



Why put up with the broken promises, missed deadlines and bad behaviour that hold your business back?

Accountability is not for the faint-hearted.

When a colleague's behaviour or performance falls short of expectations you face a thorny and potentially costly conflict.

Such moments are risky and emotionally charged. And they're often avoided.

But what if such moments were opportunities for a business breakthrough? A breakthrough in performance AND a breakthrough to a stronger relationship too.

Like Ken Blanchard (world-renowned business author and trainer) suggests:

"The greatest test of a relationship is what happens when someone lets you down. Yet these are the moments of greatest opportunity."

Is it possible to move from avoiding accountability (and messing it up) to embracing accountability (and being brilliant at it)?

In a nutshell

Tackle below-par performance early, have a well-structured conversation to solve the problem and strengthen the relationship.



A rock and a hard place

You'll have experienced this. You expect one thing from a colleague (or family member) and get less than you were expecting. An agreed deadline or target is missed, or your teenager's room is a mess (again!).

What to do?

1. Say nothing and let the poor performance go undealt with?
 2. Speak up and create a new, emotionally-charged problem?
- Tough choices – avoid the below-par

Here's a proven solution for you...

Embrace, learn and build the skills of healthy accountability conversations.
Work on yourself first then build a constructive accountability conversation.

performance or start an argument?

But broken promises don't need to result in prickly, complicated, and frightening arguments.

Handled well, your accountability conversations can improve results.

Accountability gets results...

Imagine the profit gains for an IT company that sees quality improve by 30%, productivity up 40%, and costs down 50%. All because of a modest (22%) improvement in accountability.

And when a large telecoms company improves the structure of accountability conversations, productivity from the same people improves by 40%.

And if a 1% improvement in accountability process delivers £1,000,000 gain in productivity for a defence contractor, it all proves that accountability, done well, drives profits and capital value upwards. Go to the downloadable tools detailed on the back page of this report to see all the case studies.

Go in search of conflict!

In Patrick Lencioni's landmark publication 'The Five Dysfunctions of a Team', he promotes the idea of conflict. Constructive conflict.

Lencioni's experiences of working in many internationally recognised companies suggests that it's tough to move a business forward without conflict.

Holding someone to account is a conflict – and so it's an opportunity to move your business forward.

Simply make your accountability conversations constructive (and well-structured).

Accountability pays off but is challenging...

In their book 'Crucial Conversations' the authors (Kerry Patterson et al) start by describing how animated we all get moaning about people pushing into a queue we occupy. They then show how very rare it is for us to actually 'challenge' the one pushing in.

You're probably now thinking that you would challenge the queue offender, but the research shows that when 'push-comes-to-shove' we mostly do not challenge.

We mostly avoid the conflict.

But this changes as soon as the queueing people learn a great way (a great script or structure) to approach the offender.

"I'm sorry; perhaps you're unaware.

We've been standing in line for over 30 minutes."

The research shows that once one person uses the script then others follow suit when other offenders try to 'push-in'.

A vital conclusion

Show people what to say and a way to say it (that leads to the result they want) and they will hold others to account.

Where do you start?

You already know that it will all end in tears if you start an accountability conversation with anything like:

"What's wrong with those bozos?"

So, breakthrough accountability starts with *you* working on *you* first. Before you even open your mouth!

1. Don't rush in. Slow down!

Imagine the distress a parent has when their daughter misses the midnight curfew agreed and promised earlier in the evening.

As soon as she returns, over an hour late with her dislikeable boyfriend, it's easy to dive into a heated and confrontational argument.

Patterson et al suggest you need to **slow down** because:

"Speed rarely leads to careful thought"

You have to take time to unbundle the problem, but first of all...



2. Choose which problem

Slowing down enables you to choose the right problem.

If you don't consciously choose the right problem to focus on, you either end up going after the wrong issue or too many issues.

So, what's bothering you the most about your daughter's curfew issue?

- She's late
- She broke her promise
- She created white-fear in you about her driving late at night
- She deliberately defied parental control yet again

Choose the wrong issue (anything that fails to get you the result you want) and the accountability opportunity will be lost. Repeat offending will be likely, or worse, you're headlong into a relationship breakdown.

Here are a few tools suggested by Patterson et al to help you choose the right issue:

- a. Think about the persons behaviour and use 'CPR' to help isolate the right issue for discussion:

'CPR' - Ask yourself about **CONTENT** first – what just happened – how come they're so late?

Ask yourself about **PATTERNS** next – it's the repeating pattern which is the biggest issue – how come they're late every time?

Next ask yourself about the biggest concerns around your **RELATIONSHIP** – what strains and struggles are threatening your relationship?

Choose which level of (CPR) accountability best fits the issue you're facing and the way you're feeling.
- b. Now ask yourself about the resulting **CONSEQUENCES**:

Consider the impact on you, the relationship, your daughter, the boyfriend, other family members.

Or in a work situation, consider the impact on you, the relationship, your customer, your colleagues and other stakeholders.

What can you share, what can you ask the 'offender'?
- c. Then ask yourself about the **INTENTIONS** behind their behaviour:

For example: Is the daughter late purely to

get at her parents, or because she simply lost track of time?

It pays to tip-toe around intentions. This is because you may suspect one intention and they have another intention – however they might say their intention is something different again! Work with the hard evidence you have and ask gentle questions.

Having unbundled all the issues and concerns you might still feel unsure about what the main issue is so...

- d. Ask yourself what you **WANT** and **DON'T WANT**

What do you want for you, for your colleague (or daughter!) and for your relationship?

Fail to think about all three and you might leave one out and weaken the solution you agree on.

3. To do or not to do?

The authors pose two powerful questions:

"...how do you know if you're not speaking up when you should?"

"...how do you know if you are speaking up when you shouldn't?"

Every circumstance is different, but it pays to stop and think before you act – should you or shouldn't you?

Going to silence, as described in the queue-jumping example earlier, is always questionable.

For guidance on whether you should or you shouldn't speak up, use the checklist found in the download resources from the back page of this Bitesize edition.

Safety first accountability...

Quite rightly, Kerry Patterson and his fellow authors focus on using the right words:

"...asking others to account for their actions lives or dies on the words (you) choose and the way (you) deliver them."

Often your people can feel threatened, insulted or intimidated by accountability. This means your first job is to choose words to make them feel safe. See how the 'contrast' principle in the next section helps...

TIME TO DISAGREE:

“Why do my accountability discussions always turn into a scary heated argument? All I get is hacked-off people in a sulk! I’m better off avoiding these discussions.”

If your people, at any time, feel unsafe you’ll see them resort to either ‘silence or violence’!

The authors suggest you use what they call the contrast principle:

“I don’t want you to think I’m unhappy with how we work together. Overall, I’m very satisfied with things. I just want to talk through how we get your reports done on time.”

What you’re doing here is contrasting what you don’t mean with what you do mean.

The ‘don’t’ section is vital for making them feel safe. And only when they feel safe can you then describe the performance gap:

“You said you were going to deliver the report by 5pm yesterday. It’s 10am now and there’s no report ready.”

Then you can tackle either the Content, Pattern or Relationship (CPR) concerns you have chosen for this particular accountability conversation.

“What if people repeatedly break the same promises and under-perform?”

Repeat offenders drive us all round the bend, don’t they?

So why not escalate your accountability conversation from one about the behaviour, to one about the repeating pattern of behaviour?

Also, when you talk about the intentions and consequences of this repeating pattern, you’re having a more impactful and focused accountability conversation.

The fact they missed a deadline is not the main issue. The fact they *repeatedly* miss a deadline is the main issue. Their intentions are worthy of discussion as are the consequences on everyone involved.

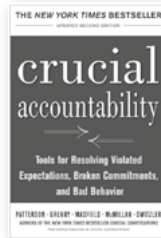
But remember to make them feel safe.

“Please tell me more”

Tom Peters is recognised as one of the world’s most influential business commentators and authors.

He suggests *“...if you read only one management book... this decade... I’d insist that it be Crucial Accountability.”*

There’s far more to breakthrough accountability than these four pages allow. Which is why we recommend you check out the downloadable tools over the page to help you further and heartily suggest you dive into the ‘Crucial Conversations’ book we’ve used to inspire this Bitesize report.



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4 helping hands for you...

When you apply the skills of ‘Crucial Accountability’ you’ll be on the path to successfully navigating accountability conversations before, during and after the moment of accountability.

No more will you see these conversations turn into gut-wrenching arguments or sulky silences.

- 1. Slow down – avoid diving into an accountability conversation without preparation**
- 2. Choose the right issue to tackle – and so avoid the wrong issue and avoid multiple issues**
- 3. Decide whether accountability is necessary or not**
- 4. Use words to make your people feel safe before and during your accountability conversations**

ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:
“How do I know that this approach to accountability will work for me and my business?”

It’s a rare business leader or manager that has received training on the skills of accountability.

And yet it’s a crucial business skill that can either help your business grow and blossom or, when done badly, result in the corrosion of your business performance.

Doesn’t it pay to test a skill set that has been proved in many types of businesses over many years?

For more reassurance and insight get yourself a copy of the book and check out the downloadable tools and resources that accompany this report (see back page).

STOP: diving into accountability conversations unprepared

START: by working on yourself first before you engage your mouth



Your next steps:

The guidance in this Bitesize report gets you on the path to stronger accountability skills.

And it seems to us that the better we get at accountability the better every one of our people get at doing their jobs.

But there's more to it than can be crammed into these 4 pages.

So why not follow internationally renowned business expert Tom Peters' suggestion: "...if you read only one management book... this decade... I'd insist that it be Crucial Accountability."

Start by slowing down

As the incisive saying goes:

"Fools rush in!"

Successful accountability requires both preparation and a calm mental state.

Start by working out exactly what you want to talk about, then work out what to say to make them feel safe - this will stop you 'rushing in'.

More tools and information for you:

To download more insights and supporting resources use the URL link in the box below.

Get accountability conversations right and both performance and working relationships improve...

It's so easy to avoid accountability conversations because both parties don't really want the stress and grief of such difficult discussions.

However, broken promises, missed deadlines and bad behaviour all hold your business back. They all result in lower productivity, higher costs and lost profits. So it pays to work on your accountability skills.

Here's how you start to make your accountability conversations more productive and much less stressful:

1. Slow down – avoid diving into an accountability conversation without preparation.

"Speed rarely leads to careful thought"

For accountability to work you have to take time to unbundle the problem...

2. Choose the right issue – and so avoid the wrong issue and avoid multiple issues.

Use CPR (Content; Pattern; Relationship) plus Intentions plus Consequences to help you choose which issue you wish to tackle.

3. Should you or shouldn't you? – having worked out which issue to tackle, now do a sense-check on whether you should tackle it or not. Sometimes it pays not to 'sweat the small stuff'. But be sure you don't use this as a way of avoiding the accountability!

4. Make people feel safe – use words to make your people feel safe before and during your accountability conversations using the 'contrast principle' - "I don't want you to think that...".

To further see how the skills of breakthrough accountability can help your business perform at a higher level, check out the downloadable tools and resources. And delve deeper into the book 'Crucial Conversations' for a full and rewarding look at all the skills of accountability.

YOUR SUPPORT TOOLS ARE HERE: Go to the link below and you'll find a selection of practical support tools to help you get a deeper understanding and develop greater skills and habitual behaviours for breakthrough accountability.

Find the support tools to help you here - www.businessbitesize.com/parfrey_murphy

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