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Management Newsletter

More About Managing People

Manage Your Staff

Is being responsible and being accountable the same thing? Their definitions are the same but when you tell someone they are responsible for something doesn't that have kind of a negative connotation? "You are being held responsible" typically means they are going to be disciplined if they screw up.

I like to think of Accountability as a bit different, and I truly believe it is perceived differently. Being held accountable typically means that you have been given expectations of getting the job done, and that you are capable or that you have ownership. It is more of a positive outlook and less of a disciplinary view.

What prisons have to do with it

While this may sound a bit off topic please stay with me for a moment. Our prison system in the United States is full of non-violent offenders who are being held responsible and being disciplined for their actions. On

the other hand, Germany has a prison system where prisoners are being held accountable to learn and grow from their mistakes. It lacks the disciplinary nature of our prisons and therefore is more rehabilitative in nature.

Do prisoners from the U.S. prison system learn violence or remorse? What about Germany's prisoners (excluding violent offenders of rape and murder); what are they learning from owning up to their offenses and being held accountable through rehabilitation?

Germany's cost for their prison system is substantial-

ly lower than ours, their recidivism rate is much lower when returning the offenders to society, and they don't become more violent while in prison. They are rehabilitated through being held accountable as opposed to being disciplined for their actions. They're being taught why "what they did" was wrong and how it affects others.

There is another organization which is doing positive things in the U.S. in regard to the incarcerated. It is called the [Marshall Project](#). They are in Brooklyn and are having a high rate of success. Maybe there is more to this idea that we can translate to the work environment.

How it affects the workplace

When we tie this thinking to the workplace it helps us realize the difference in how we respond to poor performance or bad behavior at work. When we discipline it creates a resentment, which results in low morale, lower productivity, and decreased engagement by our workforce in their quality of

work. When we work with them to be accountable and learn the repercussions of their actions on other workers, the team and/or the entire organization they are more likely to change. They are more likely to become more productive and more engaged.

So how well are you treating your prisoners at work. Are they becoming more likely to violate the policies, call in sick, or repeat the same behavior...or are they learning from their failures and becoming more productive employees once they are paroled? Are they feeling like prisoners and hating their job or are they engaged and happy to come to work?

**Positive
Accountability at
Work...**
release the prisoners!

For more information go to our blog at ManageYourStaff.org