

CHAPTER 1

NO

MORE

EXCUSES

THE FIVE ACCOUNTABILITIES
FOR PERSONAL AND
ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

SAM SILVERSTEIN

**No More
Excuses!**

No More Excuses!

The Five Accountabilities for Personal and Organizational Growth

SAM SILVERSTEIN



WILEY

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*For Renee, Geoffrey, Sara, Jaclyn, and Allison. You
inspire, challenge, and support me, and for that I am
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INTRODUCTION: YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Some people achieve extraordinary things in life; others do not. The difference between the two groups lies in accountability.

True story: Early in the Minnesota Twins 2009 exhibition season, Twins manager Ron Gardenhire discovered a note on his desk from Justin Morneau, his star first baseman. It read: “Gardy: I forgot to run sprints after the workouts yesterday; I am fining myself.” Next to the note was a hundred-dollar bill.

Was Justin Morneau accountable because he was a superstar, or was he a superstar because he was accountable?

No More Excuses is a way of looking at the world—a standard to which we hold ourselves and others accountable. It’s a strategy for life and work that attracts others to us, because accountability is a universal trait of admired people.

Introduction

No More Excuses is not a slogan. It is a competitive choice. Whether you are trying to hold onto your job or expand your enterprise, whether you are trying to create a new business relationship or improve your communication with key stakeholders, or whether you are trying to find a new customer or retain a major client, you will always find that personal accountability differentiates you from your competition and give you the competitive edge. Accountability is not a consequence. In order for it to become your competitive advantage, you must be willing to change what you expect from yourself and others.

No More Excuses is all about closing the gap between where we are and where we could be as individuals and as organizations. We can do this by learning and applying, on a personal level, the five critical principles that support an expanding “Accountability Zone” that has us at the very center.

In this book, I will challenge you to expand your own Accountability Zone by embracing what I call the Five Accountabilities:

Right things: Be accountable for doing the right things. This means ethical execution of the activities that will actually support the goals you have chosen for yourself. If you are managing a team, you must model this skill by doing the right things yourself; you must then empower each member of your team to identify his or her own right things, and you must be willing to communicate about what’s working and what isn’t in an open, transparent way at all times.

New space: Be accountable for managing your space for new opportunities. This means being willing to step away from things that are working, even though they may be familiar, to make room for something that may work better.

**Transparency Means Being Accountable for
Doing the Right Things—from the Top Down**

Organizational governance systems are like machines, and the only oil that actually makes these machines work is the oil of confidence. To generate confidence and trust, you need transparency. If there is no transparency, there is no trust. If there is no trust, the basic architecture of any company just falls down right away.

—Jordi Canals

Yes, this is a risk, but it's one that successful people take—because the return can be positive for the whole enterprise.

Managing your space takes time and practice. Force of habit causes us to repeat many behaviors and initiatives that aren't what we really want.

Process: Be accountable for managing the process when you hit an obstacle. It is inevitable that you will encounter adversities and setbacks when you pursue your goals. The question is, how will the adversities and setbacks affect

Redefine Your Space!

If you had the exact same dollars today that you did back then, and knowing what you know now, would you jump into this opportunity or a different one?

—Jeff Booth

How Will You Respond?

We cannot control what happens to us, but we can always control how we react to what happened, and we can always make good choices around what happened.

—Roger Staubach

you? Will they keep you from making creative new approaches to attain your goal?

Expectations: Be accountable for establishing the right expectations. The targets you set for yourself will have a huge impact on your actual achievement. How will you set the targets for yourself and your team? Will you set them based on what is familiar or what is possible? Will you set them too high, too low, or in that ideal zone where the goal is a healthy stretch?

Relationships: Be accountable for your relationships and your contributions to them. The human touch in any

What Are You Shooting For?

We all have to set our own targets in life. Let's say I'm a student. If all I do is shoot for a B in a course, the likelihood that I am going to get an A is pretty low. If I shoot for an A, even if fall short, I've still got a pretty good chance to get a B. So, I don't want people shooting so low that they create that tyranny of low expectations we've all heard so much about.

—Gerry Czarnkecki

Introduction

relationship is the “lubricant” that makes communication possible and empowers individuals, groups, and organizations to accomplish great things. Without accountability for supporting and contributing to the relationship, there can be no true leadership, and no effective implementation, at the group or organizational level, of any of the other accountabilities.

When you are accountable for supporting and contributing to your relationships, you are acknowledging that there is no such thing as “group accountability”—there is only the accountability of one person to another.

“It’s Really about Relationships”

A corporation really is a collection of people. It is a joint mission to accomplish something in a business. The way an organization or a household works, the way a community works—it’s really about relationships, and the real measure of any leader is the ability to leverage relationships to influence others to embrace accountability. You can only do that by giving something to your relationships and supporting them over time.

—Peter Aceto

These are the five pillars of personal accountability that make organizational accountability possible. I believe that every truly meaningful achievement and every great organization starts with an *individual* who has established a personal Accountability Zone—a place where the transparency is high, the values are clear, and the commitment to the Five Accountabilities is unmistakable.

Introduction

These Five Accountabilities are your responsibility before they are anyone else's. What's more, they are *scalable*: They can affect and enhance virtually all aspects of your life, as well as the lives of people you touch. These Five Accountabilities not only transform businesses, organizations, and communities but also help us to improve the larger world we all share.

ARE YOU IN THE ZONE?

When you are in the Accountability Zone, *your actions are fully in harmony with your promises to stakeholders*. I call this *alignment*.

Alignment means being the same person all the time. It means operating with enough integrity to talk straight about both your strategy and your tactics.

What Do You Believe In? What Do You Stand for? What Will You Deliver?

Accountability means being in the position of truly owning all that an organization believes in, stands for, and promises to deliver. Everybody had better be in that position—not just the CEO. The CEO can only deliver on the big picture if the other people in the organization deliver on their pieces of the picture. At the end of the day, everyone is responsible to each other for executing on the larger vision.

—Nido Qubein

Introduction

When you are in the Accountability Zone, *you know what you're doing and why you're doing it*. I call this *strategic intent*.

You're going to be hearing a lot about strategic intent in this book. Your strategic intent is the driving, overriding goal that motivates and inspires you. It's the goal that everyone gets—not the tactics that support that goal. (Those *tactics* are your right things.) Strategic intent is going to the moon for the first time and getting back safely; it's launching a startup that creates a whole new industry by winning 100,000 new customers in its first year; it's making \$250,000 in personal income for the year, when you've never done that before.

Strategic intent is a big goal that's easy to understand *and* buy into.

I created Dean's Beans about 16 years ago for one reason: to model how a for-profit business could be a positive player in social change and still be profitable. That was my strategic intent. So, we were accountable for that social change, whether it was environmental, economic, or social. It was not relegated to the world of the nonprofits. I realized that nonprofits were always asking businesses to give them money, so they could keep going. I made myself accountable for changing the model. I thought, "It's [the] business's responsibility to behave in a way that doesn't damage the earth, the people, [and] the societies in it so that eventually, we can reach a point where those nonprofits may never have to exist." Proving that concept's viability became my own commitment.

—Dean Cycon

Introduction

When you are in the Accountability Zone, you encourage open dialogue and discussion rather than sealing yourself off from it. I call this *engagement*.

Engagement means connecting with other people. If you're not willing to communicate with people about whatever you're doing that affects them, you are not in the Accountability Zone. Very often, leaders of governments, corporations, and other larger entities must make a special point of identifying at least one individual whose job it is to support the task of promoting dialogue and listening to stakeholders. This engagement may be a little job you can

Accountable to a Nation

In our case, we were accountable for creating a new constitution for a post-apartheid South Africa. That meant starting from scratch, disengaging from everything in the old space, and starting a responsible, transparent dialogue that somehow incorporated the views not of a tiny elite [group] but of 42 million people. That dialogue wasn't about revising what had gone before; it was more about liquidating the previous dispensation and replacing it with [a] completely new idea. We had to liquidate the old company as it existed, scrap it and bring it down to zero, and from that create a new environment with a completely new structure. We had to create a new paradigm based on a completely new set of values that would replace an old paradigm that had been in place for 350 years.

—Roelf Meyer

Introduction

do on your own, or it may be something you have to get some help with. After all, some of us have a few stakeholders to listen to, some of us have hundreds or even thousands, and some of us have millions!

When you are in the Accountability Zone, all stakeholders *know what you've done, where you stand, and why*. You are operating above the board. I call this *transparency*.

Most of the high-profile scandals in which business people, politicians, and celebrities find themselves enmeshed come about as the result of an early decision to leave the

Be Clear about What's Happening

One of the principles that I live my professional life by—and my personal life, too, for that matter—is to be as open and transparent with people as I can possibly be about what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. I had a conversation with a person who worked for me some time back where I had to deliver some news about a decision I knew he wasn't going to like. After I'd told him what my choice was and how it would affect him, his response was, "Well, I may not agree with your decision, and I may not agree with everything you have always done, but you have always been very clear about what is happening, and I have always understood exactly where you have stood, and that's something I value a great deal in our relationship. I have never had to question where I have stood with you. Thank you for telling me this."

—Richard Chambers

Introduction

Accountability Zone by keeping key stakeholders in the dark about important choices. This is a seemingly small decision that inevitably echoes larger and becomes more destabilizing over time.

When I'm working with organizations to create a culture of accountability, my clients will sometimes ask: How do we create an Accountability Zone? I think it's more a matter of knowing when you *left* it. Your own private Accountability Zone is always there waiting for you. Here's a quick and easy test you can perform at both the personal and organizational level. If there's no alignment, if there's no engagement, if there's no strategic intent, if there's no transparency—guess what? *You just left your Accountability Zone!*

A better question than “How do I create an Accountability Zone?” is: “How do I *expand* an Accountability Zone?” And the answer is, by making the Five Accountabilities a part of your daily life. In over 30 years of owning businesses, observing people, speaking professionally, and writing, I've found the Five Accountabilities covered in this book to be the most powerful tools for personal and organizational growth available. I suspected that the Five Accountabilities I had identified were already serving as anchors in the lives of the most successful people and organizations on earth. I interviewed dozens of high achievers from around the world and found that they, too, had been using most or all of these principles to create Accountability Zones for themselves and their organizations.

Some of the people I interviewed had mastered the Five Accountabilities quickly in life, almost by instinct; for others, it took years of personal experience and plenty of trial and error to master the principles. No matter how long it takes to master these ideas, no matter what you call

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them, the lesson remains the same: *The Five Accountabilities work*, if you are willing to use them to change your own life first by expanding your current Accountability Zones and creating new ones as you go along.

This book includes interviews with Highly Accountable People from all walks of life—including corporate CEOs, politicians, professional athletes, educators, a conqueror of Mt. Everest, and even the man who led the effort to write the new constitution of South Africa. These Highly Accountable People came from business, government, and academia, and from six different continents. *They all agreed on the core accountability principles you're about to learn.* As you'll soon see, they have used the Five Accountabilities to open new doors, take advantage of new opportunities, and expand Accountability Zones in their lives, their careers, and their organizations. When you expand your own Accountability Zone, you create and support a culture of accountability within your organization.

No More Excuses gives you the tools you need to go about designing and living an excuse-free life. If you're a

Start at the Top

What I have found is that accountability is something that people often don't understand. Leaders have to educate people about what they are accountable for, and the very best place for a leader to start is his or her own management team.

—Sir Andrew Likierman

Introduction

manager or executive, you'll also find insights on the best ways to model the Five Accountabilities for your team. I believe we can all model the highly accountable achievers who have made these five commitments a daily blueprint for living. What's more, I believe that these are the foundation of all great achievements, both on the individual and the organizational levels.

The Key Drivers

When I look at these Five Accountabilities, I think these are probably the key drivers that allow people to make and fulfill commitments.

—George Tamke

The Five Accountabilities have made an incredible difference in my life—and I believe they can make the same kind of difference in your life, too. Let's get started!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Expanding your Accountability Zone is as easy as . . .

*One: Read chapters one and two. You will get clear on why accountability matters, find out how expensive the excuses we make to ourselves really are, and get an overview of the *Five Accountabilities* shared by all truly successful people.*

Two: then, get serious about the five accountabilities. Each of the following chapters will help you master one of the Five Accountabilities and offers case studies and insights from the Highly Accountable People I interviewed for this book. Lock in what you've learned by completing the Accountability Check activities at the end of each chapter. (You can find additional tools for implementing and reinforcing each Accountability at www.SamSilverstein.com.)

How to Use This Book

Three! Check Chapter Eight for long-term advice on how to create a culture of accountability within your organization from the remarkable gathering of Highly Accountable People who shared their experiences in this book.

ACCOUNTABILITY MASTERS

The Highly Accountable People who agreed to be interviewed for this book are as follows:

Peter Aceto, President and CEO, ING Direct, Canada
Christine Aquin, President and CEO, Gunpowder Business Development, Inc.

Gary Bailey, Legendary goalkeeper for the Manchester United Soccer Club and a member of the England World Cup Soccer Team

Jeff Booth, President and CEO, BuildDirect

Dixon C. Buxton, Senior Managing Director, Private Capital Corporation

Sila Calderón, Former Governor of Puerto Rico

Jordi Canals, Dean, Instituto de Estudios Superiores de la Empresa (IESE) Business School, University of Navarra

James C. Castellano, CPA and Chairman, RubinBrown

Richard Chambers, President and CEO, the Institute of Internal Auditors

Elim Chew, President, 77th Street

Dean Cycon, CEO, Dean's Beans Organic Coffee Company

How To Use This Book

Gerry Czarnecki, Former President, UNC Incorporated; Former Senior Vice President, IBM; Former President and CEO, Bank of America Hawaii; Former President and CEO, Altus Bank; Author, *Lead with Love*

Bill Donius, Former President and CEO, Polaski Bank

Mark Eaton, All-star basketball player for the Utah Jazz

Kenneth Evans, Dean, Price College of Business, University of Oklahoma

John Hannah, Former professional football player and member of the National Football League Hall of Fame

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Peter Legge, CEO, Canada Wide Media Limited

Steve Lipstein, President and CEO, BJC HealthCare

Sir Andrew Likierman, Dean, London Business School

Craig Lovett, Partner/Principal, Incognitus

Achi Ludomirsky, MD, PhD, Director of Pediatric Cardiology, New York University Medical Center

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Jim McCool, Executive Vice President – Institutional Services, The Charles Schwab Corporation

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Dr. Beck A. Taylor, Dean, Brock School of Business, Samford University

Paul Taylor, Chairman of the Board, U-Gas/Dirt Cheap

Robert Tuchman, Founder, TSE Sports & Entertainment

Bill Whitacre, President and CEO, J.R. Simplot Company

Pat Williams, Senior Vice President, Orlando Magic

What we are seeing now . . . are the effects of stepping away from accountability, the results of sacrificing long-term survival and success for short-term success. We have to go back to the notion that competence, integrity, and service are worth committing to, because they allow us to deliver value that plays out in the long term.

—Jordi Canals

I hope you have enjoyed these first parts of No More Excuses. If you are looking to make accountability your competitive advantage or build accountability into the culture of your organization pick up a copy of the book. I think you'll be amazed with the ideas shared by the accountability masters and find my five proactive accountabilities indispensable for your own personal achievement and your organizational growth.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Silverstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sam" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "Silverstein".

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“The five accountabilities that Sam shares will be key in making your organization successful.”

Howard Putnam

Former CEO, Southwest Airline

Author, The Winds of Turbulence

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