

The Power of Accountability

“You are accountable for your actions, your decisions, your life; no one else is, but you.”

Catherine Pulsifier

In the 1910 race to be the first team to reach the South Pole, Robert Scott, leader of the British team that not only took second place but also had the final travel team of five die on the way back, brought as a member of his expedition a Norwegian ski champion to train his team members how to use the skis. He did not make the training mandatory, however he complained in his diary well into the trip that “skis are the thing, and here are my fellow countrymen, too prejudiced to have prepared themselves for the event.”

Scott brought the ski trainers, but his team did not train properly to develop a skill that could have not only brought them to victory, but could have saved their lives.

Who is to be held accountable for the lack of training?

One definition I found of accountability is “the acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decision, and policies, including administrative governance, and implementation within the scope of the role or position and encompassing the obligation to repeat, explain, and be answerable for resulting consequences.”

Another definition is “taking or being assigned responsibility for something that you have done or something you are supposed to do.”

In the winter of 2007, severe weather resulted in many airline flights being delayed or cancelled. Whose fault was it? Obviously the weather. However, Southwest Airlines, to make up for the inconvenience, got their passengers to their destinations free of charge. They held themselves accountable for the problem even though they had no control over the weather, the true cause of the delays.

“You are measured by whether you take personal responsibility or not.”

— Jeffrey Benjamin

***“Accountability
breeds
response-
ability.”***

—Stephen Covey

The fact is that just as Southwest accepted accountability for the inconvenience of the passengers, you are responsible for everything that happens in your life and you are accountable for the results.

The question is, “if you fail, whose fault is it?” I don’t know how often I have heard salespeople avoid accountability with such phrases as:

“My sales territory is not good.”

“The economy is suffering, the unemployment rate is too high.”

“I can’t make sales, too many people are out of work.”

“The home office took too long to underwrite the case.”

Accountability is Power

By accepting responsibility for choices you make, you gain power. You refuse to let someone or something else control your success. Peyton Manning said, “Being there every week for my teammates is really important to me. It’s about accountability. I hear stuff about the ‘toughest quarterback in the league’ and all that; what does that mean?”

Manning pointed out that playing through pain and injuries had nothing to do with toughness. Being accountable for something greater than himself--his team--was the driving force.

Florida House Representative Baxley said, “I want to tell you something about accountability; it’s hard and it hurts.”

Accepting Accountability

Once you have decided to accept complete responsibility for your actions, you are ready to go to the next level. You are accountable for your actions, your choices, your results. And guess what--as a professional, you are accountable for the decisions you help your clients make. You are accountable to make sure they fully understand the sales presentation and the results of making the purchase.

Which gets us back to the earlier question in the story of the South Pole team. Who was accountable for the lack of ski training? Certainly the expedition members were, as would be the ski instructor. But the final accountability rests on the expedition leader.

Accountability is a valuable and necessary tool for going to the next level.

“My belief is that personal freedom cannot grow beyond personal responsibility. The more people that learn to be fully accountable for their lives, the more freedom each of us can enjoy and the more fulfilling all of our lives will be.”

—Reed Konsler

Therefore, it is important to develop a culture of accountability throughout the organization.

There are steps to take to develop this culture:

- Commit to your success.
- Set measurable parameters.
- Define expected results (goals).
- Develop a plan to achieve the results (strategic and tactical plans).
- Review the plan daily and weekly.
- Hold yourself accountable for developing the plan and achieving results.
- Set up a feedback process. How are you doing regarding the activities and results you are committed to?
- Set up an accountability partner, a sales manager, boss, your spouse, a co-worker, or your coach.

Summary

When you accept accountability for your actions, your choices, your responses to circumstances, for results, you will go to a higher level of success.