satisfaction, staff satisfaction, quantity of patients seen, proper utilization of resources, and on providing appropriate access to their patients as well as on more qualitative subjective measures like working effectively with fellow physicians and other medical team members and contribution to the organization beyond patient care. This system combines inputs from many sources. Asking the physician to self-evaluate can build accountability and create shared ownership between the physician and his boss for the quality and output of the performance review process.

Employees Want To Know:

Performance reviews are worth doing if they lead to supporting improvements for the employee, the manager and the organization. Many employees want to know how they are performing so they can make improvements or receive recognition for their efforts. If they have not received timely feedback or just anecdotal performance information from their managers, employees may be unsure about their contribution. This is demotivating for some people. For others it may mean that they have an unrealistic view of what they are achieving.

Benefits for Managers and Employees:

There are other advantages for doing performance appraisals with employees. When a manager is required to prepare feedback, it generates deliberate thought

about the individual and collective performance of the people they lead; a perspective that reflects the overall effectiveness in leading others to high performance. If they approach the process with an open mind leaders may uncover patterns that show up in the behavior and thinking of multiple employees and then they can address them with the group. Managers will get insights for changes they can make in their behavior to support their team.

The process of doing an individual performance evaluation produces a very different understanding and conversation than an occasional on the spot feedback session. When the employee gets to do their self-evaluation first, the conversation shifts even more from a top down approach to collaboration for positive forward looking improvement. Results and performance are placed in a boarder context. Both manager and employee are looking at the big picture and the timelines of historical observations from the past year or months. The manager gets to judge if he has been attending to the employee's development, activating their strengths, providing necessary resources and removing obstacles and constraints. A well done appraisal session provides an opportunity for a deeper connection between managers and staff. Managers get to renew their expectations, acknowledge strengths and accomplishments, reinforce the contribution to company results, help people plan improvement and change, solicit the expectations from the people they lead and identify employee needs. They have an opportunity to build a deeper relationship beyond the formalities of the job that could create higher levels of engagement. In some organizations performance improvement plans are negotiated between the employee and the manager that lead to big results. For instance, with one client, reviews led to the creation of an individualized 90 day plan for each employee that included one to three specific business goals along with one behavior change.

Organization Benefits:

Every organization wants to achieve high performance. People must be aligned with and accountable for those results that everyone owns but no one person controls like customer service, profitability and growth. When executed effectively, the performance appraisal system generates improvements in output from large groups of people that positively impacts the overall results of the organization. Good performance appraisals aim to align people around the overall goals of the organization. People are judged on how they supported the organization's strategies, mission and vision as well as on individual performance. They may get coaching on how their individual goals connect and support those big drivers and other corporate initiatives. Performance conversations are an opportunity to create this alignment and build a cooperative relationship between the employee and the manager.

Create Commitments:

Performance appraisal systems should generate concrete commitments from the manager and the appraised person. Those commitments must be tracked and discussed in a formal manner on a regular basis to drive accountability and sustainable change. Commitments from the employee and the manager can be reviewed at least once per quarter or more frequently. If they are only revisited once per year the process will not achieve the optimum results the organization needs and the manager will be sending the wrong message about accountability. Multiple reviews are part of the system.

Neglect and Failure:

Many organizations take a casual approach to performance reviews and there are those who do not believe in them or do them at all. Managers frequently put off delivering performance appraisals because they don't recognize their value or they feel uncomfortable about being honest, direct and engaged with their subordinates. In these circumstances engagement and accountability are negatively impacted. The results produced by a group or team are significantly less, small performance problems build over time into big challenges, and turnover increases because people don't feel valued nor do they learn and improve. The manager stagnates and ends up with only a partial view of the reality of his team and the organization loses opportunities that translate into quantum leaps in results.

Frequently we see organizations failing because systems are missing. For example, a company may not have formalized systems or processes for managing meetings, making decisions together, negotiating change or communicating exceptions. In one situation, people had no standardized method of communicating that their projects were going to be late. The managers were frequently on the road and there was no agreement or formal approach to guide people in how and when to keep management informed. Failure to deliver on time at the expected level of quality and completion was more the rule than the exception. This is not a people problem. It is a systems problem. It is hard to hold people accountable where systems are not well defined. Accountability has three key dimensions, the "I" the "WE" and "Systems and Processes." The system dimension cannot be ignored if you are seeking high performance.

Success:

When conducted with a disciplined, interactive approach that includes an effective exchange between managers and their direct reports and strong periodic follow up

Jill Morris Sincerely,
Deb Turner
Jill Morris
Steve Morris
Lorelei Cruz

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