



# TOBINISM

## Who Me?

*Your dog sits next to his poop on the carpet and looks at you as you enter the room, you scoff, "where did that come from?" Your dog looks around the room to help you find the guilty party.*

**Accountability** occurs when a staff member takes ownership of their position and their role on the team. To get that ownership the leader is going to have to first win the staff's trust. The team members are going to watch the leader as much as the leader is going to watch them. The team members want to see if the leader is going to 'walk the talk' or just 'talk the talk'.

Trust starts building when the team members see the leader listening to what they are saying through their spoken and unspoken word:

*"The biggest mistake you can make in trying to talk convincingly is to put your highest priority on expressing your ideas and feelings. What most people really want is to be listened to, respected and understood. The moment people see that they are being understood, they become more motivated to understand your point of view.*

*- David Burns (MD and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania)*



### Team members are going to wait to see:

1. if you are going to stand up for them
2. if you are going to give them credit
3. if you are listening to them
4. if you are committed
5. if you hear them
6. if you care
7. how you handle yourself under stress
8. how you handle staff that do not do their work.
9. how you conduct yourself in every situation.

*"Accountability cannot exist without proper accounting practices; in other words, an absence of accounting means an absence of accountability." - Wikipedia*

Once an associate knows what they are accountable for then the leader must hold them accountable.

A leader is to stand firm yet remain fair and equable.

As a 'newbie' manager, I was good at paper compliance because it was easier to shuffle papers and read what needed to be done than to actually do the job. The hard part of accountability is the application of it when there has been no prior accountability. When there has been no accountability the game of "who me" is rampant. Rarely does the offending party own up to their mistake. The majority of the time the guilty party wants to excuse their behavior and blame everyone else around them for why they did what they did. For me to apply accountability meant I had to put on my "parental" hat and demonstrate to the staff that every position is important and if we are going to accomplish what is good for the whole then every player has to be accountable to do their part.

With lack of accountability there is probably a need to apply some disciplinary steps in order to get things back on the right track. Discipline is not a word people like to use and society has tried for years to soften the word by giving it another label, but the truth is corrective actions have to occur. When a team member has not followed policy or has stepped over the line, you need to take action quickly. The longer you wait the worse it will get; you can try to close your eyes to the issue but that will not make it go away. If you hide half eaten food in a drawer eventually that food is going to cause a stink and become a bigger issue as it has morphed into something uglier.

**Before you meet with an associate who has been unaccountable, consider:**

1. Meeting with others on the team to gain insight to the team's views
2. Evaluate the outcomes that need to be accomplished
3. Evaluate the systems that have been provided to meet the outcomes
4. Assess the training and orientation the associate has received to perform their duties
5. Review the associates job description and expectations for measurability

Meet with the associate and always remember the goal is to  
**'Salvage the associate and resolve the issue to the positive'**

- √ Keep the focus on the issues
- √ Leave your temper in your hip pocket
- √ Do not make it personal
- √ Listen to what the associate is saying
  - How do they assess operations and the systems
  - What do they think is working
  - What do they think is not working
  - What would they change operationally if they could
  - Is there truth or excuse in what they are sharing
- √ Get to the point
- √ Discuss ownership of the actions taken
  - Do they understand 'why' they are working in this organization and in the industry
  - Does the associate see what they do as important or not
- √ Develop an achievable action plan
  - What can they do for themselves to make them self a success
  - What training can you provide to help them be a success
- √ End the meeting

I cannot emphasize strong enough how important it is to "keep the focus on the issue" and do not try to fix the associate. You never want to enable an associate by doing everything for them or offering to help them out of their crisis. If associates do not solve their own problems they become enabled and entitled thinking.

*"I sat with one of my managers as they discussed with one of their subordinates about missing a vital step in a process which lead to an injury of another person. The only excuse the subordinate gave was that she was having trouble at home and she was distracted by those issues. She stated she was sorry she had missed the important step and someone was hurt but her family issues caused her to forget. The manager listened calmly to the associate and then told her she was sorry that she was having troubles at home but the issue was she did not perform her duty appropriately and someone was injured. Whether her family issues caused her to be forgetful or not, the point is she allowed her family issues to distract her and it resulted in a negative outcome."*

The manager respected the associate by acknowledging the associate had family problems, but the manager did not let the focus turn to the associate and her family issues. The manager reminded the associate that her position at work was important and it held many responsibilities and mistakes in her department could cause death; therefore, the associate needed to keep her head in the game at all times while she was at work.

Even though the redirection action was delivered appropriately and the focused stayed on the issue, the associate vehemently complained that the organization was not being understanding of her situation and over reacted in their corrective plan. The fact that a person sustained an injury from her mistake appeared to be of no consequence to this associate.

There will be staff that a leader will never be able to turn but still the leader must approach those team members and try to get them to accept their accountability.

Once associates see their leader is going to take action when others do not carry their weight they will either stay or leave. Those that stay will join the band wagon and become the advocates for change. These associates will put their trust in their leader and help the company accomplish their vision.

Once road blocks have been removed and the 'poop' has been cleared the trip forward will be less 'stinky' and a whole lot smoother.

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