

TIPS for HOLDING CO-WORKERS ACCOUNTABLE

- **Identify the right problem.** When approaching your co-worker, think “CPR” (Content, Pattern, Relationship). Our natural inclination is to talk content—the immediate offense. But if and when your co-worker continues to behave poorly, it’s time to talk about the pattern of bad behavior. If the infraction continues, talk about the long-term damage the pattern is having on your relationship of trust and dependability.
- **Make it motivating.** If the other person is able to do what’s been asked, but chooses not to, start by making the invisible visible. Talk about the natural consequences—both good and bad—he or she cares about. What are the effects of his or her behavior on other employees, customers, shareowners, etc.?
- **Make it easy.** If you find out the problem is not due to motivation, then it’s likely due to an ability barrier. Maybe your expectations aren’t realistic. Maybe you didn’t provide him or her with the right tools. Maybe he or she is constrained because of bureaucracy. Whatever the constraints, discover them and make changes. The goal is to make it as easy as possible for your co-worker to meet the expectation.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH.

The study collected responses via an online survey from 1,225 individuals in May of 2013. Margin of error is approximately 3%.

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According to our research, **3 in 4** employees quickly attribute their co-workers’ bad behavior to lack of motivation while only **1 in 10** consider ability deficits. As a result, they avoid holding problem colleagues accountable, engage in costly workarounds and perpetuate the very problems they detest.

Our study of 1,225 people found that this misdiagnosis and resulting lack of accountability has caused major fallout in the workplace as those who assume their co-worker is unmotivated rather than unable to change are half as likely to speak up and share their full concerns. As a result, one in three employees suffer the effects of their co-workers’ bad behavior for more than five years and three in four report that unaccountable co-workers create severe problems for them, their customers or the organization.

The biggest problem isn’t necessarily the problem behavior itself, but rather how our misdiagnosis affects our response. Those who think more generously and carefully about the cause for others’ misbehavior are far more likely to speak up and explore potential motivation and ability barriers to their co-workers’ performance and report success in resolving the issue.

About VitalSmarts—An innovator in corporate training and leadership development, VitalSmarts combines three decades of original research with 50 years of the best social science to help leaders and organizations change human behavior and achieve new levels of performance. VitalSmarts has identified four high-leverage skill sets that, when used in combination, create healthy corporate cultures. These skills are taught in the Company’s award-winning training programs and *New York Times* best-selling books of the same titles: *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Accountability*, *Influencer*, and *Change Anything*. VitalSmarts has consulted with more than 300 of the Fortune 500 companies and trained more than one million people worldwide. www.vitalSMARTS.com

KEY RESULTS

Those who assume their co-worker is unmotivated rather than unable to change are

1/2 as likely to speak up and share their full concerns

94% fail to effectively hold their co-workers accountable

1 in 3 employees suffer the effects of their co-workers’ bad behavior for more than five years

3 in 4 report that unaccountable co-workers create severe problems for them, their customers or the organization