

Itâ??s Time to Bring Back Accountability. Hereâ??s How.

Description

When can we start holding people accountable again? This is a question I frequently receive. It does not mean that there is no accountability. What it does mean is that due to staff shortages, leaders are tending to lower the bar on expectations and accountability. It makes sense. If there are not enough staff to provide service, the business may need to reduce hours. This can lead to not having enough revenue to keep the doors open. Revenue is more important than ever, as for many businesses the cost of goods and labor has increased significantly.

Most of my time is spent in healthcare. Staffing issues in healthcare can lead to delays in care and/or less quality in care. Research in healthcare shows a direct correlation between employee turnover and clinical outcomes. Even if a hospital fills job openings with temporary workers, having lots of new people working can cause stress on the regular workforce. The saying â??caught between a rock and a hard placeâ?• fits what many leaders are feeling.

Most people have a desire to do an excellent job. It is not likely that a good worker becomes a not-so-good worker overnight. Instead, factors like short staffing, lack of supplies, rude customers (patients), and intense pressure on them and their supervisor slowly leads to dissatisfaction and burnout.

The pressure on leaders is at an all-time high. More staff vacancies create lots more work. Add to that financial pressure to not lose money as well as high customer service expectations. Innovative technology, while good in the long run, creates more pressure to get everyone up to speed.

Over the years, my observation is that leaders have moved from more of a transformational culture to a transactional culture. A transformational culture is built on trust, a shared vision, a guiding mission, and an agreed-upon set of values. It is one for all and all for one. One hears statements like â??We are like a family.â?• A transactional culture is based more on â??checking the boxes.â?• It is just what it sounds like: â??Complete the transaction and move to the next one.â?• This is not all bad if those transactions are connected to the mission, vision, and values and if there are trusting relationships in the organization.

It saddens me that rounding on people to see how they are doing has so often become more of a set of scripted questions, a form of â??check-the-boxâ?• accountability. I recently shared that the main

question to ask if you want to know how a person is should be: â??How charged is your battery?â?• The other is: â??How is your work experience?â?• These two questions will lead to healthy conversations. For leaders, the question to the people doing the rounding is: â??What are you learning from rounding?â?•

With much to do and too little time, we can slowly move from a transformational leader to a transactional leader. We need to get intentional about coming back to a more transformational style. I find it also will move us back to accountability.Transformational leaders realize that holding people accountable is a form of caring and compassion. Not holding people accountable leads to more pressure on the coworkers. By doing the following, we create that trusting culture we all desire.

Some tips:

It is okay to say things have drifted on accountability. Give some examples of how that has happened. Then share why it is now important to get back on track.

Connect the â??back-on-trackâ?• message to the mission of the company. For example, the mission might be to provide quality of care or quality of service.

Meet with each person. Recognize those who perform well. Thank them for the example they set. For those not performing as needed, dig deeper. They at one time were meeting expectations or they would not be there. Listen and learn. For some people, this conversation is all it will take. For some, it will require referring them to resources available to them. For some, it will be the conversation that will lead to a departure.

It is about caring and compassion. If someone is not working out, letting them go is the compassionate thing to do. While painful for a while, they will realize it is for the best.

Put away the checklist and scripted questions. Instead, focus on building relationships. Leadership is about people. That is what leaders enjoy: the relationships they have at work. When one leaves a job and there is a going-away event, what people talk about is the relationships.

People spend too much time at work to not feel good about what they do, the impact they have, and the people they work for and with. When we make an effort to be more transformational in our leadership, it pays off for everyone.

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