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# DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE MEASURING STICK

Recently I re-read a study conducted in 2012 by Harvard that was published on the *Harvard Business Review* Blog. According to that research, "one out of every two managers is terrible at accountability." That statement struck them as counterintuitive—could the number really be that high? Unfortunately, four years later, I think the number may actually be higher.

Their study of 5,400-plus also revealed that "upper-level managers seem to be focused on securing their image and position and avoiding tough conversations. Instead they created and hid behind processes and procedures. As a result, however, their need to be keenly focused on productivity was replaced."

Why is this happening when we all know the behaviors of avoidance and re-directing never result in long-term health and growth?

So should we take this to mean that 50 percent of managers aren't intent on making sure their team is getting results? Could that be true? If results aren't going to come from your team where else might they come from?

Another factor cited in the study was 'the growing number of employees who are not particularly open to critical feedback. Many managers have replaced the necessary controversy and conflict around what needs to be done and how to do it with politeness, political correctness and efforts to not offend'. I have yet to meet a passive-aggressive or codependent manager who was an effective long-term motivator. Their style may work in the short term but eventually their teams

disintegrate or the manager is labeled as ineffective.

A team simply cannot consistently produce at high levels without the mutual respect that accountability provides. It's more important that your team respect you than like you. First, work to prove why they should respect you. Hold them accountable.

It's time to bring out your measuring stick. Define the key performance indicators that matter to your business. Know how you will track whether those are being met and share that information with your team. Then, put on your big-boy pants, grab your courage and hold everyone accountable for their strong or weak performance.

Your team should not fear your measuring stick. Rather they should witness you referring to it with each member of the team on a regular basis. They will then come to trust it for being an indicator of how quickly you'll attain desired results and with whom you will or won't celebrate.

Here's why this is so important. Have you ever been on a team where some members don't carry their weight and drag on the performance of others? Have you ever witnessed someone being placed on a pedestal and extended leniencies not offered to others? A word of caution: Allowing everyone to enjoy the benefits of group membership while some of them don't have to make the necessary personal contributions is a recipe for long-term disaster.

Group performance requires that someone play the role of sheriff and that can be a thankless job. After all, who wants to be

labeled the 'bad guy?' The unfortunate consequence of not holding others accountable is that you create a culture of mediocrity that leads to lackluster performance overall. No business owner wants to settle for that.

Accountability is not a dirty word; rather it's the foundation for motivation. The team needs to know what you measure and both the positive and negative consequences of hitting or missing those marks. Only then will they be able to choose whether they want to step up or step out. When your team is convinced that your managers will hold their feet to the fire, they will begin performing and you will win.

## ABOUT SHARON DAY

Sharon Day is President of Greenville-based Sales Activation Group. She and her team focus on recruiting, educating and motivating sales teams to produce at higher levels. Everything is customized for each client and their offerings range from fractional sales management to one-of-a-kind sales contests and promotions. For more information call 864.451.7676 or e-mail: [sharon@2activatesales.com](mailto:sharon@2activatesales.com)