

ACCOUNTABILITY Means Action



BY GARRETT J. SULLIVAN

Are you a CEO who others view as “you say what you mean and mean what you say?” Can you be counted on 100 percent to fulfill your promises, or do you sometimes slide? If you are the owner or CEO of a privately held construction company, you are accountable to very few people. Most owners of construction companies believe this is a good thing, but that’s a serious mistake.

Very often, CEOs will tell me in the same breath that they enjoy the lack of accountability, but are unhappy with the way their companies are performing. Oftentimes, I point out to them that their employees are simply mirroring the lack of strict accountability they see from the top. This occurs across the operations and various departments.

Turning around this culture is not easy. The only place to start is with you, the CEO. As Ghandi said, *Be the change you wish to see in the world.* Never underestimate how closely your employees watch and mimic you. If you are unaccountable to others, they notice.

The dictionary defines accountability as the state of being liable and answerable for one’s actions. It’s typical for people—and especially leaders—to think of accountability in a negative

GLOSSARY OF FAILURE TERMS TO AVOID

- **Soon**
- **As soon as possible**
- **Right away**
- **Later**
- **Try**
- **Best**
- **By the next time we meet**

sense. Many believe it’s squelching or even intimidating; however, the opposite is true. When accountability is a major focus in a company, results happen on time and with predictability. Employee performance increases, job satisfaction improves and relationships are strengthened. It is a formula for success.

It starts from the top; if you need help in this area, find an accountability partner. This is a person who will tell you the truth and challenge you to remember your commitments. It should be someone within your company with whom you have excellent rapport. This person should be proactive in asking you questions such as, “I know you are working on the XYZ project. Have you gotten back to Jim on the change order you promised him?”

Encourage your team to speak with clarity regarding expectations

and completion dates. This means being specific about details and not asking others to “do a good job” or “get right on it.” Instead, be clear about what a “good job” entails. Below is the **Glossary of Failure**.

Avoid these terms at all costs:

- Soon
- As soon as possible
- Right away
- Later
- Try
- Best
- By the next time we meet

Accountability is for fearless individuals who are not content with the status quo; it is for individuals who want to be true change agents. With accountability, you and your company will be more productive, reach higher levels of performance potential as well as achieve richer personal and professional relationships.

True accountability begins with integrity with your language and actions. Accountability activates action.

Why not make today the day that you begin to choose your words carefully? Why not speak intentionally in order to influence the kind of change you wish to see in your company and build a high performing culture of accountability? **BI**

Garrett Sullivan is president of Sullivan & Associates, Inc., a management consultancy focused on the construction industry. Connect with him at GSullivan@SullivanHi.com, www.SullivanHi.com or 808.478.2564.