

Accountability

Beyond the Myths ↘

Debunking misconceptions, activating ownership,
and accelerating results.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why this playbook matters ↘

“Accountability” is one of the most misused terms in business today; when misunderstood, it turns into blame, policing, and administrative burden that erodes trust and initiative. This playbook addresses the top myths of accountability and replaces them with evidence-based principles and practical actions, combining Culture Partners’ validated Accountability Framework with DOOR International SEA’s regional expertise in building behaviour-driven, high-performance cultures across Southeast Asia, and drawing on insights from The Oz Principle (Connors, Smith & Hickman, 1994), which redefined accountability for a generation.



What you’ll find inside

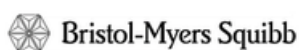
12 pervasive myths, each reframed with the underlying truth, associated risks, and field-tested practices.

Strategic application points for Culture Partners models to replace myth-driven behaviors used by major global leaders.



Key Outcomes

- Equip leaders with the tools to model and instil accountability.
- Enable teams to embrace ownership of outcomes.
- Align organisational purpose, culture, and performance.
- Establish sustainable accountability systems that deliver tangible business results.



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

The business case for accountability

Your organisation is likely operating at 60-70% of its performance potential. Not because of strategy. Not because of talent. Because of how accountability actually functions in day-to-day decisions, conversations, and culture.

93%

of employees are unable to align their work with Key Results

84%

cite leadership behaviour as the key driver of accountability

15%

only - have clearly defined and communicated Key Results

> The cost of inaction

Disengagement - the most visible symptom of low accountability culture - costs organisations approximately 34% of each disengaged employee's annual salary in lost productivity. Gallup (2023) estimates this at \$8.8 trillion annually at the global level.

\$8.8T

Global cost of disengagement annually (Gallup, 2023)

34%

of annual salary lost per disengaged employee in productivity

10x

more likely top performers leave - toxic culture vs pay (McKinsey, 2022)

> The return on getting culture right

This is not an HR metric. It is a revenue metric. Culture Partners research conducted with Stanford collaboration, tracked companies over three years:

CULTURE ALIGNED WITH STRATEGY**+42.7%**

Revenue growth over 3 years

CULTURE MISALIGNED WITH STRATEGY**-0.1%**

Revenue growth over 3 years

CLIENT RESULTS - ACCOUNTABILITY CULTURE IN PRACTICE

FORD MOTOR COMPANY - IT DIVISION

90% of BVR target achieved. **+13 pt** engagement increase. Stronger leadership alignment. Reduced attrition.

NOVELIS - ADITYA BIRLA GROUP

Net income **+597%**. Adjusted EBITDA **+119%**. Net sales **+59%** - all year over year.

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

What this means for you

Three questions to ask your leadership team this week. Honest answers tell you exactly where your culture sits.

1 Can every person in your organisation name the top 3 Key Results they are accountable for this quarter?

Research shows only 15% of employees can. If your team cannot answer this, you have a clarity problem - not a talent problem.

2 When something goes wrong, does your team first ask "What can we do?" or "Who is to blame?"

The answer tells you whether your culture sits above or below the line. Below-the-line cultures are high-activity and low-impact - they look busy but ownership is absent.

3 Are your accountability conversations developing people - or defending positions?

If managers dread performance conversations, accountability is being used as punishment. This playbook replaces that pattern with a sustainable ownership culture.

THE SHIFT THIS PLAYBOOK ENABLES

Managing tasks



Owning outcomes

Assigning blame



Solving problems

Policing compliance



Building trust

One-off training events



Sustained accountability culture

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU AS A LEADER

Accountability culture starts at the top - not with a programme, but with the questions you ask, the behaviours you model, and the stories you tell about how results get achieved. This playbook gives your team the language, tools, and framework. Your job is to make it the norm. When people see the CEO operating above the line - owning outcomes, asking "what can we do?" - the culture follows.

Your next step > Action Planning Template

See page 25 - turn these principles into measurable commitments today.



WHY ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS

Organisations today face a persistent paradox: high activity doesn't always lead to results.

The missing link? ↘

Research by Culture Partners shows

93%

of people surveyed were unable to align their work or take accountability for results

84%

cite leadership behaviour as the key to accountability

only **15%**

have clearly defined and communicated Key Results

What low accountability costs your organisation

- The global cost of disengagement: \$8.8 trillion annually (Gallup, 2023)
- Each disengaged employee costs ~34% of their annual salary in lost productivity
- The average organisation loses 20-30% of revenue annually to inefficiencies caused by unclear ownership and poor execution (Harvard Business Review)

Organisations with strong accountability cultures achieve:

Fewer silos and stronger collaboration

Ownership-driven problem solving over blame

Natural growth in trust and innovation

"The moment every individual begins asking 'What else can I do?' - transformation begins."

Culture Partners, The Oz Principle®

The revenue impact of getting it right!

THE POWER OF ALIGNMENT Full alignment vs misalignment



Companies with
culture aligned
with strategy:

+42.7%

Change in revenue
over **3 years**



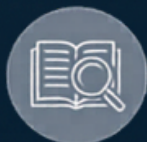
Companies with
culture misaligned
with strategy:

-0.1%

Change in revenue
over 3 years



VS



Culture Partners research
conducted with Stanford
collaboration.

The revenue impact of getting it right!

THE POWER OF ALIGNMENT Full vs partial alignment

**Companies with full
culture alignment:**

+44.5%

Change in revenue
over 3 years

**Companies with
partial alignment:**

+10.7%

Change in revenue
over 3 years



Culture Partners research conducted with Stanford collaboration.

Defining Accountability



Culture Partners Definition:

Accountability is a personal choice to rise above circumstances and take ownership to achieve desired results.



Key Mindset Shift:

Accountability can't be assigned; it must be chosen. When people choose accountability, they achieve results faster and more effectively than any external control.



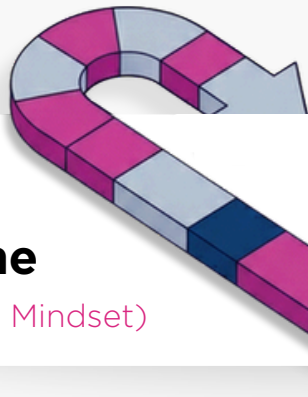
Concept Overview:

Accountability exists Above the Line. While blame, denial, and deflection live Below the Line.

This Culture Partners model helps teams recognise ownership vs. avoidance behaviours.

Above the Line

(Proactive Mindset)



See It	→	Face reality
Own It	→	Take responsibility
Solve It	→	Act with initiative
Do It	→	Deliver outcomes

See It	→	Ignore It
Own It	→	Finger-Point
Solve It	→	Wait and see
Do It	→	It's not my job

Below the Line

(Reactive Mindset)

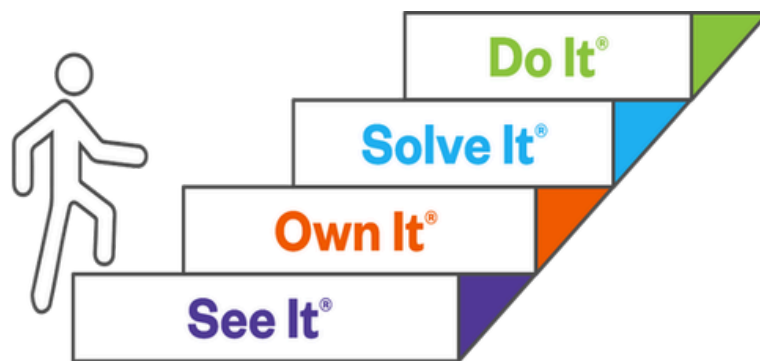


“Culture transforms when the focus shifts from who’s at fault to what else we can do.”

Creating a Culture of Accountability

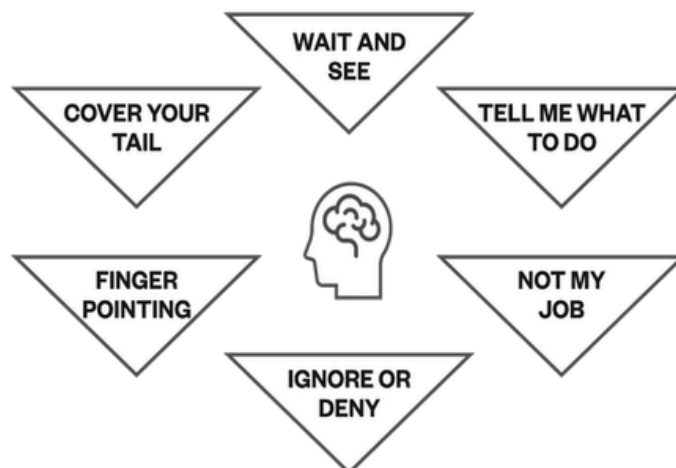
MOVING ABOVE THE LINE ↘

Externalizing	→	Internalizing the need for change
Blaming others	→	Taking accountability
Doing the job	→	Achieving the result
Working in silos	→	Collaborating
Telling people what to do	→	Engaging Hearts & Minds



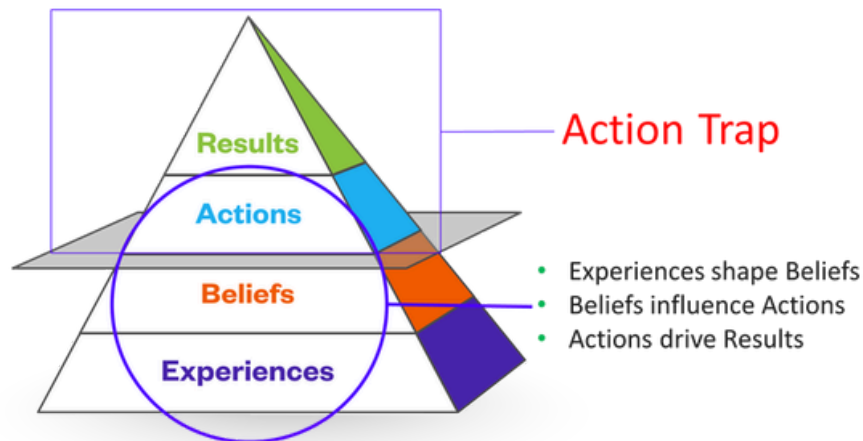
ABOVE THE LINE®

BELOW THE LINE®



HOW MYTHS TAKE ROOT AND HURT RESULTS

The Results Pyramid®



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6

The Pattern ↘

Myths thrive when expectations are unclear, leaders send mixed signals, and systems reward effort over outcomes.

The result:

high activity, low impact, and growing disengagement. Gallup research shows declining clarity of expectations and persistently low engagement conditions where accountability myths spread.

Fix the Belief System, Not Just the Behaviour ↘

Culture Partners Results Pyramid® explains why myths endure:

The Action Trap occurs when leaders skip straight to implementing new initiatives or processes without first shifting the beliefs and experiences that drive behaviour- producing change that looks different on the surface but reverts quickly underneath.

Experiences shape beliefs, beliefs drive actions, and actions create results. When people experience punitive “accountability,” they form defensive beliefs that block ownership.

Change the experience, shift the belief, and new actions and results emerge.

FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The 12 myths - three clusters

Every myth belongs to a cluster. Fix the mindset first - no system or structure holds if the foundational belief about accountability is wrong.

CLUSTER 1 OF 3

Mindset myths

Myths 1, 2, 11

How individuals and leaders think about accountability

#1 Accountability is punishment

#2 You can delegate accountability

#11 Fear creates accountability

CLUSTER 2 OF 3

Leadership myths

Myths 3, 7, 8, 10

How authority and hierarchy shape accountability

#3 Accountability is only individual

#7 Accountability means control

#8 Leaders are the only ones accountable

#10 Holding people accountable means calling them out

CLUSTER 3 OF 3

System myths

Myths 4, 5, 6, 9, 12

How org structures and processes block accountability

#4 Results alone prove accountability

#5 Clarity is optional if the team is talented

#6 One workshop can install accountability

#9 Feedback equals blame

#12 Accountability is an HR function

WHERE TO START

STEP 1 - MINDSET

Fix beliefs first

Without the right mindset, no system or structure will hold.



STEP 2 - LEADERSHIP

Model the behaviour

Leaders must go first. Accountability is cultural, not positional.



STEP 3 - SYSTEMS

Build the structures

Processes and rituals reinforce what is already alive in the culture.

MYTH ↘

Accountability is Punishment



The myth ↘

Accountability means catching mistakes, calling people out, and tightening oversight.

Why it persists ↘

Under pressure, leaders default to compliance-seeking behaviours; legacy systems emphasise after-the-fact inspection.

The truth ↘

Accountability is forward-looking and solution-oriented, not retributive. Punishment suppresses learning and calculated risk-taking; ownership invites problem-solving and initiative taking. Both research and practice demonstrate that performance improves when accountability is framed as partnership and development rather than policing.

Risks of the myth ↘

- Issues are concealed; problems surface late
- Innovation and creativity collapses; teams default to minimum effort
- Engagement deteriorates; top performers depart

Replace with this practice ↘

Redesign the experience: Begin reviews with

"What reality do we need to **See**?"

"What can we **Own**?"

"How do we **Solve** it?"

"What will we **Do** by when?"

Apply the Steps to Accountability® in every one-on-one and team review.



MYTH ↘ You Can Delegate Accountability

The myth ↘

Leaders often assume accountability can be assigned down the hierarchy: "I told them, so they're accountable."

Why it persists ↘

Traditional structures, especially in Southeast Asian regions where hierarchy plays a big role, equate delegation with control. It appears efficient: hand over the task, transfer the accountability.

The truth ↘

While tasks can be delegated, accountability cannot. Accountability remains personal; it is chosen, not imposed.

When leaders delegate ownership rather than mere responsibility, they build organisational capacity and trust.

Replace with this practice ↘

Use the See It → Own It → Solve It → Do It sequence to reflect shared ownership across organisational levels:

- Leader Sees It: Clarifies results and context
- Team Owns It: Accepts responsibility for delivery approach
- Together Solve It: Removes obstacles collaboratively
- Everyone Does It: Executes and learns together

Insight ↘

"Delegation without ownership yields compliance. Ownership creates commitment." — DOOR International SEA

MYTH **Accountability Is Only Individual**



The myth

Accountability belongs to individuals, so leaders measure one person at a time.

Why it persists

Performance management systems focus on individual KPIs and appraisals rather than interdependence.

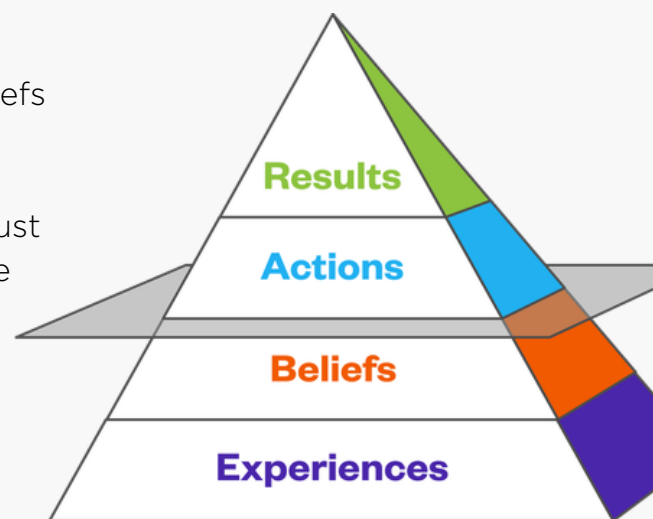
The truth

Team accountability multiplies impact. High-performing cultures don't merely produce responsible individuals; they create networks of shared commitment. When teams hold each other accountable for results, alignment accelerates.

Culture Partners Model in Action

Using the Results Pyramid® to map team beliefs and actions:

- Create experiences of cross-functional trust
- Reinforce beliefs that success is collective
- Encourage actions that benefit the entire system



Insight

"When accountability operates as a solo endeavor, silos result. When it operates as a team endeavor, synergy results." — DOOR International SEA



MYTH ↘ Results Alone Prove Accountability

The myth ↘

Strong numbers indicate strong accountability.

Why it persists ↘

Short-term metrics dominate executive attention. Leaders assume outcomes reflect underlying mindsets.

The truth ↘

Results can mask low-accountability cultures. When teams hit targets through heroics or fear, performance is unsustainable.

Accountability is measured not only by what gets accomplished, but how it gets accomplished and whether ownership is shared when things go wrong.

Culture Partners Model Applied ↘

The Results Pyramid® clarifies that results stem from actions, which stem from beliefs. Healthy beliefs create sustainable results; unhealthy ones create burnout.

Diagnostic indicator ↘

In accountable cultures, employees openly share failures, leaders celebrate learning, and data is used for insight, not interrogation.

Insight ↘

McKinsey (2022) found that a toxic workplace culture was over 10x more likely to drive top performer attrition than compensation alone.

MYTH ↘

Clarity Is Optional If the Team Is Talented



The myth ↘

Capable people figure things out; detailed expectations are unnecessary.

Why it persists ↘

High performers often mask uncertainty; leaders mistake silence for alignment.

The truth ↘

Talent without clarity doesn't create results. Even the most capable teams stall without defined Key Results and shared language.

Clarity is not micromanagement; it represents respect.

Culture Partners Model Applied ↘

Start with The Results Equation™:

Purpose + Strategy + Culture = Results.

If clarity is absent in any element, accountability breaks down.

Practical tool: Clarity Checklist ↘

- Have we defined what success looks like?
- Does everyone see their connection to the Key Result?
- Have we communicated the 'why'?

Insight ↘

"Gallup (2024): Only 46% of employees know what's expected at work — the sharpest decline in a decade. McKinsey's OHI data confirms: role clarity is a top-4 driver of long-term performance, not a luxury."

MYTH ↘

One Workshop Can Install Accountability

The myth ↘

A single training session or town hall can establish an accountability culture.

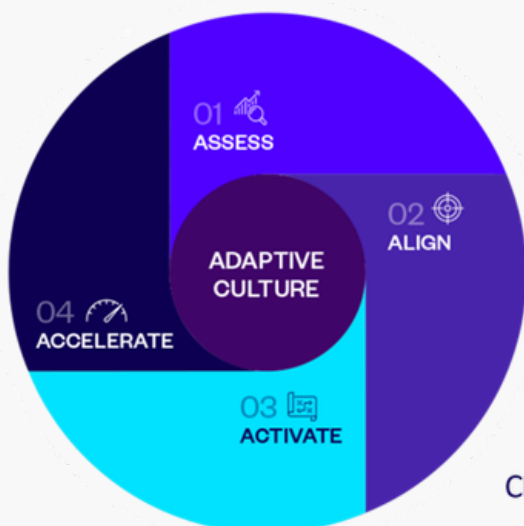
Why it persists ↘

Leaders seek measurable milestones and quick ROI; culture change is harder to quantify.

The truth ↘

Accountability is a journey, not an event. Workshops create awareness; systems and rituals sustain behaviour.

Culture Partners Accountability Journey™ and DOOR SEA's reinforcement approach demonstrate how to move from awareness to habit.



Four Phases ↘

Assess:

Measure current beliefs and behaviors

Align:

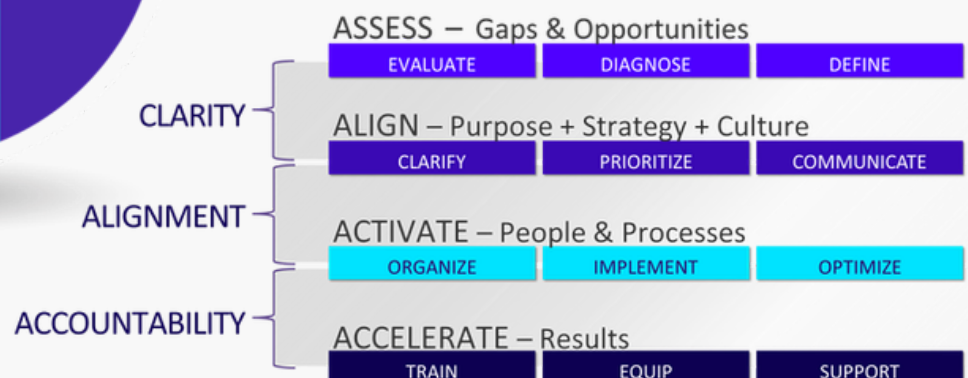
Define Key Results and common language

Activate:

Equip leaders through workshops and coaching

Accelerate:

Embed scorecards, recognition, and follow-ups



MYTH ↘

Accountability Means Control



The myth ↘

Many leaders equate accountability with control; constant check-ins, strict approvals, and close oversight.

Why it persists ↘

It feels safer. Under pressure, micromanagement masquerades as leadership.

The truth ↘

Accountability is empowerment, not control.

True accountability provides freedom to act within clear expectations.

It thrives on trust, not tension.

Above / below the line ↘

The Above the Line / Below the Line framework reframes control-driven cultures:

Below the Line: "I need to check everything myself"

Above the Line: "I've equipped my team to own outcomes"

Leadership practice ↘

Focus on results, not routines. Replace checklists with conversations that emphasise ownership, learning, and collaboration.

Insight ↘

"Control delivers compliance; trust delivers commitment."

— DOOR International SEA



MYTH ↘

Leaders Are the Only Ones Accountable

The myth ↘

Accountability flows only downward, leaders are responsible for results, and employees report to them.

Why it persists ↘

Hierarchies and outdated leadership paradigms equate accountability with authority.

The truth ↘

Everyone is accountable. Accountability is cultural, not positional.

Leaders are accountable to their teams for clarity, purpose, and alignment; teams are accountable to leaders for ownership and execution.

Culture Partners Model Applied ↘

When accountability is shared across these elements, results become sustainable.

Purpose + Strategy + Culture = Results

THE WHY

THE HOW

THE WAY

Practical application

Conduct quarterly "Reverse Accountability Dialogues":

- Teams articulate what support or clarity they need from leaders
- Leaders listen, respond, and commit to specific actions

MYTH ↘

Feedback Equals Blame



The myth ↘

People avoid accountability conversations because they associate feedback with fault-finding.

Why it persists ↘

Historical performance reviews emphasise mistakes over growth. When feedback is rare or delayed, it becomes emotional rather than constructive.

The truth ↘

Feedback is a developmental asset. It is how accountable cultures learn, evolve, and strengthen trust.

Feedback fuels the See It® and Own It® steps of Culture Partners Steps to Accountability® framework, helping individuals confront reality and take ownership.

Google's Project Aristotle (2016)

Research shows that improving psychological safety- the foundation for non-blame feedback, can result in a

27%
reduction
in turnover

40%
reduction in
safety incidents

12%
increase in
productivity.

Sources: Gallup State of the Global Workplace 2023;
McKinsey Psychological Safety Study;
Google Project Aristotle 2016

Results Pyramid®

(Culture Partners) —

Feedback is the mechanism that surfaces Experiences, which shape Beliefs, which drive Actions, which produce Results.

Without honest feedback, the pyramid stalls at the bottom.

This directly connects the myth to Culture Partners' core IP.

Insight ↘

"Accountability isn't rank-based—it's relationship-based."
— Culture Partners

**Google studied 180 teams and found psychological safety —
not talent — was the #1 driver of performance.**

MYTH ↘

Holding People Accountable Means Calling Them Out

The myth ↘

Too often, leaders mistake accountability for confrontation, believing they must “call out” underperformance to prove authority.

Why it persists ↘

The result? Avoided conversations, quiet resentment, and surface-level compliance.

The truth ↘

Accountability isn’t about calling people out; it’s about calling them forward.

When done right, it’s not a confrontation; it’s an invitation to align, act, and own outcomes together. That’s where Culture Partners’ Accountability Sequence® changes the game.

The Leadership Flow: ↘

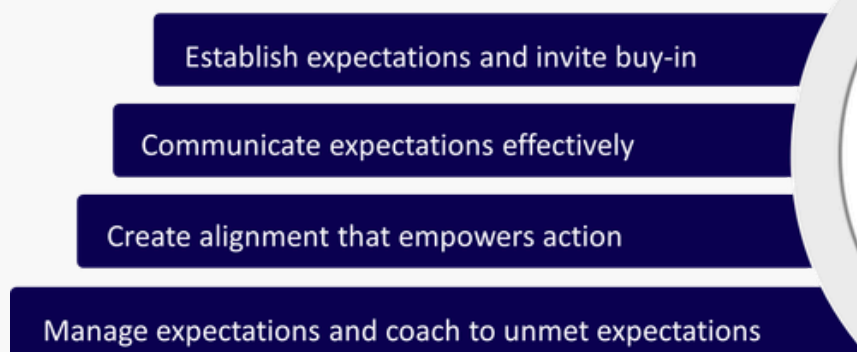
FORM: Begin with clarity — define success together.

COMMUNICATE: Keep expectations alive through honest dialogue.

ALIGN: Turn “your goals” into “our goals.”

INSPECT: Coach, don’t corner — explore unmet expectations.

ACT: Model the mindset you want mirrored



MYTH ↘

Fear Creates Accountability



The myth ↘

Fear of missing targets, public blame, or job loss will drive performance.

Why it persists ↘

Short-term results from fear-based pressure, misinterpreted as success. Leaders confuse urgency with anxiety.

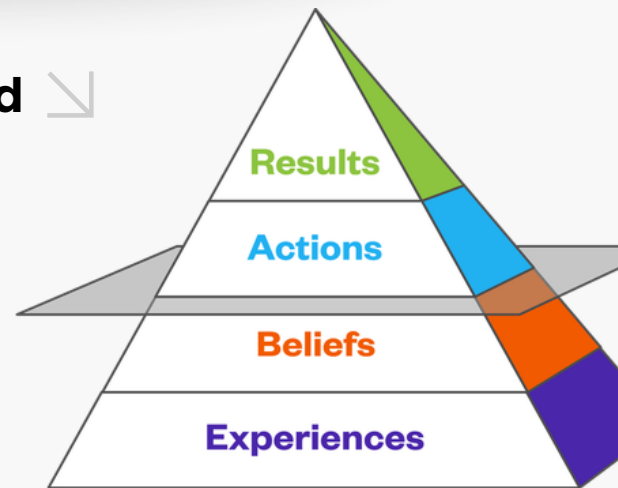
The truth ↘

Fear drives compliance, not commitment. Sustainable accountability is built on psychological safety and trust, not threat.

When people feel safe, they admit mistakes early and take ownership faster.

Culture Partners Model Applied ↘

Within the Results Pyramid®,
fear creates negative experiences
→ limiting beliefs
→ defensive actions
→ poor results. Trust reverses this flow.



Practical actions: ↘

- Encourage "fail forward" storytelling in team meetings
- Recognise honesty as much as achievement
- Replace "Who did this?" with "What can we learn from this?"

Insight: ↘

"Fear fuels control. Trust fuels accountability."
— Culture Partners



MYTH ↘ Accountability Is an HR Function

The myth ↘

Accountability is seen as HR's responsibility tied to appraisals, performance plans, or compliance policies.

Why it persists ↘

Because HR manages "performance," organisations mistakenly assume accountability can be outsourced to systems and documentation.

The truth ↘

Accountability is a leadership function and a cultural mindset.

HR can enable it, but it must be owned by everyone.

When accountability is embedded into daily operations, it becomes how people think and act, not a process owned by a department.

Culture Partners Model Applied ↘

The Accountability Journey™

(Assess → Align → Activate → Accelerate) demonstrates how accountability starts with leadership alignment, not policy enforcement.

Practical steps ↘

Shift HR's role from enforcement to enablement

Train managers to lead accountability conversations

Measure cultural outcomes (trust, initiative, collaboration), not just compliance

CASE STUDY ↘



Driving Accountability & Agile Transformation at Ford IT

Organisation ↘

Ford Motor Company (IT Division)

Industry ↘

Automotive (with a strong focus on Digital Transformation / IT Services)

Scale ↘

- 10,000+ employees (IT Division)
- 250+ Certified Culture Champions
- Presence across 80+ global locations

The Challenge ↘

Ford's IT Division struggled to accelerate digital transformation due to:

- Low employee engagement
- Lack of leadership agility
- Weak alignment between Key Results and daily actions

Despite a global team of 10,000+ employees and 250+ culture champions, accountability was inconsistent.

The Insight ↘

The issue wasn't targets- it was how leaders were driving them. The Results Pyramid® revealed the root cause: leaders were not shifting beliefs, only changing actions.

CASE STUDY ↘

Accountability culture works across industries and scales.
The following case study shows the same principles applied
in a global manufacturing environment facing financial crisis.

We can never overestimate the power of a strong and unified company culture. It plays a huge role in any organization's success, from employee safety and engagement, to customer satisfaction and operational performance. We're being deliberate in deciding what we want our culture to be – how we need to think and act to be successful. And it works!



CHALLENGE ↘

- Dismal Financial Performance, Conflicting Priorities, Poor Customer Reputation, Organizational Silos, Lack of Accountability, Employee Confusion and Frustration
- These issues posed a catastrophic risk to the business, customers, industry and employees

THE APPROACH ↘

- Using the Results Pyramid®, leadership assessments revealed that limiting beliefs — not targets — were driving poor results.
- Accountability workshops aligned teams on shared Key Results using the **See It → Own It → Solve It → Do It framework**.
- Coaching and reinforcement embedded ownership behaviours into daily operations.

CLIENT OUTCOMES ↘



Net **income** up

597%

year over year



Adjusted **EBITDA** up

119%

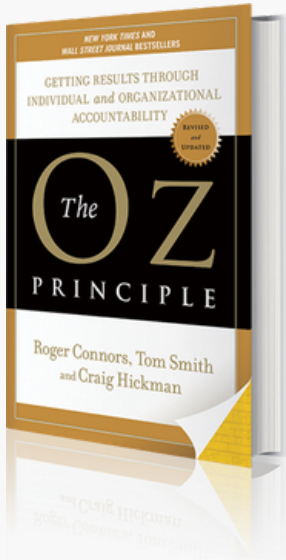
year over year



Net **sales** increased

59%

year over year



The Approach ↘

Aligned with OZ Principle:

Diagnose (See It)

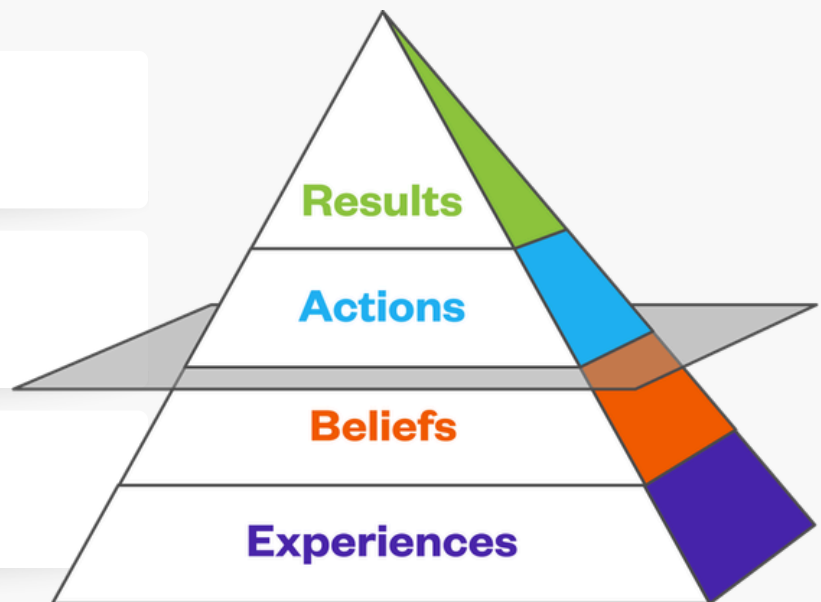
Leadership assessments
Culture and engagement analysis

Activate (Own It & Solve It)

Accountability & behavior workshops
Strategy-to-action alignment

Embed (Do It)

Real-world application
Coaching & reinforcement



The Outcome ↘

90% of BVR target
achieved

+13 point increase
in engagement

Stronger **leadership
alignment**

Faster
execution

Improved productivity and
reduced attrition

Key Takeaway ↘

Accountability isn't enforced—it's built into culture.

Ford didn't just improve results— they created a scalable culture of ownership and agility.

Credits

Culture Partners – Results Pyramid® & OZ Principle®

✂ ACTION PLANNING TEMPLATE

Purpose: Turn truths into measurable action.

Execution principles

- + Use See It → Own It → Solve It → Do It language in every review
- + Celebrate behaviours, not just outcomes
- + Track accountability KPIs quarterly alongside performance KPIs

"Accountability becomes habit when it's tracked, discussed, and celebrated."

— DOOR International SEA

KEY RESULT	ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICE TO EMBED	OWNER	TIMELINE	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
Increase client retention by 10%	Weekly "Above the Line" team check-ins	Sales Lead	Q2	Retention % + team survey
Improve cross-functional collaboration	Accountability Circles across departments	Operations Head	Q3	Peer accountability rating
Reduce decision turnaround time	Empower decision rights via "Own It" model	Leadership Team	Q2-Q3	Avg. turnaround reduction %

16 Accountability Best Practices

"Use this as your daily behaviour reference.

Rate yourself honestly on each practice — 1 (rarely) to 5 (consistently).

Your lowest scores are your highest-leverage starting points."

See It®

- Obtaining the perspectives of others
- Communicating openly and candidly
- Asking for and offering feedback
- Hearing and saying the hard things to see reality

Own It®

- Being personally invested
- Learning from both successes and failures
- Ensuring my work is aligned with Key Results
- Acting on the feedback that I receive

Solve It®

- Constantly asking, "What else can I do?"
- Collaborating across functional boundaries
- Creatively dealing with obstacles
- Taking necessary risks

Do It®

- Doing the things I say I'll do
- Staying Above The Line
- by not blaming others
- Tracking progress with proactive, transparent reporting
- Building an environment of trust



Build **Accountability**, Drive **Results**.

If leaders aren't delivering
consistently,

it's time to move
from managing tasks
to owning outcomes.

Companies with
culture fully aligned
to strategy saw

+44.5%

revenue growth over
3 years, versus

+10.7%

for those only
partially aligned.

Culture Partners research conducted with
Stanford collaboration.



Let's Get Started

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