

## **Personal Accountability for Improved Business Performance**

Personal accountability within an organization improves corporate culture and boosts performance. Accountability at employee-level means taking ownership over individual performance - for mistakes as well as for achievements. At optimum, this involves an intrinsic sense of personal responsibility for compliance with legal or industry obligations, ethical conduct and performance of tasks without the need for consistent external pressures or sanctions. Conversely, a lack of accountability stifles the professional growth of the employee in question, negatively impacts other members of the team (for example, where disproportionate workloads are imposed on good performers), and erodes morale. Significantly, the company bears the burden of a lack of personal accountability in terms of reduced overall performance, lowered work standards, and ultimately, a decline in the quality or timeliness of products or services. Taken a step further, a company that does not prioritize personal accountability faces increased risks of reputational and legal liabilities.

Establishing a workplace where all staff feel personally accountable (and where there is a sustained and high level of engagement), can take time to build and take root. Accountability and responsibility always start with management, but personal accountability is applicable across the board to anyone engaged with the organization, no matter how large or small the role.

Addressed under the rubric of two broad themes (communication and engagement), the highlighted actions below can assist managers to engender a sense of personal responsibility among employees, and at the same time, boost employee engagement in company initiatives, goals and values.

### **Communication**

A work culture of trust and empowerment is built on a foundation of transparency, the best tool for which is consistent and regular (two-way) communication. Effective communication facilitates dialogue and openness among team members, and should be inclusive of all employees. Openness encourages staff to ask for help when needed, prevents the hiding of mistakes, and reminds staff that they are a part of a broader whole.

#### ***Information or specific training for compliance***

Employers should provide staff with the necessary information and training required to keep them up-to-date with legal obligations, ethical responsibilities, or industry-specific standards and codes of conduct. Managers should be clear about the consequences (for the individual, for the team and for the company) of not complying with set rules and guidelines. For these purposes, it is critical for managers to keep abreast of regulatory changes and implications for their businesses.

### ***Targets and performance indicators***

Specific targets, results and deadlines that are feasible and measurable must be established. Targets and indicators should be meaningful to avoid perfunctory assumption of tasks for the sake of fulfilling arbitrary indicators. Employers should be very clear on expected performance and conduct. An employee should understand their specific functions, how such functions relate to the role of other team members, and their impact on the company as a whole. This bolsters a sense of personal responsibility for achieving set milestones. Where a lack of performance is acknowledged, solutions can be quickly identified, and progress can be made. This process facilitates the regular communications that are required relating to consistently sub-par performance, or breaches of guidelines or standards that may eventually result in termination. Periodic and constructive performance-focused feedback allows the employee to value their role and take pride in their work in a manner that ultimately impacts the quality of work and output. Managers can assist employees in understanding how the achievement of corporate targets can assist in the furtherance of professional goals and career development, so that the employee is also personally invested in the outcome.

### ***Addressing challenges or undesirable behaviour***

Undesirable behaviour or poor performance should be addressed swiftly, and managers should be able to tell employees how to improve performance to achieve desired results. Consequences for compliance related issues should be clear and uniformly implemented.

### ***Channelling innovation for growth***

Setting targets and expectations must be balanced with providing a degree of autonomy commensurate to the employee's skills and experience. New ideas that improve workflow, work process or products and services should be encouraged, not only for the benefit of the organization overall but also to foster increased engagement and a sense of accountability on the part of employees, who feel they have directly contributed to the growth of the company.

## **Engagement**

Employees that do not understand their company's vision or values cannot align themselves with such goals. An organization's values must represent more than just corporate profits, and therefore should demonstrate clear value for employees, any communities being served, and the natural environment. The emotional investment of an employee in a company's performance and impact boosts individual performance, accountability and engagement. Improved engagement means reduced turnover, improved productivity and fewer absences. Corporate policies that promote the wellbeing of employees, and that recognise staff as an asset of the organization, induce loyalty and attract skilled workers to the company.

***Participation in the business sustainability strategy***

Managers should encourage the participation of staff in the development and implementation of the business sustainability strategy. This strategy sets out investments and actions to ensure the alignment of operations, products and services with a company's core purpose, so as to generate profit, benefit customers and the general public, and promote environmental protection. Such strategy should offer the company longevity and resilience to risks. Improved employee engagement in the strategy will not only improve the likelihood of successful implementation, but also fosters a sense of individual responsibility, and gives employees a reason for being at work beyond the pay they take home.

***Training and awareness on personal impact on service/product delivery***

Employees require training on what sustainability means for the company (in particular the dynamic nature of this concept and the need for continuous evolution). Employees should know why and how the company delivers value to its customers, and more broadly to the general public. Each employee should understand their respective role in the design and delivery products or services in line with the corporate strategy to minimize negative externalities.

*To request more information on MPG advisory services on regulatory compliance, corporate governance, or business sustainability, please address your request to Ambra Gobena, Special Counsel and Business Sustainability Lead at [info@mahanakornpartners.com](mailto:info@mahanakornpartners.com)*