

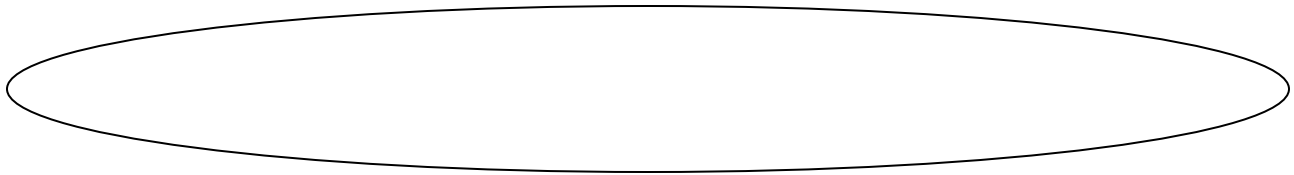
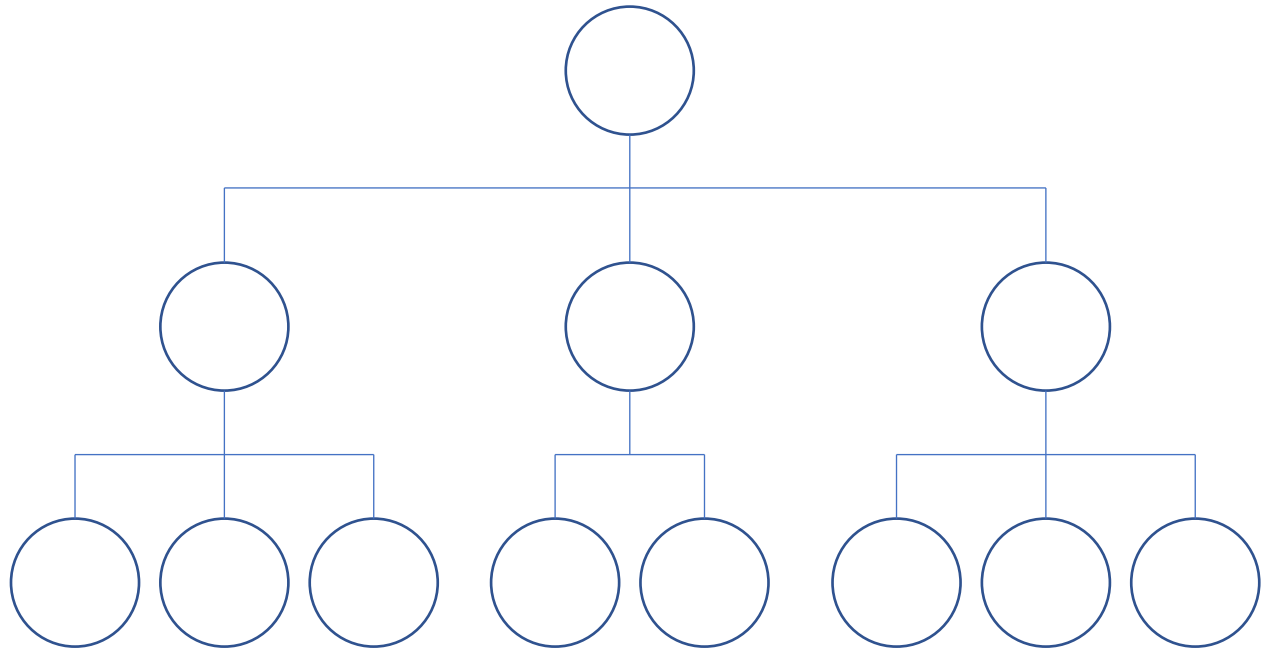


Creating and Leading Accountable Teams



Eric Coryell
ecoryell@wi.rr.com
414-840-5704

ORG. STRUCTURE & ACCOUNTABILITY



Accountable teams/individuals take the necessary (different) actions to achieve the desired results that are *not* currently being obtained.

~ KEY TAKEAWAYS ~

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- The traditional hierarchical structure is created because it makes it easier for the leader to maintain control and manage accountability. Under this model, leadership assigns different accountabilities to different positions and it then becomes their job to tell their reports what to do and “hold them accountable” for doing it.
- By separating responsibilities and accountabilities into areas of expertise (e.g., departments or divisions), it also makes it easier for the leader to know where to go when the desired results aren’t being achieved.
- However, this structure is not designed consistent with the way work flows through an organization. The separate departmental accountabilities creates friction between people in separate areas who are just trying to do their job.

HOLDING SOMEONE ACCOUNTABLE

- The process of “holding someone accountable” involves setting clear expectations, making sure they have the tools and resources necessary to achieve those expectations, establishing metrics and goals and then coaching, training, motivating, etc., the employee until the desired results are delivered. Continued failure on the employee’s part invariably leads to some form of ultimatum and sometimes termination from that position.
- The notion of “holding people accountable” is a myth. What it really translates to is “I (the leader) am taking the accountability from you and I now have it.”

LEADER vs. TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY

- There are two ways in which accountability can be managed in the organization: by the leader or by the team.
- If a leader manages the accountability, they have a higher level of control which helps them minimize their anxiety. However, they end up exhausted because so much is on them. Meanwhile, the team has less anxiety but ends up feeling unempowered.
- If the team manages the accountability, the leader loses control (and the feeling of importance) but ends up with more time and is no longer the constraint. Meanwhile the team has higher levels of anxiety that comes with having more accountability and responsibility, but is increasingly engaged and empowered.

PREREQUISITES FOR TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY

- If you are going to have your teams manage a higher level of their accountability, then as a leader you have to become comfortable with losing *some* control, and
- You have to require a higher level of adulthood from your employees.

NON-FUNCTIONAL vs. FUNCTIONAL vs. ACCOUNTABLE TEAMS

BEST TEAM EXERCISE

A. Identify the best team you have ever been a part of.

B. What made/makes that team so special?

"To counteract fear and to make the individual strong to face whatever the future holds, there is nothing so important as a fully accepted belonging to a group whose fate has a positive meaning to them."

~ Kurt Lewin

"Reality always wins, your job is just to get in touch with it."

~ Wilford Bion

SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL and ACCOUNTABLE TEAMS

FUNCTIONAL TEAM REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Clear and fully accepted purpose. (e.g. “what the team is accountable for achieving.”)
- 2) Measures that tell the team if that purpose is being achieved or not.
- 3) Competent people and capable processes.
- 4) High degree of *shared fate*.

ACCOUNTABLE TEAM REQUIREMENT

- 5) Deal with their *real issues* together.

ULTIMATE SUCCESS

- 6) Individual commitment to each other’s success (We > I).

Shared fate occurs when what happens to one, happens to all.

A **team** is any group of individuals with a shared fate.

A **real issue** is any issue, behavior, etc. that affects the team's ability to achieve its purpose/goals. In other words, if it is something that might affect what the team is accountable for they must deal with that issue if they are to be accountable.

~ KEY TAKEAWAYS ~

NON-FUNCTIONAL vs. FUNCTIONAL vs. ACCOUNTABLE TEAMS

- Teams can fall into three categories: non-functional, functional and accountable. Of these three, non-functional is by far the most common.
- You can best tell which category your team falls into by observing it during high pressure or high anxiety situations. A non-functional team will start to avoid their issues, talk behind each other's back and team members will prioritize their own needs ahead of the team. Functional teams will avoid these behaviors but will often become very leader dependent to get them through the tough stuff. Accountable teams on the other hand will rise to the occasion, take ownership of their real issues and work through them together. In the process they will become stronger, more resilient, and better able to handle future challenges.

FUNCTIONAL TEAM

- A functional team starts with a clear purpose. A team's purpose is defined by what the team is accountable for achieving. It is different than the company's purpose and the expectations that are set for the individual team members. A team must have a crystal-clear purpose to succeed and it is ultimately the responsibility of the leader to decide what the team is accountable for.
- The team must take ownership of the metrics which determine whether they are successfully achieving the team's purpose. This should happen on a weekly or (worst case) monthly basis.
- In order for a team to function it must have competent people and capable processes (clearly defined roles and responsibilities, good communication, good problem solving process, and clearly defined levels of authority around decision making)
- The engine that drives all teams however is shared fate. Without a meaningful shared fate the team will breakdown under pressure. More importantly the team members will not have the incentive to address their real issues together as individual success is not tied to team success.

ACCOUNTABLE TEAM

- All that separates an accountable team from a functional team is that the team takes accountability for achieving the team results. In other words, when expectations are not being met, the team members start doing something different until the desired results are achieved. This is different than a functional team where it is typically the leader that steps in and does this.
- The degree to which a team starts to deal with their real issues as a team is also the same degree that they can be an accountable team.
- Only when a team starts working through their real issues do they start to develop the trust and commitment to each other that will lead to high performance under even the most difficult circumstances.

REAL ISSUES

- Most teams have issues stack (a build-up of real issues over time that have not been dealt with as a team).

REAL ISSUES AND THE FEAR OF SEPARATION

Bion's Theory of Herd

- 1) Humans are pack animals.
- 2) Individual action is a myth.
- 3) Groups do not need to be present to influence an individual.
- 4) **Connection to a group is a requirement for human survival.**



Implications of a Herd

- a) Individual behavior in a group setting is driven by our *fear of separation*.
- b) There is a one-to-one correlation between high levels of creativity and functionality on a team and low levels of fear of separation.
- c) The role of the leader interested in creating a highly functional team is to maximize connection and minimize separation on the team.
- d) Minimizing fear of separation can only be achieved by ensuring that the group deals with its real issues together.

THE FIVE WAYS A TEAM CAN ADDRESS REAL ISSUES

1) _____

Anxiety:

Fear of Separation:

2) _____

Anxiety:

Fear of Separation:

3) _____

Anxiety:

Fear of Separation:

4) _____

Anxiety:

Fear of Separation:

5) _____

Anxiety:

Fear of Separation:

Pairing takes place whenever an issue that affects the team's ability to achieve its purpose is addressed by anybody less than the full team. For today we will use a simplified definition: talking negatively behind someone's back.

"A confrontation is a search for a truth. When you confront someone, your job is to know your truth and your job is to understand their truth. The key is you can't go in assuming you already know the truth"

~ Pat Murray

The real reason we don't talk about real issues with each other in a group setting is because it would break the *psychological contract* that says I will not talk about your performance and _____.

What separates those teams that are willing and able to deal with their real issues from those that work so hard not to is the existence of a meaningful _____ and establishing a base level of _____.

The LAW of SPEAKING FOR YOURSELF!

Everyone must speak on their own behalf in all meetings. No more speaking on behalf of others or speaking in a hypothetical third person.

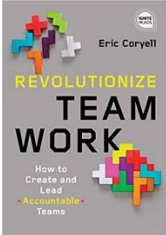
- 1) No one is allowed to use group pronouns during a meeting. No more "we," "they," or "our."
- 2) No more questions.....that are not questions. Almost all "questions" asked during a meeting are really statements in disguise. A question must be preceded by a statement.

~ KEY TAKEAWAYS ~

- Humans are pack animals and are fundamentally group-oriented in all that we do.
- Our strongest biological need is our need to be connected to other people. If we lose that connection, we die.
- It is because of this need to be connected to others that we operate from a fear of separation.
- As fear of separation increases, teams tend to fracture under pressure. As fear of separation decreases, teams tend to pull together and become stronger in the face of adversity.
- Your job as a leader is to maximize connection and minimize separation on a team. This can only be achieved by making sure a team deals with their real issues together. It is only here where true safety can be experienced by the team members.
- All attempts to ignore real issues or give them to our teammates or to the leader stem from our desire to minimize our own anxiety. This short-term gain is more than offset by the long-term price of the fear of separation going up.
- Pairing (talking about a real issue without all related parties present) is the single most destructive behavior on teams.
- One-on-one conversations are clearly superior to ignoring/pairing/looking to the boss but the advantages of group conversations far outweigh those of a one-on-one. Most of the advantages of one-on-one conversations have their roots in comfort or perceived safety.
- What makes the thought of dealing with real issues in a group setting so anxiety producing is that it breaks the psychological contract (I don't talk about you and you don't talk about me) and exposes me in a way that triggers my fear of separation.
- All performance conversations are really conversations about the gap between expectations and reality.
- A confrontation is a search for a truth – as long as you don't go into it assuming you already know the truth.
- Speaking for yourself is the single most important skills that high performing teams consistently demonstrate. Speaking for yourself means:
 - No speaking on behalf of others or in hypothetical third person.
 - No more group pronouns.
 - No more questions that aren't truly questions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY – TEAMS, LEADERSHIP and REAL ISSUE CONVERSATIONS

~ OVERALL ~



Revolutionize Team Work – Eric Coryell – a quick read that summarizes much of what I presented today. Published by Simple Truths as part of their Ignite Series of business books, it was written with the intent it can be read in an hour yet covers most of the key concepts. A good way to share the ideas and language with your team. Available on Amazon and many Barnes & Nobles stores.

~ ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE and ACCOUNTABILITY ~

Team of Teams. McCrystal. Quick easy read that provides insight into how the hierarchical structure of the military and business slows down decision making and is inefficient. Offers up solutions to address.

The OZ Principle. Hickman. A good book that breaks down what personal accountability is and provides a great framework to understand and talk about accountability.

QBQ! the Question Behind the Question: Practicing Personal Accountability at Work and in Life. Miller. Another really good book on personal accountability with some good tools. While personal accountability is outside the scope of this presentation both of these books are great foundations to start thinking about accountability.

~ FUNCTIONAL and ACCOUNTABLE TEAMS ~

Legacy. Kerr. Great book with an interesting perspective around leadership, accountability and high performance. Some neat examples of creating shared fate.

~ PAIRING & SPEAKING FOR YOURSELF ~

Glenn Rolfsen: How to start changing an unhealthy work environment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYLb7WUtYt8&t=3s> A great, short (8 min) video that uses the term backbiting for pairing. Highly recommend you watch this yourself and then show to your team as away of introducing and addressing the topic of pairing.

Jerry Harvey: Abilene Paradox <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFQ-ukyvAMk> Speaking version of his brilliant video (which is a subset of the book) of the same name. Two hours long, but very entertaining and insightful.

No-Fault Negotiating. Leritz. While the title talks about negotiating this in one of the best books ever written about having difficult conversations with other people. Very dry read but content rich.

Caring Enough to Confront. Augsburger. Just like the title says, good book for those who have anxiety around confronting others.

Brene Brown: Anatomy of Trust <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agOgnVpr2eg> A great look at trust and where it comes from.