

A is for accountability

Accountable (adj): subject to giving an account

Account (n): a statement explaining one's conduct; a statement or exposition of reasons, causes, or motives

Accountability is not the same as responsibility, which is a felt obligation to act within an organization's values (see *Responsibility*, page 70.) Being accountable means you can be called to answer for your own actions and, if you are a manager, for the outputs of your direct reports. The notion of a manager being accountable for his/her direct reports' outputs may seem odd at first, but is logical when you consider that a manager determines the goals for those direct reports, monitors their work, and provides the resources they need to do their work.

In an accountability-based company...

- People understand what they and others are accountable for.
- People get called to account if they do not meet expectations—there are consequences.

"It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do for which we are accountable." (Molière, French actor and comic dramatist, 1622–1673)

Here's what ALL EMPLOYEES are accountable for at all times:

- Doing their best
- Supporting company values and goals
- Working cooperatively with others
- Carrying out assigned work
- Informing their manager if progress on tasks is better or worse than expected
- When in doubt, asking their manager to clarify expectations

MANAGERS are also accountable for the following:

- The work their direct reports produce
- The result or impact of their direct reports' behaviour
- Building and sustaining an effective team capable of producing required outputs
- Continually improving processes
- Providing their team with effective managerial leadership, which includes
 - holding regular team meetings
 - setting context for work
 - planning
 - assigning work effectively
 - appraising team members' personal effectiveness
 - carrying out merit reviews
 - coaching
 - selecting and inducting team members
 - when appropriate, deselecting a team members from roles

And MANAGERS-ONCE-REMOVED (people who manage managers) are also accountable for the following:

- Ensuring their direct reports exercise sound managerial leadership practices
- Establishing work levels and placement in compensation bands for employees-once-removed (employees two levels down, or EoRs)
- Developing a talent pool of EoRs (includes mentoring and career planning)
- Assessing their EoRs' current capability
- Planning succession for roles one level down
- Ensuring EoRs are treated fairly and equitably across the organization
- Finalizing their EoRs' placement in/removal from role and, when appropriate, removal from the organization
- Ensuring their EoRs are able to maintain effective cross-boundary relationships

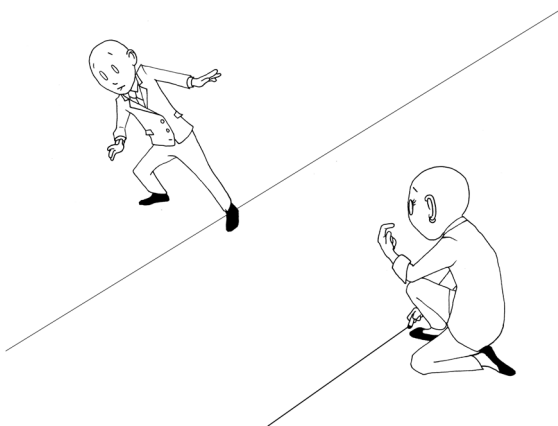
B is for boundaries

Boundary (n): something (as a line, point, or plane) that indicates or fixes a limit or extent

We all live and work within social, legal, and organizational boundaries. Some boundaries are narrow and restrictive, while some are wide. In an organization, it's important to know where the boundaries of your role are—what you can do yourself and what you have to go to others for. Knowing the boundaries and having the authority to act within them is empowering rather than restrictive.

In an accountability-based company...

- Managers work with their direct reports to clearly define what the direct reports can and cannot do.
- People understand their own and others' boundaries and decision-making authorities.
- Managers encourage their direct reports to exercise discretion and creativity within the defined boundaries.
- Boundaries are wide enough to allow people to do their work effectively.



"Freedom is not the absence of structure... but rather a clear structure that enables people to work within established boundaries in an autonomous and creative way." (Erich Fromm, German psychologist and social philosopher, 1900–1980)

F is also for form follows function

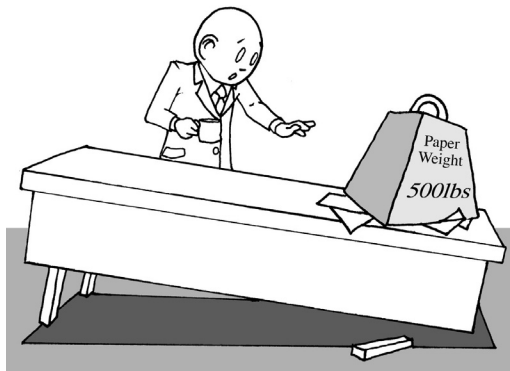
Form (n): the shape and structure of something as distinguished from its material

Function (n): the action for which a person or thing is specially fitted or used, or for which a thing exists

A company's structure needs to be designed so the company can most effectively achieve its strategy. This involves having the right number of layers of management, and the right types of work taking place in the right groups. Failure to pay attention to how work is grouped and layered wastes effort, time, and money.

In an accountability-based company...

- There are exactly the right number of management layers, with effective distribution of accountability and authority.
- Work is grouped to minimize cross-boundary friction and coordination costs.
- If the strategy (the function) changes, senior managers automatically review the organization's structure (the form).



"The structures that we create and use must match their intended purpose—no more and no less—to be the most effective." (David Allen, American management consultant, trainer, and author)

J is for jam-up

Jam (v): to become blocked or wedged; to become unworkable through the jamming of a movable part; to make unintelligible by sending out interfering signals or messages

If someone is performing work at the same level of complexity as his/her manager, they are both probably experiencing a jam-up. A direct report in a jam-up with his/her manager might say,

“My manager is always interfering and won’t leave me alone to get on with my work.”

“My manager doesn’t set appropriate context for my work—I usually go elsewhere for this.”

“My manager and I work more like colleagues than roles in a reporting relationship.”

“My manager and I both do the same things, so work gets duplicated.”

And a manager experiencing a jam-up with his/her direct reports might say,

“I share my work with my employees as equal partners. It helps keep them motivated, although it does make my job less challenging.”

“There’s a lot of work I could delegate but I don’t, because I don’t want my direct reports to get all the interesting stuff even though they keep asking for it.”

In an accountability-based company...

- Each employee has a manager capable of doing, and performing, work exactly one level higher in complexity.
- Jam-ups are not built into the structure (except perhaps temporarily, with careful thought and awareness of how to manage the jam-up).

Note: It can be OK for an individual contributor (a role with no direct reports who provides specialized knowledge or skills) to be in a jam-up situation with his/her manager.



"The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and the self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it." (Theodore Roosevelt, 26th US President, 1858–1919)

P is also for personal effectiveness

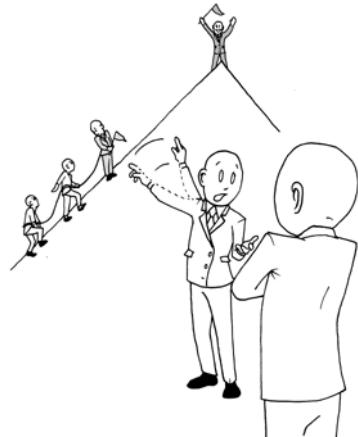
Effective (n): producing a decided, decisive, or desired effect; readiness for service or action

Personal (adj): of, relating to, or affecting a person; done in person without the intervention of another

Personal effectiveness is how well someone applies him or herself to the tasks in a role. It's one of the things a manager judges when evaluating a direct report's performance: this is the "how" part of goal achievement. However, the manager does not make this judgment in isolation. The manager-once-removed ensures fairness and equity by discussing such judgments with his or her own direct report team, as well as with other managers-once-removed.

In an accountability-based company...

- Everyone can be counted on to do their best.
- Personal effectiveness is not measured by complicated points scales: it's a manager's judgment.
- Managers-once-removed meet with their own direct reports to discuss and compare the performance of employees-once-removed within the three-tier unit (see page 82).
- Groups of managers-once-removed meet regularly to discuss and compare the performance of employees-once-removed and ensure managers across the organization are passing fair judgments.



"An empowered organization is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill, desire, and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organizational success." (Stephen R. Covey, American author and consultant, 1932-)