Mental Model Dōjō
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THE ACCOUNTABILITY CULTURE SHIFT

How Organizations are Finding **Ownership** Key for Transformation

Oct 10 Thu

Online on Zoom, Sign-up (free): agile-od.com/events

Session A: 08:00-09:00 SGP
(Oct 9 Wed, 20:00 US EST, 19:00 CST, 17:00 PST)

Session B: 18:00-19:00 SGP
(Oct 10 Thu, GMT 11:00, CET 12:00, DXB 14:00)

agile Organization Development

Today's Outline

- **The Want, Needs, Wish**
- **The Challenges, Issues, Pain Points**
- **Windows**
- **So, what's the Insight?**
- **Now, what can we do?**

The Want, Needs, Wish

CEOs, GMs, Unit Heads like the idea of Accountability Culture because…

- Accountability is the readiness and capability to take ownership of one's actions, decisions, and the outcomes they lead to.
- When people hold themselves accountable, they actively seek out challenges, find solutions, and continuously improve their abilities.
- Accountability, embraced as a fundamental value by everyone in an organization, cultivates a shared sense of commitment to collective success and alignment with organizational goals. Everyone feels empowered, creating an atmosphere that nurtures growth both personally and organizationally.
- Accountability requires a foundation of transparency and integrity, urging the accountable person to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses while actively seeking feedback for professional growth.
- Accountability holds promise as a solution to command-and-control leadership and micromanagement.

The Challenges, Issues, Pain Points

- **We resist holding others accountable because we're uncomfortable doing it. Being held accountable causes anxiety.**
- Employee disengagement persists as a major, chronic issue.
- People don't trust their leaders. They feel that priorities frequently change, causing them to lose respect for leadership and become indifferent.
- Organizations today are metrics-obsessed. The dangerous side of being metrics-driven is that it creates an expectation once a target is met, people can take their foot off the gas. Essentially, it breaks the cycle of continuous improvement. Leaders often concentrate on short-term monthly and quarterly results, which manifest in immediate thinking over genuine accountability. Consequently, employees prioritize hitting the metric of the month over doing the right thing.
- When accountability is absent, one person's delay becomes the team's delay, causing issues to snowball. This environment also discourages employees from 'picking up trash'—addressing problems they notice—since they don't see it as their job, fostering siloed behavior.

Windows

Many windows to look into an organization

Accountability Culture and…

- Performance Management
- Employee Engagement
- OKR & Feedback Culture
- Ownership Culture
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Agile

The Challenges, Issues, Pain Points (cont'd)

Despite the effort...

- **Performance management** not working: People are meeting their SMART goals, but at the organizational level, we're still not achieving the outcomes and impact we want.
- **Employee engagement** not working: We hold frequent town halls and internal updates, but it seems like a one-way communication that goes unheard.
- **OKR** & **feedback culture** not working: We've implemented OKR and given feedback training to all middle managers, but since then attrition rate has actually gone up. In exit interviews, people complained that they felt more micromanaged.
- **Ownership culture** not working: We gave delegation and empowerment training to our leaders and managers, but people resisted to take additional responsibility for fear of blame. We also saw "ownership hoarding" by some middle managers, where they started creating fiefdoms, not passing down the empowerment to their people.
- **Roles & responsibilities** not working: Our efforts to address role ambiguity and confusion led to unnecessarily long discussions about role boundaries and instead increased the silo mentality, causing people to become territorial about their responsibilities.
- **Agile** not working: We put people into small squads and empowered them to design and deliver their work collectively. Yet leaders are complaining that they feel slowed down and that there is less clarity overall.

So, what's the Insight?

Coach Takeshi's View

- In my observation, low scores in accountability and ownership are common factors in all unsuccessful interventions. Therefore, **strategically focusing on enhancing accountability and ownership across organizational initiatives** could yield the greatest impact.

What to look out for:

- Accountability and ownership go hand in hand, but they are two distinct concepts.
- Accountability is fundamentally an external process. It involves someone within the organization, typically the manager, holding you accountable by setting goals and establishing performance measures.
- However, a sense of ownership cannot be imposed—it is intrinsic, much like personal motivation. **While ownership drives motivation, accountability is about taking responsibility for the outcomes achieved.**
- Taking ownership of a project doesn't mean you own it; it means you care deeply about your role and the overall outcome. It is a mindset where you feel in control and committed to the project's success.
- A manager responsible for a project's success will feel personally accountable for its outcome, but will also expect participation and accountability from team members.
- Individual and team goals should **ladder up** to larger company goals, so that everyone understands their impact on the bigger picture.

Now, what can we do?

Discussion

References

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