

## **HOLDING PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE (HPA)**

**Holding People Accountable** involves setting high standards of performance and holding team members, other government jurisdictions, outside contractors, industry agencies, etc., accountable for results and actions.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• giving clear instructions as to what you expect from others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• giving assignments without deadlines or with unclear quality requirements</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a "clear and firm approach" to what must be done in a crisis situation or when other means of influence have not succeeded in achieving important results</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ordering staff around in an inappropriate manner, showing little respect</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clearly explaining to others when their expectations are unreasonable or are at odds with the strategic direction of the government</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• complaining about inappropriate requests from others but not directly talking to them about it</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• holding people accountable to deliver against high standards and confronting them when their performance is not up to standard</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• being reluctant to risk upsetting an employee by telling them when their performance is inadequate</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• knowing when corrective or disciplinary action is necessary and taking action accordingly</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• issuing repeated warnings and allowing poor performance to continue</li></ul>

**Developmental  
Activities**

**Level 1-2 Activities**

**Prepare for giving direction to an employee.**

- Write a purpose statement for the task or assignment. Be sure to include:
  - ⇒ the objectives
  - ⇒ key steps to completion
  - ⇒ date and time by which the task or assignment should be completed
  - ⇒ clearly stated consequences of succeeding or failing to succeed
- Discuss the task or assignment with the employee.
- Review the purpose statement you have prepared and clarify any questions (include any changes as a result of your discussion in the purpose statement).
- Ask the employee to summarize the objectives and instructions.
- Check in from time to time to address any questions and ensure the task or assignment is proceeding without problems.
- Identify any areas where your instructions were unclear or where important steps were omitted.
- Ask the employee for feedback on the clarity and completeness of your direction the task or assignment.

**Reflection Tips:**

- \* What performance standards or expectations did you set with the employee?
- \* What communication process do you have in place to ensure the task is completed correctly?

**Provide clear direction when delegating tasks.**

- Select a function in your normal routine that you perform easily and well.
- Delegate the task to one of your employees in order to help them develop their skills and to free up some of your own time for new activities.
- Provide clear, specific direction to them and monitor their performance.
- Ask them to summarize the objectives and instructions to be sure that it is clear to them.
- Make sure you check in from time to time to address questions and check on progress.
- Ask the other person for feedback on the clarity and completeness of your direction during the task or assignment.

**Keep track of situations where you feel you showed you were strong (or weak) at holding people accountable.**

- Review each situation and identify those ones where being more firm or clear with your expectations would have been the more effective approach.
- Consider whether you were sufficiently (or overly) directive.
- Make a list of the techniques or strategies you could apply to improve situations when you should have been more directive than you were.
- Plan how you will more effectively hold others accountable for doing what you have asked them to do.

**Reflection Tips:**

- \* What actions or steps will you take in the future? What will you change?

**Identify someone who successfully holds people accountable to get results.**

- Observe his or her behaviour; note the techniques used.
- Try to model their behaviour when you need to be directive.
- Assess whether you have been successful at implementing these new techniques.

**Reflection Tips:**

- \* What do you need to do to modify or alter your behaviour to ensure you are holding people accountable?

**Set clear performance objectives for direct reports.**

- These objectives should be SMART:
  - ⇒ **S**pecific: describe what the end result will look like.
  - ⇒ **M**easurable: expressed in quantifiable terms.
  - ⇒ **A**chievable: the goal is realistic.
  - ⇒ **R**elevant: linked to organization or department goals.
  - ⇒ **T**ime-Bound: provide target completion dates.
- Communicate these standards to employees in your area/department. Ask for their input.
- Compare performance to the standards you have set in each area of accountability on a regular basis (e.g., quarterly, annually).

**Work on your relationships.**

- Review your relationship with co-workers, subordinates and clients and identify one relationship where you feel an individual sometimes takes advantage of you.

- Prepare a plan for dealing with the situation the next time it occurs so that you are able to firmly say “no” to an unfair request.
- Practice your plan for dealing with the situation with another co-worker, asking them to play the role of the other person and allow him or her to be very persistent with the request.
- Adjust your plan after the practice session and implement it the next time the opportunity arises.
- Keep notes of the outcomes and include these notes in your learning journal.

**Reflection Tips:**

- \* What patterns or themes do you see when addressing performance issues?
- \* What can you do to gain commitment from the individual responsible for their actions?

### **Level 3 Activities**

**Identify a past situation where you had considerable difficulty providing direction to others.**

- Meet with your manager and describe the past situation.
- Explain what led up to the situation, who was involved, what you actually did to provide direction, and the outcome.
- Ask for suggestions about what you could have done differently to provide better direction. (Don’t get the manager to solve the problem for you. The goal is to learn to be directive yourself).
- Create an action plan with your manager to confront these difficult situations and overcome the obstacles.
- Design the plan so that the manager may begin by playing a very supportive role, but gradually withdraw that support as you learn to feel comfortable dealing with the situation single-handedly.

**Ask your manager to describe a challenging situation where he or she had to say “no” to an unreasonable request, or to hold others accountable for their performance.**

- Ask how he or she dealt with the situation (e.g., probe for the techniques used and the reactions of others).
- Resolve to incorporate two or three techniques the next time you need to be directive with others.

**Set performance standards and monitor.**

- Set performance standards with your subordinates for their key projects.

- Ensure that each of you understand the reasons for the level of performance is required i.e., the consequences to the organization of poor performance.
- Monitor their performance regularly against the standards and discuss performance that is lower than required.
- Make sure that you also comment on and reward performance that meets or exceeds the standards.

**Keep these coaching choices in mind to get a better effort from an employee who works fast but makes too many mistakes:**

- Assign the employee to a different job that requires more speed but not as much precision.
- Spend more time with the employee on proper techniques for getting the job done at a reasonable pace with fewer errors. Then make the employee accountable for meeting the job's quality requirements.

## **Level 4-5 Activities**

**Here are some ways to be assertive in a nice way when you find yourself in these situations:**

- You want something from someone: "I would like you to..."
- You fear being assertive: "I'm afraid you'll think I'm being pushy, but will you..."
- You're not sure about what you have a right to expect from others: "pardon me. Can you tell me if you?..."
- Someone resists giving you what you want and deserve: "I know you're resisting me, but I want you to..."
- You detect a lack of assertiveness in others: "I want you to tell me what you want from me and not be afraid to do so."

**Use this problem-solving script in difficult face-to-face communications when you and a co-worker or subordinate face what could become a bigger problem if you don't deal with it:**

- Begin with a "when you" statement. *Example:* "when you get here late for the meeting..."
- Describe what that person's behaviour means to you. *Example:* "...I have to try to answer questions that are relevant to your department and then fill you in on the issues you've missed and keeping the meeting on track at the same time."
- Say why you're telling the person. *Example:* "I'm telling you this because it's not the first time, and it means we can't run the kind of productive meetings we're supposed to."
- Explain what you'd like to have happen. *Example:* "I'd appreciate if you'd start getting here on time..."

- Add a “because” statement that shows how doing what you ask will alleviate the problem. *Example:* “because it will allow both of us to do our jobs right - something I’m sure you want as much as I do.”
- Pause to give your co-worker a chance to reply. Hear the other person out and be willing to discuss options.

### **Take clear and concise action to rectify behavioural problems.**

- Help people see the gaps between required and achieved performers.
- Discuss the “how” not the “who” of the issue.
- Put formal plans in place as needed.
- Ensure the implications/outcomes of further performance deficiencies are clearly understood by the individual.

### **Consider the following positions when addressing a performance problem with a direct report.**

- Does the person agree there is a problem? If not, consider how you might need to reposition the issue to help them recognize that a problem exists and to consider the steps needed to resolve it.
- Identify the unique issues, concerns and motivators of each of your employees. Write this information down and share it with your Superior. Update this information through regular contact with your employees.
- Encourage the person to come up with alternatives. Solutions generated by the individual are more likely to be accepted.
- Does the person recognize that the responsibility for improvement lies with him or her, not you? Emphasize that you will provide encouragement and feedback.
- Be sure to recognize and reinforce improvements in performance, especially in the early stages.
- Consider consulting human resource professionals if repeated attempts to not result in improvement.
- Take quick action if tough decisions are required.