

Ethical behavior: Personal accountability starts with behaving in an ethical manner; performing our duties and responsibilities in ways that are consistent with the moral standards of our society. It means acting properly at all times, even when we think no one is looking. It also means treating everyone fairly and ensuring that disadvantaged groups are provided sufficient opportunities to participate in the decisions that affect them.

Knowledge of your field: We should strive to be masters of our professions by knowing the underlying theories and their practical applications, as well as our field's various practices and accepted policies and procedures. This knowledge should also include an understanding of when certain methods should and should not be used. Our academic and practical training should also be broadened by our experiences where we have learned by doing.

Continuous learning: Developing personal accountability also requires that we develop the practice of continually developing and improving our skills and knowledge. Through continuous learning we remain current with the changes in our profession. We also acquire the knowledge to adapt to changes within and outside our organizations. Continuous learning also includes investing the necessary time and effort to understand why a failure occurred and how to improve oneself.

Commitment: The role of commitment in personal accountability is about doing our work to the best of our abilities, whether the task is routine or a unique challenge. We should make a commitment to excellence in all endeavors. As such, commitment consists of seeing each task and challenge as an opportunity to improve both ourselves and organizations.

Ownership: When we have personal accountability, we *own* our mistakes. We don't blame someone else or make excuses. Ownership also includes being responsible for effective management and providing our coworkers with the necessary resources and support to carry out our directives.

Listening: Being receptive to others' ideas and accepting accurate criticism is also part of personal accountability because it allows us to identify more effective and efficient means of getting policies developed and programs implemented, as well as opportunities for improvement.

Self-reflection: Personal accountability also consists of holding ourselves to a high standard, both morally and professionally. Self-reflection helps us to achieve high standards through regular examination of our actions and motives with the goal of understanding our strengths and weaknesses. Thus, through self-reflection, we can become better at our work, better at our relationships and better at contributing to our societies and profession.

Balanced lifestyle: Achieving an acceptable level of personal accountability also requires that we maintain a balanced lifestyle—one that provides adequate time for family, recreation, rest, self-improvement and of course, our work. A balanced lifestyle allows us to recharge our brains and spirits, giving us the room to be more creative and productive.

Accountability is a key element of good governance. Yet, most discussions about accountability address the organization and deal with after-the-fact issues such as poor performance. However,

accountability is much more than that. Accountability must first be grounded in the individual. Public managers themselves must strive to be ethical and to obtain expertise in their fields of practice.

We must remain abreast of our ever-changing and complex world. When we hold ourselves accountable, we become more effective at work and at home. What's more, when we embrace personal accountability, we lead by example and thus become better leaders.

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