

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 1069 We Make Accountability Much too Complicated

I'm reading an article in a relatively prestigious business publication the other day, which covered the topic of accountability. This is something I regularly cover in my training courses, so I'm interested in the author's take. Then, she jumped the tracks and I just couldn't imagine where she went with the conversation. I'm Jerry Roberts and I'll explain, next, on The Extra Point.

The article on accountability started off okay, giving a basic summation of the concept. You have to rely on other people to get important stuff done. If they don't step up and do what is needed, then chaos ensues and things quickly fall apart.

So far, so good. This is a fundamental of organizational life. You give me a job to do and you trust that I'll do it.

However, there's a second level to this. Not only do you believe that I can get the task accomplished, you know that I take — and here's the key word — *ownership* of the situation. I accept responsibility for delivering the job the way you want it and when you want it.

There's another level to this and it's also based on ownership, but I'm going to put that on hold for just a moment and get back to what the author did that made every hair I don't have stand on end.

The author began to say that one problem with accountability was the confusion that could surround it. In her words, accountability could mean different things to different people, even in the same team.

Further, that words like *accountability*, *responsibility*, and *ownership* are used interchangeably, which furthers the confusion. Don't forget those words, and let me add one more — authority.

The author of the article also said that accountability is often only discussed after things have gone wrong and people are scurrying about, covering their behinds and trying to affix blame on somebody else.

There was more but you get the general idea. I'm not saying this writer is totally off-base, but everything was made unnecessarily complicated.

Do you remember I mentioned that "other level" to accountability? It's foundational to the whole concept of delegating work to others.

Here's four quick and easy steps to the whole issue of accountability.

Step one. The person delegating the job is accountable to make sure the person is ready to do the work and that person, in turn, then becomes accountable for the results.

Look, if the person selected is not ready to take on the job and I choose them anyway, then it's my fault if something goes wrong.

Step two is when you *are* prepared and confident you can be successful, you will likely have no trouble accepting responsibility for the job, and to be held accountable.

Step three. If you're prepared and confident, and are willing to put your name on the project, then I will be more confident and more willing to give you partial or complete authority to make decisions on budget, resources, and how to do the work.

Step four. If I give you the authority to make this project yours, including much of the decision-making, will you likely have trouble taking "ownership"?

(Con't.)

No. I don't think that would bother most folks who want to be active in this process.

As they say, it ain't rocket science. Train people from the get-go on what responsibility, authority, and accountability mean in your organization. Train them in this from the moment they hire on, and you'll be way ahead of the game.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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