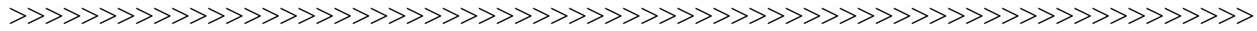


# ajcBusiness

SUNDAY FOCUS ON LOCAL INDUSTRY & DEVELOPMENT

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## Biz Voice

# Accountability still vital

### Employees must be held responsible.

A thought-out plan, repercussions for failure needed to run business.

By **Mike Gomez**  
For the AJC

I watched President Barak Obama accept full responsibility for the multitude of opportunities by the different federal intelligence agencies to “connect the dots” and prevent the “Underwear Bomber” from boarding a flight to the United States.

Throughout his speech, the president used some variation of the word “accountable” but ultimately dodged any specific actions to enforce accountability within his administration.

Does this word not have teeth anymore?

Has it been relegated to the same politically incorrect or overused, under-enforced trash heap of words such as “you’re fired,” “deadline,” “delivery date,” “fixed price,” “trust” and “customer service”?

I contend that if your business has any ambitions of growth and long-term success, personal accountability is a must.

My experience in government, corporate America, small business and nonprofits



**Mike Gomez says that if a business has goals of achieving growth and long-term success, personal accountability is important.**

has taught me that mediocrity begins the moment leadership fails to hold people accountable for not achieving specific goals and objectives on time.

The message sent when this occurs is viral, speeding with firestorm-like intensity throughout the company or organization. The damage can be overwhelming and take years to repair.

So, what does it take to create a culture of accountability in your business?

**A Plan:** First and foremost, it takes a written plan. Operating to well-thought-out three-year strategic and one-year tactical plans is one of the most important characteristics of companies and organizations that grow in good times and bad.

But just having a plan is not enough. The plan has to be shared which allows every member of the team to know his or her role in its execution.

Just as a movie cannot be made without a detailed script for the actors, cameraman, director, etc., a business owner cannot hold his or her employees accountable for completing their “movie”

without first giving them a script.

#### **Written Job Description:**

The relationship between an employee and employer is a contractual one.

As far as the business is concerned it should be nothing more.

In return for a set amount of compensation and benefits, an employer expects to have a certain level of experience and education, work a scheduled number of hours, and be held accountable for defined responsibilities.

With both a plan and a written job description in place, an employer has taken the steps to remove an employee’s excuse of “I didn’t know” as a means to fend off accountability.

**Resources:** You cannot hold someone accountable unless you have given them the resources to do the job you assigned them.

If, for example, you expect someone to build a widget in a certain timeframe then you must ensure the employee has the materials, tools, instructions, and proper environment to complete the task.

The same is true for your salesmen. You can’t hold them accountable for meeting sales objectives unless you have first given them the value proposition, a clear under-

standing of the competition, and the tools necessary to uncover prospects and close the sale.

#### **Implication for Failure:**

Finally, and most important, there must be consistent repercussions associated with failure.

A plan or a job description is useless if you don’t hold the individual and leadership accountable for fulfilling responsibilities and meeting goals. Tying bonuses or a portion of base pay to objectives is one method.

Private or public rebuke when a deadline is missed is another. This is clearly a personal decision but whatever the repercussion, it must be doled out with consistency.

Maintaining a strict culture of accountability does not, as some believe, negatively impact moral or performance. On the contrary this culture takes away the ambiguity and assures each and every individual knows what is expected of them and as a result keeps them focused and comfortable knowing that if they perform they have a long future.

Mike Gomez is managing partner at Allegro Consulting – The Business Growth Specialist.