

The Art of Accountability

When people are asked to define what accountability means to them, many conjure up thoughts of uncomfortable conversations, defensiveness, and conflict. For some, it's all about confronting "them" about how they are underperforming and what they "must" do to improve. When thought of in this way, accountability becomes something to avoid and put off. After all, you might have thoughts that the person that he or she will never really change their behaviour. There is an inherent discomfort in this entire way of thinking and viewing the world of accountability.

So we need a new mindset to achieve a different result. That's why I coined the phrase and concept "Account-4-Ability©". At its core, Account-4-Ability© is about seeing another person's potential and having a deep honest desire to assist them in their success. By holding the **highest vision of the other person** and appreciating that they are doing their best according to their awareness at the moment. This process is all about genuinely caring about the outcomes for the individual as well as the organization or project.

Here are four key concepts of Account-4-Ability©

1. Every interaction is about **Respect** for all persons concerned. That means that we don't judge or criticize the other person. We simply recognize that they can do even better than their current performance. And we choose to share information about specific challenges by describing behaviour and outcomes, never criticizing the individual's personality or personhood.
2. Account-4-Ability© is about **Honouring** the other person fully. I choose to honour you and our process together so much that as we build our relationship, we are truthful and honest with one another. Every time I think about you, I choose to see the highest vision of you – that place where you have potential to be most successful.
3. **Caring** is a key component. In order for this to work, it's paramount to focus on what you like and appreciate about the other person so that you offer feedback in an authentic way. As humans, we have mirror neurons that allow our brain to "read" how you are feeling towards us, so this cannot be faked. If necessary, find a small part of the person that you like and appreciate about them. Then focus on that throughout the conversation – otherwise you run the risk of alienating the other person – after all, we all want to be cared about.
4. It is helping that person to realize their **true ability** through honest, constructive and respect filled conversations. Learning more about what makes the person most successful, offering help to remove barriers and help that person discover how they can grow into their potential. It is having conversations that go deeper than the behaviour of concern and into exploring the best working relationship for both of you.

As a Project Manager, setting up a new project by exploring Rules of Engagement with the project team may seem like time consuming process. However, when you take the time to uncover the needs and aspirations of each team member, you can set the team up to be better able to maneuver through setbacks. Think of this process as an investment. Here are some key questions to ask during the first session for your next project:

1. What are each person's personal aspirations from the project? What do they hope for as the best outcome for this project?
2. Ask each person to identify with the project team what they personally and professionally hope to gain from being involved in the project. By uncovering what's in it for me, team members are more likely to increase their personal investment in the project.

3. Discuss how we will deal with challenges as they arise. Ask each person how they would like to be given feedback or be held accountable (what works best for them individually). Ask the team how they want to hold themselves and each other accountable given these personal styles.
4. Explore how you will communicate project successes and challenges during this project. Then celebrate all successes, even the micro-successes along the path. By seeing the progress to date, especially during challenging times, it helps people to remain motivated and to push through to create the best possible outcomes.

Account-4-Ability©provides a process to champion each member of the team, while ensuring that everyone benefits from honest, respectful and caring interactions with both the project's best interests and each team members highest potential as well. It's a roadmap to project success!

Sylvia Plester-Silk is a Catalyst and Executive Coach at On Purpose Consulting. She is an expert in team dynamics. By understanding the energy of the team and coaching leaders to shift the culture she enables you to increase commitment and release results.

www.onpurposeconsulting.ca