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We are proud to announce our new book:
The Power of Personal Accountability

Achieve What Matters to You

Accountability is in, and not a moment too soon. Certain sectors of the business world had gotten so unaccountable that the government stepped in to force the issue with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. The question is, can Accountability really be legislated? Sure, you may follow the rules to avoid going to prison. But we understand that true Accountability comes from within, not from above. You can't impose Accountability on others through fear, but you can foster an accountable corporate culture. And the best way to do so is via a "grass roots" effort that begins with a single individual.

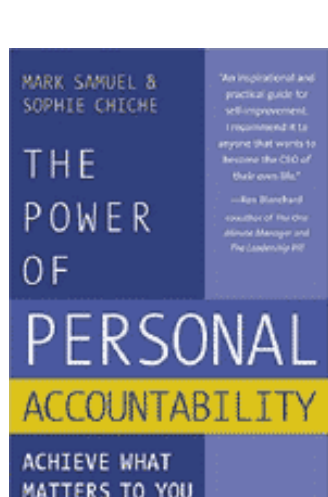
That's right . . . you.

A corporate culture is simply the collective habits of employees. To instill Accountability in people you must practice it yourself. Get your own house in order first--start holding yourself accountable for your goals and business practices--and you set the stage for others to follow your lead. Then, Accountability can spread throughout your organization one person at a time.

At its heart, Accountability means doing what you say you're going to do. Simple as it may sound, it's a concept that can strike fear. In the book, we have identified that people resist Accountability because of three primary fears: fear of blame, "If it goes wrong, I'll be punished", fear of failure, "To avoid looking bad, I'll set my sights low", and fear of success, "If I accomplish more, I'll have to maintain a high standard of excellence".

These may not sound like fears that typically plague leaders; everyone is susceptible to them. In *The Power of Personal Accountability*, we offer a thought-provoking how-to guide for breaking what we call the "Victim Loop" and choosing the "Accountability Loop" instead. The result is moving from a way of life and business where "stuff" happens to you, to a life where you step into the driver's seat.

▶ [Click here for more on these insights from the book.](#)



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• **Be a victim no more.**
"No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible." -Voltaire

When things happen to you and you don't seem to have a choice in the matter, you are a victim. But the unsettling truth is that people often choose to be victims. It's a mindset. What we call the "Victim Loop" is simply this: when faced with a situation, the choice you make is to ignore, deny, blame, rationalize, resist and ultimately hide. You must come to the realization that regardless of what has happened in the past, you can choose what to do next. You can confront the uncooperative employee, or look for another job or mend a relationship that went south years ago. Breaking free of the victim mindset allows you to move into action.

• **Take charge of your life.**
"I never hit a shot, even in practice, without having a very sharp, in-focus picture of it in my head." -Jack Nicklaus

Now that you've stopped being a victim, you must clarify what real success looks like for you. How could you possibly move toward a goal until you have identified what that goal is? Perhaps you want your division to make \$10 million in sales this year. Once you have defined and refined your picture of success, put together a list of accountable actions that will take you there. But beware of one of the surprising pitfalls of Accountability: perfectionism. That's right. If you wait until you have perfected something, you will never move on. Remember what John Updike said: "Perfectionism is the enemy of creation."

• **Recognize your current reality.**
"It often happens that I wake up at night and begin to think about a serious problem and decide I must tell the Pope about it. Then I wake up completely and remember that I am the Pope" Pope John XXIII

Call it what it is--whatever it is. Until you know what you are dealing with and are willing to just state it sincerely, you can't do anything differently. Sometimes, it just looks really big. When you shine the light on it, it turns out it wasn't as big as you feared. So, pull out your flashlight and take an objective and unbiased look at where you really are. Realize that your best thinking brought you to this point--if you had known how to do any of this better, you would have done it better. You might consider hiring a good coach. He or she can provide an "outsider's" look at your situation and can help guide you to achieve your goals.



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• **Own your part.**
"Most of us can read the writing on the wall; we just assume it is addressed to someone else." -Ivorn Ball

In order to change the reality you live in, it needs to be your reality. Since you have participated in creating the original situation, you can create a different one. And consider this: when you own something, you are much more likely to respect it. When was the last time you took a rental car through the car wash? When you are working on a project with other people, assume 100 percent of the ownership in your own mind. Don't become a powermonger, or a martyr who takes all the blame, or a sidestepper who takes none of the blame. Find a good balance of responsibilities, while keeping in mind that at the end of the day, what needs to be done, needs to be done.

• **Give the gift of forgiveness.**
"The old law of 'an eye for an eye' leaves everybody blind." -Martin Luther King, Jr.

Once you have recognized the reality of what you are dealing with and owned the part you have played to get there, forgiveness is your way out. Not an excuse to do something that didn't work again, but an opportunity to wipe the slate clean and give it another shot. Forgiveness is not a substitute for corrective action, but a way to come to the action in a more creative, caring way. One of our consultants is known to stop periodically during sessions and "forgive himself" for self-criticisms. This helps him stay calm, open and ready to hear more feedback. Self-forgiveness is a powerful tool in the road to achieving what matters to you.

• **Practice the art of self-examination.**
"Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them." -Albert Einstein

This is the turning point. From here, you can start creating your new life. It's time to get rid of your automatic pilot syndrome and start making deliberate, thoughtful choices. You may feel that you have no control over your circumstances, and it's certainly true that you can't control other people. But what you can control is how you respond and react. Ask yourself: how might I have created, promoted, or allowed the situation I am in? If you suspected a colleague was diverting funds and you said nothing, then you did play a role in the scandal. If you turn a deaf ear to harmful gossip, then you did play a role in a good employee's decision to leave. When you admit your role in any dysfunctional situation, you set the stage to take productive action next time.



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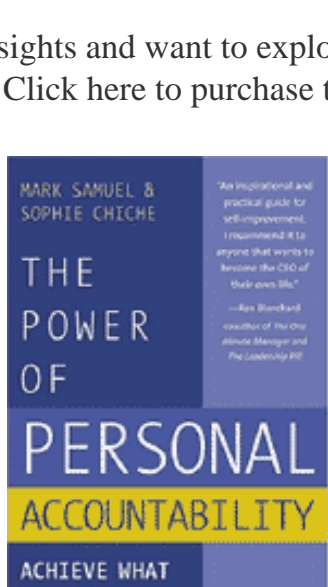
• **Be a master learner.**
"Change is the end result of all true learning." -Leo Buscaglia

Seize the opportunity and let yourself be transformed. Think differently. If what you did in a previous situation didn't work out, the process of learning guarantees you will proceed differently next time. Be aware, however, of the traps that get in the way of learning: perhaps you feel attached to the old way, or you try it before and failed or you feel that you have to have absolute proof that it will work before you try it. Be completely open to learning. Leave your ego at the door. Too often, highly successful business leaders are so attached to their old techniques--the ones that brought them accolades and wealth--that they aren't willing to try something new. Often what got them to success is not what they will need to succeed in the future. To be a master learner, you must approach new situations with fresh eyes. By starting each day with the attitude that he knows nothing, the "old dog" can learn new tricks.

• **Take action.**
"Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there." -Will Rogers

There is a direct relationship between your life as a whole and all the actions you take every hour of every day. To like your work life--the sum of your actions while "on the clock" --you have to like each individual. Take small, manageable actions consistent with your desired outcome. The steps should be large enough to take you beyond your comfort zone but not so large that they paralyze you. Keep moving toward your goal. Reach out for help when you need it. Finally, have a recovery plan. If there's one certainty in business and in life it's that things will not go according to plan! So figure out what you'll do when you get off course--as long as you recommit yourself to your goal, you will be able to recover from your mistakes.

If you enjoyed these insights and want to explore these ideas in a deep, meaningful way, [Click here to purchase the book.](#)



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