

“How to Best Hold Managers Accountable”

by Roger Connors and Tom Smith

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Help desk receiving frequent complaints? Roger Connors and Tom Smith, authors of *How Did That Happen?*, offer advice.

Help!

Our help desk receives frequent complaints about its service. How can I better hold managers accountable?

Coaches: Roger Connors and Tom Smith, Copresidents, Partners In Leadership, and authors of the best-selling book: *The Oz Principle* and the newly released, *How Did That Happen?*

Always make sure your expectations have been clearly formed and communicated when holding others accountable. If expectations are unclear, then the accountability conversation may seem unfair to your employees and be received negatively. We call this the accountability paradox—the harder you try to hold others accountable, the less accountable they become. By taking the proper steps to clarify what you are holding people accountable for, you enhance their ability to report good results.

To keep it positive and productive, make sure your expectations can be 1) Framed: consistent with current organizational priorities; 2) Obtained: they are realistic and achievable; 3) Repeated: easy to keep top of mind and simple to communicate; and 4) Measured: can be tracked. When you communicate expectations, make sure you explain the “why” behind the initiative so it’s understood what you are trying to accomplish.

Sometimes the effort needs to be focused on ensuring alignment around your expectations. Just because people are willing to comply does not mean they are on board. If it is an important expectation, you need to take steps to ensure they really buy in. Conducting the right kind of inspection—one that has been agreed upon and is positive—may be just what is missing in the accountability relationship.

Never play the blame game. It’s not productive and will only give everyone else in your organization permission to waste time and energy on something that yields no results. Remember, what you create accountability for is what you get.

*Roger Connors and Tom Smith are the authors of the bestselling books, *The Oz Principle* and *Journey to the Emerald City* and their new book, *How Did That Happen?* and are Co-Presidents of Partners In Leadership, Inc., the worldwide leader in Accountability Training. ©2009 Partners In Leadership.*