

5 Actions of Positive Accountability: How to Build and Lead a Positive Culture for Peak Results

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Informed by scientific research, the business guide 5 Actions of Positive Accountability suggests means of creating a positive work culture.

Paulette Ashlin and John Kello's business book *5 Actions of Positive Accountability* speaks to leaders and employees alike, recommending both affirmative accountability and positivity.

Distilled from years of behavioral scientific research and consulting, this book on positive accountability encourages leaders and workers to be clear in communicating their expectations. It also champions positive reinforcement and honest appraisals. Its five-step process is introduced via a mnemonic device for easy recall; its steps are anticipate, assist, appraise, advise, and affect. Following this process, the book suggests, will help organizations to maximize their performances and productivity. Indeed, it's an empowering approach that eschews negative reinforcements.

The thematic chapters muse through topics like the challenge of accountability, individual accountability, team accountability, positive psychology, and humanistic psychology. The book flows well from section to section, though. Direct, declarative sentences help the book to be both concise and actionable, communicating its lessons in an effectively pithy manner. For instance, it makes the case that optimism is more energizing than pessimism with a quote from a sales executive: "no one buys gloom."

Further, the book reinforces its messages through repetition, recapitulation, and other didactic techniques. And it tackles most topics from multiple angles, as when it makes a case for positive reinforcement by noting that it increases desired behaviors and outcomes, while also detailing why negative reinforcement is flawed (it does not guide those targeted toward the preferred behavior, but merely invokes fear that can disrupt other employee behaviors and hamper job performances).

The book's claims are bolstered by its academic references, as to Ivan Pavlov's experiments on dogs and B. F. Skinner's training of rats to pull levers for food. These are used to indicate the established power of anticipated rewards. A brief final note reiterates the book's mission of equipping leaders with the tools and strategies of positive accountability, encouraging managers to practice them until they become ingrained habits; and a late chapter summarizes the main takeaways of all the previous chapters in bullet point form, distilling the book's message to its essence. An encouragement to always keep learning, growing, and improving ends the work. Additionally, insightful interviews with leaders outside of the business realm, including collegiate football and basketball coaches who apply these methods themselves, are transcribed in full in the book's appendix, resulting in an added level of edification.

Informed by scientific research, the business guide *5 Actions of Positive Accountability* suggests means of creating a positive work culture in order to yield quantifiable results.

JOSEPH S. PETE (July 5, 2022)

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