

ADVANCING PEOPLE

By Peter Nankervis

One of the more challenging and rewarding aspects of our roles as leaders is getting the people we lead to the next level. How do we enable a FROM - TO shift, from where they are now to where you would like them to be? Your role unlocking the “next level” appears in various ways.

- How do you create greater engagement to a business transformation or change?
- How do you achieve a step up in their level of performance?
- How do you develop them to be ready for future roles?
- How you can help them to take more on, so you are free to do other things?
- Reducing the level of noise or interpersonal conflict between people?



Ownership and Accountability is key to enabling a FROM – TO Shift. What underpins this? What engagement system do you need as the leader to enable this shift? What needs to be in place for greater levels of empowerment?

An easy way to think about this is how you can get an extra 20% from each of your people to generate an additional 20% for you.

Ownership/Accountability and Empowerment are a two-sided coin, both rely on the other. You can't really have one without the other. This metaphor relates to you and your staff member. The cause and effect relationship must be reflected in the individual you lead and how you lead.

The 6 C's of Ownership and Accountability

So, let's discuss what needs to be considered for an individual to take more ownership and accountability

Competence – This is the skill of the individual in the area you would like them to step up. There are likely to be four or five main areas of their role. They will have a different competency level for each. Unless they feel like they have a moderate to high level of competence in these areas, they are unlikely to take full ownership.

Commitment – This is the will of the individual to do the task or project you would like them to do. This will be influenced by their level of experience and competence, their results, their preferences and their personal situation at that time. Unless there is a high level of commitment, they are unlikely to take full ownership.

Confidence – This is the belief of the individual. Ultimately our motivation levels are a combination of our interest in the goal and our faith in our ability to achieve that goal. In my experience leaders focus too much effort on challenging the person on the target or goal, rather than building confidence. Building confidence requires achievable goals, a process to achieve, focusing on strengths, focusing on momentum, and the next small steps.

Clarity – This is the understanding of what is required for achievement within the context of the business situation. Edwin Locke did a twenty-year study on 20,000 people and proved the clear link between goal setting and performance improvement. If you want to get a lift there needs to be clear and specific goals. The goals need to be focused on the inputs, the main things that will generate 80% of the result. Too much focus on the outcomes erodes commitment and confidence. The fewer goals the better.

Communication – This is mostly about feedback. Often when I talk to leaders about creating a change with their people, I hear their frustrations. So, I ask about whether they have given their people feedback. Does the person understand where you see them now in this area and where you want them to be? If you want change, people need awareness, and you don't get awareness without feedback. It is the gap between where they are now and where they want to be that motivates change. The key is shrinking the gap. Make the leap seem easy by breaking it down into tiny achievable bits.

Consequences – This is about care. Do you care? Do they care? The art of establishing ownership is helping the person be accountable to themselves. You need to follow up, get them to follow up with you, challenge them on their commitment. You may find you have the wrong goal. Without a perceived consequence there will not be the effort required to make it a habit.

The art and science of people management is understanding the unique strengths of the individual and leveraging those. So, what does that mean for you then in leading your “side of the coin?”

Your Engagement System

It means you need a carefully designed engagement system specifically for you that will help you advance people.

The key elements are:

- Mindset
- Behaviour
- Skills/Capability
- Process/Structure
- Tools

Mindset: If you want to create a TO shift you need to make advancing people a priority. If you are leading in your spare time, not dedicating the time to lead you will not get the results you seek. We get what we focus on.

Behaviour: If advancing people is your priority, you must be intentional and proactive. Each person is an individual. Each individual needs a management plan. Based on their competence, their commitment, their confidence, what is the right goal, the right communication, the right carrot or stick.

Skills/Capability: “People only support what they create” If we push with command and control we will get the corresponding result. We need to Pull, engage people by being inclusive. We need to be strong coaches. The skill we need to be great at is asking questions. This is how you teach people to think and own stuff. Prompt with the topic, then ask questions. Don’t push before you have pulled.

Process/ Structure: How much time do you make for your people? We know from the research that a conversation per week increases team engagement by 13%, whereas a conversation per month decreases engagement by 5%. Weekly rhythms are the key. Team meeting and individual meetings each week with a structure to your conversation.

Tools: How do you track the advancement of your people? In addition to a plan, you need a dashboard and that needs to align with a conversation framework so you can focus on the 6C’s. GROW is a common coaching framework. We like to use a Compass, so we can navigate people from where they are now to where they need to be. The key is knowing what tool you use for what purpose and keep it simple.

A good metaphor for building ownership and accountability is “license to drive”. My third daughter just got her P’s. She is now accountable for herself, the car and the safety of others around her. To earn the license to drive, I needed to do 120 hours with her, to teach the key elements she needed to be confident in handling the variety of situations. She needed to get some lessons from others. She needed to complete some tests. The whole process readies her to be empowered.

Key messages are;

- The basics are Set Goals/ Give Feedback
- The enabler is you, your engagement system
- The key to building ownership and accountability is building confidence in your people.

At Lighthouse, we have tools, methods and process to help Leaders navigate FROM-TO shifts. If you would like help building ownership and accountability and/or building your own system to enable a transformation, please contact us at www.lighthousegroup.co or Peter can be contacted directly at peter@lighthousegroup.co