

# Accountability Part 1: 3 Ways You Are Short-Circuiting Your Team's Development

▫ [percepileader.com /accountability-part-1-3-ways-you-are-short-circuiting-your-teams-development/](http://percepileader.com/accountability-part-1-3-ways-you-are-short-circuiting-your-teams-development/)



One of the most common things I hear discussed when I facilitate workshops is accountability, most often how to drive it down into the organization or their own team. This inspired me to create a 4-part blog series on accountability in organizations. This first post will focus on recognizing some common leadership mistakes around accountability. The following three posts will focus on different levels of accountability, moving toward the most effective ways to drive accountability with your team.

Accountability is a fundamental part of business success, right? Companies have ethics officers, whistleblower hotlines, annual performance reviews – there are even accountants, which shares the same root word as accountability. Without a true commitment to accountability, we'd likely see all sorts of corporate abuses the likes of Enron or Bernie Madoff, and without holding people to standards, we would see drastic decreases in business performance. With something this vital to your business success, it is important to understand that leaders can misapply accountability, blocking development for the people on their teams.

I once consulted with a company that had a leader who was obsessed with control. If you had a conversation with someone outside of your department, he wanted to know about it. If you were involved in a skip-level meeting, he wanted to be there (even if that meant you weren't skipping levels anymore). He wanted to be courtesy copied on everyone's emails, and all decisions had to go through him. As odd as this may sound on the surface, this is an accountability problem. This leader was taking accountability for everything: communication, information, relationships, and decisions. When this leader left the company, his legacy was one of paralysis. His direct reports didn't know how to make decisions and collaborate

without asking permission. This can be crippling to an organization.

Although you might not be this extreme, there are three common ways that leaders hinder the development of their team members that are misapplications of accountability:

**Poor delegation.** You may have worked with leaders who want to do everything themselves. Some leaders don't delegate much of anything; other leaders only delegate busy work, keeping the important work for themselves. The net effect of these two situations is the same – taking too much personal accountability and ownership and not letting others stretch their skills is a sure-fire way to keep your team from developing. Learn to delegate and do so with development in mind.

**Micromanagement.** So maybe you delegate and do so with development in mind. You're not out of the woods yet, as there's another trap lurking just around the corner. Many leaders delegate and then hover. They're constantly asking for reports and status updates. They might even accompany you to meetings just to make sure you're doing everything right. A client once told me of a leader who dropped everything just to supervise the hanging of dry erase boards around the office! If you've ever been micromanaged, you know the negative impact this can have. So, offer support and constructive feedback and let people perform. It's a risk worth taking!

**Not letting people fail.** We protect people from failure from the best of intentions. It's hard to see people fail. However, failure is a vital part of development. Don't mishear me, though – there are mistakes that need to be avoided at all costs. Short of this, people need to learn to solve problems and rescue themselves. Phil Jackson, the Hall of Fame basketball coach, was well known for leaving his players in when they were struggling. They needed to learn to play through their challenges, not get benched in the midst of them.

In truth, the root of the issue here is control. When a leader's focus is control, it hinders accountability. This hurts trust and stunts development. When accountability is used correctly, it can be trust building and can go a long way toward developing competent team members. How have you seen this dynamic at work in your organization? Please let us know on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and share this post with others who might find it helpful.

Get the printer friendly version of this post [here](#).