

# McLean, Koehler, Sparks & Hammond

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## The Accountability Culture: From “Have-To” to “Want-To”

*“People don’t change their behavior unless it makes a difference for them to do so.”*

*--Fran Tarkenton*

As I mentioned, in order to have accountability, you need three things: a culture, a process, and you. This is the culture chapter. It’s about how to create a culture of accountability: A “Want-To” culture, you might say, as opposed to a “Have-To” culture, which, unfortunately, you find in some work environments.

What exactly do I mean by “culture”? Well, basically, culture is the “personality” of an organization. It’s the values and norms and assumptions of a company, as well as the behaviors of the people working in it.

Culture is one of those things that’s hard to express in words. But you can sense it. You can see signs of it, too, by the way people talk, or what they wear, or how the offices are arranged – just like you can get a feel for someone’s personality when you meet them for the first time.

So every organization has a culture. You might not know what to call it, but it’s there. And it’s never neutral. The culture either supports accountability or detracts from it. Let’s look first at a Have-To Culture.

You might recognize this scenario.

The boss hands out assignments. Employees must complete them, the boss explains, exactly this way and by this deadline. “Any questions?”

But the boss isn’t really interested in the questions employees have, and doesn’t appear to have time to answer them anyway. Therefore, few people ask questions.

Then the employees do the work...or not. They know they *have to*. But they complain about it, as they might complain about having to pay a parking ticket. Most people don’t like being told what to do. They don’t like working on assignments that don’t feel meaningful or won’t be appreciated. They don’t like being “bossed around.”

So they do it reluctantly. They do the minimum work required, without enthusiasm or creativity. They do it slower than it needs to be done, in order to postpone the next assignment.

And they begin to resent it. They begin to resent their work and the company. They may begin to resent the boss. That resentment may become noticeable in their attitudes, their demeanor, and the quality of their work. Eventually, the boss begins to resent *them*.

The people in a Have-To culture also reject responsibility. It was *your* assignment; they’re just doing it because they *have to*. They’re not committed. They’re not involved. They begin to behave like irritable children: “Well, I don’t want to,” they might say to themselves, “but I will, because she’s *making me*.” All along the way, they’re resisting, resenting, and rejecting responsibility.

### The 7 Rs of a Have-To Culture

Clearly, there are severe consequences associated with a Have-To culture. Employees experience a range of symptoms that only get worse with prolonged exposure. These symptoms are the 7 Rs of a Have-To culture:

1. Reluctance: “I’m not sure we should.”
2. Resistance: “I don’t think I want to.”
3. Resentment: “I’ll do it if you make me.”

4. Rage: "I'm angry about it."
5. Rebellion: "I'm not going to."
6. Revenge: "I'll make you pay for this."
7. Resignation: "I'm outta here."

So what does a Want-To culture look like? Obviously, employees want to come to work in the first place. It's not a big deal to get up in the morning, as it was for Johnny, the school principal. People in a Want-To culture arrive at work ready to work. They're eager to get started and they show genuine interest and enthusiasm for what's going on that day.

In contrast to the 7Rs, people in a Want-To culture work *voluntarily*, *cooperatively*, and *willingly*. They feel responsible for their own success and the success of the company. They want to be there, want to perform, want to succeed. Do those people exist? Of course! You might be one of them. And it's quite possible that you already work in a Want-To culture.

But what if you don't? That's what The Accountability System is all about: How to transform a Have-To culture into a Want-To culture.

It starts in small ways – with you, your work group and the employees you supervise. Remember: you can't change other people, you can only change yourself. And a small change in your behavior will make a big difference in your results. So it really is up to you. In order to create a Want-To culture, there are three choices you need to make:

- Will I choose to supervise by attacking or approaching?
- Will I motivate people by controlling them or caring for them?
- Will my communication style confuse or clarify?

## THE ACC MODEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY

### “WANT-TO”

#### Accountable

When I demonstrate these behaviors:

APPROACH  
CARE  
CLARIFY

I create a “Want To” culture.

As a result, my people will be more likely to **ACCEPT** responsibility and they will be accountable.

### “HAVE-TO”

#### Not Accountable

When I demonstrate these behaviors:

ATTACK  
CONTROL  
CONFUSE

I create a “Have To” culture.

As a result, my people may **REJECT** responsibility and they will not be accountable.

These three choices form the Approach–Care–Clarify, or “ACC” Model of Accountability:

#### **A: Approach, Don't Attack**

When talking with your staff about what could or should be done, keep in mind the golden rule of accountability: Do unto others as *they* would have you do unto *them*. You see, it's about what *they* need. When you approach rather than attack, you encourage employees to be honest with you, to tell you what they need in order to do their best. Approach honestly. Discuss openly. Plan accordingly.

## **C: Care, Don't Control**

Discover the best that each person has to offer, and capitalize on those strengths. Praise your staff for what they're doing well, so that they know they're making a positive contribution. Demonstrate that you're looking out for their personal and professional well-being. Go to bat for people, supporting them with other leaders. Will you lose control this way? Not really. By relinquishing control up front and focusing instead on expressing care and concern for your employees, you'll gain more control over yourself – and the accountability process.

## **C: Clarify, Don't Confuse**

Establish and maintain open, honest, and regularly scheduled two-way discussions with your employees. Don't assume that you know what's on their minds. Don't assume that they can read yours. Keep people in the loop by sharing news, plans and ideas. Share your grand plan, too, so that everyone understands what the work is really all about. When employees know what they're working toward, they will tend to commit to that vision and work with you to achieve it.

**Approach – Care – Clarify**  
**A+C+C = Accountability!**

That's the central message of The Accountability System. And there's more to come. But when you demonstrate Approaching, Caring and Clarifying, you begin making the shift from a "Have-To" mentality to a "Want-To" mentality. Learn the ACC Model and you'll be well on your way to creating a culture of accountability.

I don't mean to imply that you can create a culture all by yourself. I hope that you're studying and implementing this system along with the rest of the leadership team at your company. I hope that all of you, together, decide to create a Want-To Culture.

But even if you don't have the support of other leaders in your organization yet, you can still create a Want-To Culture within your own work group. And it all starts with the ACC Model: Approach, Care, and Clarify.

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McLean, Koehler, Sparks & Hammond helps owners and business leaders become more successful by providing innovative financial, technology and management solutions for every stage of their organizations' life cycle. MKS&H's organizational consulting division, Tandem Partners, specializes in people strategies that drive business results. For more information on this article or MKS&H, please contact Margaret Wilson at 410-296-6200 or via email: [margaret@mksh.com](mailto:margaret@mksh.com).

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