



NOT A DIRTY WORD:

Seven Steps to Create Accountability in Any Organization

By Bob Prosen



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Leaders are always asking how they can increase accountability to get the results they need. My advice is to start by defining your role when it comes to delivering results. Simply put, the leader's job is to ensure every member of the team wins, and winning is defined as meeting the organization's top objectives.

I only wish someone would have explained this to me earlier in my career.

The reason this is so powerful is due in part to its inherent quid pro quo approach.

Throughout my career one of the best ways I've found to help people win is to establish an accountability-based culture focused on producing results, not activities.

Here is the seven-step formula you can use to create accountability and achieve extraordinary results in any organization:

Step 1: Establish the organization's top three objectives. This means the significant few, not the important many. Once identified, objectives must be clear, concise, measurable and obtainable. Notice I didn't say easy!

Step 2: Assign each team member his or her respective objectives. Remember, when combined, they must allow the organization to achieve its top objectives. In other words, the sum of the parts must be equal to or greater than the whole.

Step 3: Ask each team member what he or she needs to win. To help people win, leaders must remove the roadblocks that stand in the way. Do this by having each team member identify a maximum of three things they need to accomplish each objective. Have them put it in writing.

Step 4: Agree on what the leader will do to help. Meet individually with each team member to clarify the roadblocks and agree on what's needed to win and who will be responsible for making it happen. In all likelihood, the leader will assume some responsibility. Why? Because you're responsible to people, not for them. Being responsible to people means helping them get what they need to win.

Step 5: Follow up. Each direct report should schedule a 30-minute monthly update using a standard color-coded results report. Results at or above the plan are in green and any area behind plan is in red. Focus the conversation on what was done to achieve green and if the results will remain green for the remainder of the year. When discussing red results focus on what will be done to achieve green status, when it will be achieved and any help that's needed.

Step 6: Share lessons learned. Hold quarterly meetings with the entire team to discuss lessons learned, identify critical roadblocks and make specific offers to help any team member behind plan. Remember, the leader wins when everyone on the team wins.

Step 7: Reward results. When objectives are achieved, ensure that rewards are disproportionate and highly visible. Those who achieve the most get rewarded the most—and everyone should know that. It's just that simple. Ensure that people at the bottom are either improving their performance or being moved out. No one with poor performance gets to remain on the bottom for more than a year without action being taken.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION DRIVES RESULTS

This means being direct and forthright with people in every conversation, letting them know where they stand, what's needed from them, and when it is needed. Often good leaders can become great leaders by reshaping the way they talk. Here's how it works. When you make a request of someone, take a little extra time to explain why you are making it. Put it in context and explain why it's important to the goals of the organization. Then the person can provide a more robust solution because she understands the purpose of the task and how the information will be used.

Last but not least, don't forget to ask what the person needs in order to complete the task. This approach removes excuses, reduces rework, and is a great way to build relationships. It's also a sound way to develop future leaders by increasing responsibility and encouraging decision making and creativity. By holding others accountable, you are teaching them to accept responsibility. Remember, making and meeting commitments is one of the best ways to build trust. So treat commitments as promises and watch how results improve.

Here's an easy way to determine the level of accountability in your organization.

Just listen to the conversation going on in meetings. Is conversation directed toward commitment? Are individuals talking about what is important and what will and won't get done? Are they making

requests of one another and asking for assistance? Or do conversations stray to generalities, vagueness, rationalization, and missed expectations?

Do you have people who constantly talk about how hard they work, how many hours they put in, how little vacation they take; yet you wonder what they actually produce? If so, most often these people are focused on activities instead of results. They will continue to do this as long as your culture condones this behavior. Ask yourself this important question – Do you care how hard people work, or what they get done? Top performing organizations prefer the latter.

A group is performing well when they talk about actual results, not the activities and hurdles along the way. When team members hold themselves accountable, you hear responsibility in their conversations. They ask one another for help in order to get on track. There are no victims, excuses, or concerns over a lack of knowledge. Instead they are searching for the knowledge and support they need from everyone around the table to reach the company's goals.

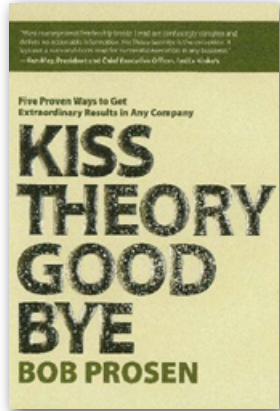
Accountable leaders work diligently to maintain company-wide focus on the achievement of management's most critical business goals and to see these goals become results.

When everyone is focused on achieving the organization's top objectives, every employee should be able to answer yes to the question, "Did my actions today move the organization closer to achieving our most critical business goals?"

Start getting results immediately by taking these ten actions now:

1. Write down and quantify your top three objectives.
How do you know you are achieving them?
2. Send a memo to five members of your top management team. Ask them to send you their top three objectives and the ways they know the organization is achieving them.
3. Send a similar memo to five of your best middle managers. Also ask them to send you their top three objectives and the ways they know the organization is achieving them.
4. Compare and contrast the responses you get from top executives and middle managers.
What have you learned? What will you do to increase alignment and teamwork resulting from everyone knowing and delivering against the top three objectives?
5. Write down the three most important ways for you to improve your leadership abilities along with key milestones and dates for achieving them.
6. What are the three most important ways for your managers to improve their leadership abilities? How and when will you communicate this to each member on your team?
7. How can your company or organization communicate better with its employees and with its stakeholders?
8. Who needs to delegate better? How can you get him or her to do that?
9. Do you have the right people in the right positions? If not, what actions are you prepared to take to accomplish this?
10. Does the company or organization make and meet commitments without having to follow up? If not, what actions will you take to make this a reality?

I pledge to you that if you act on these directions, you will achieve extraordinary results you may never have thought possible. For more insight I invite leaders, who have direct reports, to take my free Leadership Effectiveness self-assessment—
<http://www.bobprosen.com/leadershipeffectiveness>.



BUY THE BOOK

For more details or to buy a copy of Bob Prosen's *Kiss Theory Goodbye* [click here](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob Prosen is President and CEO of The Prosen Center for Business Advancement (www.bobprosen.com) and author of *Kiss Theory Goodbye: Five Proven Ways to Get Extraordinary Results in Any Company*.

Bob has been successfully teaching top business leaders from around the world how to execute by applying his Five Attributes of Highly Profitable Companies. Prosen's customized programs help leaders identify their key objectives, increase accountability and alignment throughout the organization, simplify processes, consistently deliver required results and continue to develop other top-performing leaders for their organizations. Prosen's no nonsense approach gives leaders what they want most - proven tools and tactics to immediately improve performance and profits.

A native New Yorker, Prosen earned a BS in engineering from Texas Tech University and an MBA at Georgia State University. He's done post-graduate work at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, at MIT and at Duke University. He has received numerous awards for professional excellence and serves on the University of North Texas School of Marketing Advisory Board and is listed in The International Who's Who of Entrepreneurs. In addition to his management training programs, he speaks nationally and internationally to a wide range of organizations and companies.

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