



Be a **MODERN MANAGER** with a thriving team.

*episode guide*

## EPISODE 138

# Managing Four Types of Accountability

Managing accountability means more than focusing on "performance" or "face-time" at the office. While goals are important, as is spending time on task, a more broad understanding of accountability is needed for the modern workplace.

This guide contains an overview of the four types of accountability, the accountability loop process and recommendations for how to hold accountability conversations.

## 4 TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

### Accountability for Results

Accountability for Results focuses on measuring success against a set of predetermined goals. What is tricky about results is that they are not always within our control. Goals that are centered on outputs or activities are easier to achieve than goals centered on impact or outcomes. Be clear as to whether you are holding someone accountable for completing the work or realizing the impact of that work.

#### Questions to ask:

- Did you achieve the results you set out to accomplish?
- Did you hit the targets set?
- Did you accomplish the goal?
- Did your activities produce the impact we expected?
- Did your efforts pay off in the results we were aiming for?



Accountability is never about blame or punishment. Accountability is about taking ownership and figuring out how to do (even) better going forward.



## Accountability for Responsibilities

Accountability for Responsibilities focuses on ensuring the activities within a specific role or job description are completed as expected. Goals are predominantly set for big or new initiatives, but there is plenty of work that must be done that doesn't rise to the level of goals.

### Questions to ask:

- Did you complete the activities you're responsible for in an acceptable fashion?
- Are you managing the day-to-day aspects of your job effectively or adequately?
- Are the domains or areas of work within your role's purview being attended to?

## Accountability for Behavior

Accountability for Behavior focuses on how we act and interact every day. In addition to the work itself, we must address how we act, as colleagues and professionals, and how we go about doing the work.

### Questions to ask:

- Did you act in alignment with our team's/organization's values?
- Do you act professionally e.g. meeting deadlines, accepting feedback, etc.?
- Did you follow the appropriate processes, procedures and policies when doing your work?

## Accountability for Growth

Accountability for Growth focuses on how we develop our knowledge, skills and capabilities in ways that enable us to fulfill our current role and advance our careers.

### Questions to ask:

- Did you meet your growth/professional development goals?
- Did you improve in the areas identified as growth or stretch areas?



## THE ACCOUNTABILITY LOOP

### Set Expectations

Whether writing goals, establishing norms, or redefining job responsibilities, it's critical that accountability begin with shared expectations.

Try using these approaches to set expectations

- **You set the expectation:** Sometimes it's appropriate for the boss to determine the expectations. This approach is often used when there are preexisting agreements, such as team norms, company policy, or goals set by the department.
- **They set the expectations:** Occasionally it makes sense for your team member to set the expectations for themselves. This approach may be used when the person is very senior or an expert in their domain.
- **You set the expectations together:** In most cases, you'll want to work together to set the expectations. This could be true co-creation where you brainstorm together, or more of an enrichment process where they develop drafts that you enhance.
- **The team sets the expectations:** There are times when the team needs to own the expectation (team goal or team norms) in which case developing them as a group is most appropriate.

### Check-In Regularly

Accountability needs both real-time and planned conversations to be most effective.

- **Real-Time Feedback:** When you notice something positive, let the person know right away. If you notice something going awry, do the same. It's these real-time conversations that keep everyone on track and reduce the chances of anyone being caught off guard down the road.
- **Planned Feedback:** It's not always possible to be close enough to the work or person to notice accountabilities and provide real-time feedback. This is one reason planned feedback sessions are so important. They provide an opportunity for reflection and normalize the feedback or accountability conversation, making them easier to hold.



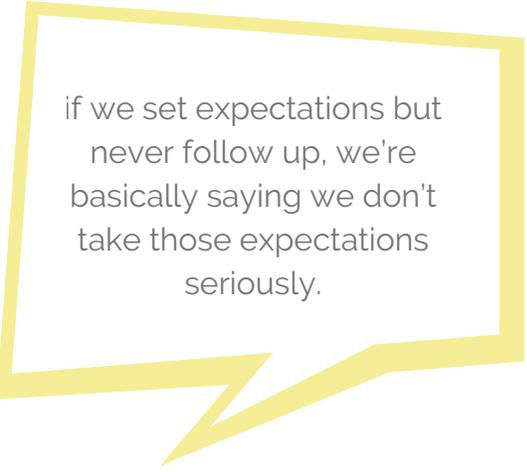
## Hold an Accountability Conversation

Use the following flow to check-in with the person about what the issue is, explore why the work or behavior is falling short of expectations, and problem solve for the future.

1. **State the expectation:** Refer to any prior communications in which you described what success looks like. This is one reason why documenting the expectations is so useful.
2. **Identify the gap:** Use the optimal approach depending on whether you already know the feedback to provide or are reflecting in the moment.
  - a. **Specifically describe your observation of what is falling short:** Avoid speaking in generalizations whenever possible. Instead, refer to specifically
  - b. **Reflect together on performance against expectations:** Planned check-ins are a great opportunity to ask how its going. What have you and they noticed when looking back over the past few weeks? What is going according to plan and where are they struggling or hitting roadblocks that might inhibit success?
3. **For areas of concern, investigate by asking what's going on:** Is there a lack of clarity or misunderstanding? Are their skills not yet up for the task? Was there another factor that led to this?
4. **Seek understanding:** Give them the floor to explain and help you understand from their side. Be genuinely curious to uncover the root cause.
5. **Solve the problem together:** Identify potential solutions and agree on a new plan.

### TIPS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY CONVERSATIONS

- Shift your mindset around accountability from "I have to give someone feedback which might hurt their feelings or cause defensiveness" to "I have an opportunity to help make something better."
- Avoid judgement and assumptions. There are many reasons why people fall short of expectations.
- Take time to find the root cause and work together to determine the right solution.
- Hold yourself accountable to following through on accountability conversations even when they're uncomfortable or don't seem necessary.
- Give positive feedback, too. Acknowledging when things are going well is just as important as addressing when things are not.



if we set expectations but never follow up, we're basically saying we don't take those expectations seriously.