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Personal Accountability

A session from

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Personal Accountability

Being answerable for personal actions.

Why is this skill important?

A person who is skilled in Personal Accountability gets things done. They go out of their way to meet each and every commitment they have made. They don't let setbacks keep them from reaching their goals. They don't look for outside sources of accountability, instead relying on themselves to make sure things keep moving. They also don't need outside sources of direction, if they have an objective, they set out to complete it and don't need to be told how. It's all about owning yourself and your actions.

Personal Accountability also includes the ability to learn from your mistakes and your experiences. What obstacles have you run into the past that slowed down your work? How might you avoid them in the future? You can also gather feedback to get others perspectives on how the project went. This might give you other ideas as to how to improve the next time around.

High levels of Personal Accountability tend to come with a "hero" mindset. Everyone has the choice to view themselves as the victim or as the hero. A victim is someone that has no control over their outcomes, they are at the will of the others or the circumstances surrounding them. I was late because traffic was so bad, I couldn't finish that report because no one gave me the data I needed, etc. A hero is someone who acts, they are in control of what happens to them. I was late because I pressed snooze too many times, I didn't finish that report because I didn't make it a priority to get the research I needed done, etc. Heroes are in charge of their own destiny, victims are not.

What skills are associated with Personal Accountability?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Personal Accountability:

- Demonstrates the ability to self evaluate.
- Strives to take responsibility for her actions.
- Evaluates many aspects of her personal actions.
- Recognizes when he/she has made a mistake.
- Accepts personal responsibility for outcomes.
- Utilizes feedback.
- Observes and analyzes data to learn from mistakes.
- Sees new possibilities by examining personal performance.
- Accepts responsibility for actions and results.
- Willing to take ownership of situations

How do you develop your own skills in Personal Accountability?

- Accept personal responsibility for the consequences of personal actions.
- If a problem is the result of your actions, work to solve it.
- If you make a mistake, admit it, and then work to fix it.
- Avoid placing unnecessary blame on others.
- Support others when they need your support. This way people will be more likely to support you when you need it.
- Maintain personal commitment to objectives regardless of the success or failure of personal decisions.
- Don't make promises you can't keep. If you make a commitment, keep it.
- Don't make excuses for things you haven't done. Instead, do what you need to do to get them done as quickly as possible.
- Apply personal lessons learned from past failures to moving forward in achieving future successes.
- Analyze mistakes you have made. Think about what you could have done differently and move forward.

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Activities

Activity 1: Top-Level Planning

Identify a project that involves multiple resources and a significant amount of time to accomplish. Then, try to complete the following tasks with that project in mind:

- Identify the Project.
- Select a deadline for completing the plan you are creating.
- If necessary, establish a budget for the project.
- Determine how the project fits in with organizational objectives.
- List up to five specific critical goals related to accomplishing this project.
- List as many less critical goals as you can think of.
- Prioritize your list of goals based on how important each task is, what tasks are related to others and/or timelines.
- For each goal, determine who should participate in reaching the goal and what their deadline is for accomplishing it.

Once you have completed your planning process, confirm the completed plan with your manager to determine if it is accurate and complete.

Activity 2: After Action Review

One good way to ensure that you learn from your past is to conduct and After Action Review (AAR) at the conclusion of each project. AARs are focused on debriefing how the project went in order to gain valuable insight about were processes, procedures or people could improve going forward.

Your AAR should include tat least three questions:
- What was supposed to happen? What did happen? Why was there a difference?
- What worked? What didn't work? Why?
- What would you do differently next time?

These questions can be asked in any number of ways, just as long as you're getting the spirit behind each question answered.

You should also be sure to set some ground rules before beginning. First, make sure that everyone knows the goal is to find constructive changes that might need to be made. You are not there to place blame or find fault. Keep the discussion positive by returning to the goal of improvement. Second, make sure that everyone knows that their opinion and feedback is important and valid. If you're facilitating the meeting, make sure taht everyone gets a chance to share their thoughts. And finally, ensure that you are focusing on the team effort and not individual performance. No one should be getting thrown under the bus.

The most important outcome of an AAR is that you learn something. It might be a small tweak in the process you use, or deciding to include another department in the planning stage. Whatever it is, make sure you gain a new insight about the project so that you can continue to improve each time.