

Do You Have the Secret Ingredient for Superior Performance?

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There is one skill that sets people apart, acting as a foundation for the mastery of all the other job-related skills. In fact, it's so crucial that employers like Bill Bonnstetter, a highly successful serial entrepreneur and peak performance researcher, won't consider hiring someone who doesn't have it. Can you guess which of the 23 job-related personal skills it is? Skills like problem-solving ability, planning and organization, and the ability to influence others are all important. They could be job-related. But do you know which skill acts as a foundation for mastering all the other skills?

It's the "alpha dog" of personal skills, and to reach your own height of peak performance, you have to have it. It's PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY, otherwise known as the ability to be answerable for one's actions. It's easy to spot people who have it, because they focus on questions, such as "What can I do about this?" rather than "It's not my fault it's this way." They have a sense of ownership and involvement in creating results; and consequently, they make choices that contribute to progress. People who have it have a strong sense of responsibility. So when you're building a high-performance company culture, look for this quality in employees.

How does personal accountability set the stage for a person to become a star? When a person with personal accountability sees a need, they will take action to provide what's needed. They don't wait to be prodded. In times of change, they will make the choice to adapt. For example, if they find themselves lacking a necessary skill to get a job done, they will read a book, take a course, ask questions or otherwise locate whatever resources will help them get it done. People with personal accountability are focused on whatever actions and choices will get results because they hold themselves responsible.

"My research into superior performers has shown that 100% of the time, these are people who have a strong sense of personal accountability," Bill Bonnstetter points out. "For example, my entrepreneur research has shown that 60% of serial entrepreneurs have experienced at least one business failure on their way to success. People who are without personal accountability would have given up after that first failure. But serial entrepreneurs keep going until they make it. As a result, they create multiple businesses that provide employment for others."

Personal accountability makes a person resilient. Even when they're confronted with a total failure in their personal or professional life, they will get back on their feet again. No matter how hard they are knocked down, they won't stay down, because they are determined. They don't blame and they don't procrastinate. They are the least likely of anyone to rely on others to get themselves going again. In fact, they're an example for others, so they contribute to building a can-do culture in the workplace.

There may also be a relationship between personal accountability, competitiveness and control. After all, competitive people don't like to lose. They will take the initiative to push for the results they want. Similarly, people who are very controlling — whether they do so consciously or unconsciously — are taking responsibility for making things happen. They seek to influence results, and so are likely to also have a high level of personal accountability.

People with a high level of personal accountability focus on how, what and when, not on who and why. They ask themselves, "What can I do?" They bring a sense of ownership to work, and that encourages the rest of the team to focus on a shared sense of purpose, too. Never hire a person who lacks personal accountability.