J. Michael Locke
Musings

#14: Creating a Culture of Accountability
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One thing that is critical in running anything is holding people accountable. You can't have a "best efforts" culture where someone works hard but comes up short. What matters is results. (See a good old movie with management takeaways called *Twelve O'Clock High*.)

Netflix is good at this. I have never had the pleasure of meeting Reed Hastings, but what he has done at Netflix is really impressive. I think their culture is a big part of that and the PowerPoint deck on their culture is the best I have seen. Worth a read [here](#).

It is hard to have accountability without clear ownership. One challenge with the movement toward matrix management is blurred accountability. If two people own it, no one owns it. "One throat to choke" might not be a good saying in today's workplace but you get the point. This was one of the important aspects of Apple's success under Steve Jobs. There was no confusion on who was responsible. Every task had a DRI – Directly Responsible Individual. For my paddle tennis playing colleagues, this is why you do the reset lob down the middle….no DRI.

A good basic practice is to ask at the end of every meeting for a review of the follow-up items and identify the DRI. No ambiguity on who owns it.

Another technique is to have clear deadlines. When you give an assignment, along with identifying the DIR, set a date for its completion. As a leader, you should track those dates and begin your day with what is "due" to you that day. If someone misses a deadline, make your disappointment known. Sometimes individuals will need to ask for an extension, but that needs to be done before it is due. Deadlines never should just be missed.

In this way, you can "delegate" but not "abdicate." The leader is responsible for everything that happens on his/her team. It is not acceptable to say "[insert name] on my team didn't get it done." The leader selects the team, grows the team, and manages the team – the leader is accountable.

One final recommendation is to make individuals present in front of their peers. I mean literally stand up in the front of the room and present the results from their area of ownership. Pride is the best motivator of all.

Be Safe.

Jml