



How Leaders Can Inspire Accountability: Three Habits That Make or Break Leaders and Elevate Organizational Performance

Michael Timms

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How Leaders Can Inspire Accountability is an effective business book that suggests means of developing work cultures focused on cultivating accountability.

Michael Timms's engaging business book *How Leaders Can Inspire Accountability* argues that building a culture of responsibility can lead to excellence.

Leaders should “elevate others to achieve a common goal,” Timms says, appreciating that everyone in an organization has the potential to lead and foster positive change. His big picture ideas about moving beyond blame to focus on accountability are designed to help leaders understand why such shifts matter; later, the book introduces specific strategies to change individual organizations. It argues against negative habits, like finger-pointing and creating a lack of trust. “Blame is like a virus,” it says; ultimately, who is wrong matters less than what is wrong. Instead, it encourages prospective leaders to admit their mistakes and request feedback from others, turning systems-focused thinking into practical skills, like transparency and clarity around critical steps.

Self-awareness and methods of engineering solutions follow the book's section on blame shifting. In total, three new habits are proposed to bring about more accountability; they are introduced in an organized fashion, with sections devoted to each. Psychological buzzwords, as of “growth mindsets,” are included for clarity.

With its memorable mix of personal anecdotes and scholarly research, this is a grounded text. Timms talks about his home environment, too, showing his children struggling to pick up after dinner—but also their parents coaching them through, with the belief that people can change, even if the process of encouraging change can be challenging. He also uses colorful outside examples, as of a train derailment following a driver's post on social media; though the driver wished to place blame elsewhere, Timms says, that outcome came at “the tail end of a bad system.”

The book is convincing in showing that problems are often more complex than they outwardly appear, and in arguing that true leaders should endeavor to uncover those true, complex realities. Diagrams are included to better illustrate the book's ideas, as of how blame leads to a cycle of ignorance.

Easy to use and understand, this is a book marked by fun language that amplifies its points, as with the humorous assertion that the “thorny thing about reality is that it delivers consequences.” It is confident in addressing the nuances of its difficult topic, ably imparting the notion that accountability is worth achieving, even if it takes hard work to do so, and makes leadership more difficult in the short term.

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JEREMIAH ROOD (August 21, 2021)

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