

Accountability

When advising with clients the most difficult issue they have overcome is being held accountable.

For the overwhelming majority of small business owners, there is no one to hold them accountable. So they aren't used to being held accountable. They're very comfortable holding others accountable, but not being held accountable themselves.

What's the downside to not having some one to hold them accountable?

First, it is easy to fool yourself; especially if the task is something you don't like doing. I mentor some small business owners in support groups and when talking to the groups about accountability, I frequently tell them a story about my personal battle with accountability. When I first reconfigured my practice, cold calling was a critical component of my marketing efforts.

Like most of you I **hate** cold calling and will do just about anything **not** to cold call. So I would rearrange my sock drawer all month and at the end of the month when I was doing my goals and objectives review, I would justify to my self that I was busy rearranging my sock draw and you know what I bought that line of silliness. If I had someone else holding me accountable they would have never accepted that excuse.

Second, if you hold others accountable isn't the first step is to not only talk the talk but to walk the walk. How can you ethically demand accountability in others when you are virtually unaccountable yourself? To take the moral high ground and lead from a position of trust you have to lead from the front – be the most accountable person you can be. This leads to my third point.

Credibility, Stephan M.R. Covey in the bestseller *The Speed of Trust* discusses how at the core of trust is its foundational principle – credibility. “Am I credible? Am I believable? Am I someone people can trust?” Are you? Do you make and keep your commitments? First of to yourself and then to all others? If you don't, you will doubt yourself and others will not trust you.

So where do you go from your present state of unaccountability to being a paragon of accountability?

The most important thing you can do is to find an accountability partner. What the heck is that? An accountability partner is someone that you have trust, respect and rapport with. That you would for instance, give your weekly or monthly or annual goals and objectives to. You two would schedule regular meetings – either by phone or in person – to review your success, discuss ways you can be more successful and determine your next set of goals and objectives.

Your accountability partner – if you are truly committed to the process – will be one of the most important focusing and success tools you will have in your entrepreneurial toolbox. When we do our periodic evaluations in the support groups I mentioned previously, the accountability partner process is nearly always ranked first as the best and most critical component of the total group process.

No one has failed to benefit from having an accountability partner, they may not like it in the beginning, but if they stick to it, they end up praising it. The group members frequently cite that this is the most focused and productive they have ever been.

So who are these partners and where do you find them? Accountability partners can be nearly anyone. (One caveat I would give is to not make a spouse or for that matter any relative your partner – that will put a lot of strain and stress on both of you.) As long as you have or can attain that trust and rapport factor so important to the process.

They can be a business peer, a friend, a mentor, a paid business coach. All will work well; I have found that the best are experienced business people who are empathic yet firm partners.

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