



Accountability

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One of the most perplexing issues faced by home furnishings retailers, whether small family-owned businesses or giant national corporations, is instilling a sense of accountability in employees, particularly sales managers and salespeople. Accountability is that mysterious trait that makes a person take ownership of his or her job and understand that the outcomes are the result of the things they do. Accountability requires a view of work that, while allowing for the obvious interdependencies among the various business areas, discounts them as the cause of failure and seeks ways to win as much as possible with those opportunities we have.

Accountability is not a "do-or-die" kind of thing. It's more like: we have goals and we have a plan. We have systems to help us. We have a time frame in which to achieve the goals. If we do it, we celebrate, and go on to the next level of performance - the next goal. If we don't, I (the manager or employee) will allow myself five seconds for excuses, then we'll define the internal, personal, performance-related reasons why we didn't make the goal, what we have to do to fix it, what help we need from the organization, what the new time frame is, and we go to work. And we do it as a team, but with individual commitment to achievement.

Think about this relative to your sales department. How much personal accountability is there for performance on a customer-by-customer basis? When things go badly, and you're not reaching your sales goals, do your managers and salespeople look inside themselves, or at outside factors - like traffic, pricing, merchandise selection, as the cause?

There are ways for even the smallest businesses to improve dramatically on developing individual accountability, and when there is owner commitment to get it done, the results are spectacular.

PROFITconsulting's Organizational Development processes are aimed at helping retailers build more accountable, productive companies, and to liberate owners from holding all accountability within themselves.