

**TOPIC: ACCOUNTABILITY AND WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS****SUMMARY:**

Employees need to be accountable, but what does that really mean? Accountability involves taking personal responsibility for ensuring your work reflects positively on both you and your company. This may include a project, a customer experience, and workplace and vendor relationships. In politics, business, and education, individuals need to be held accountable for their actions. Unfortunately, too many people do not demonstrate accountability. This chapter discusses the concepts of accountability and workplace relationships. The concepts of empowerment, responsibility, and accountability are all about personal choices. These personal choices not only impact how successfully you will perform at work, but have a tremendous impact on workplace relationships.

**OTHER RESOURCES:****POTENTIAL GUEST SPEAKERS**

- Invite a MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER to discuss empowerment and taking responsibility.
- Invite a PSYCHOLOGIST to discuss how to deal with difficult people (bosses or coworkers).
- Invite an ATTORNEY OR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL to discuss workplace confidentiality.

**POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS**

- Visit a COMPANY BREAKROOM (or view a photo) so students can visualize purpose, typical layout, and proper behavior. Point out the refrigerator (labeling, stealing, and throwing out food), coffee pot, kitchen sink, and bulletin boards/flyers listing items for sale.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES: *After studying these topics, you will benefit by:***

- Defining and linking concepts of empowerment, personal responsibility, and accountability
- Explaining how workplace relationships affect workplace success
- Identifying appropriate and inappropriate relationships with your boss, colleagues, executives, vendors, and customers.
- Justifying how best to respond to a negative workplace relationship
- Stating basic expectations regarding work-related social functions, situations, and office issues

***You Are An Expert if You Can:***

1. Summarize why the concept of accountability is critical for today's workplace

- and provide examples of how to improve personal accountability
2. Describe appropriate and inappropriate behaviors to exhibit with bosses, coworkers, vendors, and customers
  3. Describe how to respond when a workplace relationship turns negative.
  4. Identify basic workplace expectations including social situations such as social functions and gift giving

### **OVERVIEW OF EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES:**

The following chart provides a quick overview of the activities for Accountability and Workplace Relationships. A complete description of each activity follows these tables. In the full description, you will find the activity title, instructions, and how to conclude/evaluate the activity. As you review which of these activities to use, consider the following:

- None of the activities are meant to be prescriptive. Pick, choose, and adapt. You know your students and what they need better than anyone else.
- We have denoted the format in which the activities can be used. Note the column below titled “Applications.” Most of the activities can be easily replicated from the classroom to the online environment. For example, reflection papers and case studies could be posted on discussion boards or chat rooms and students could respond there. Where appropriate, additional suggestions have been included in the activity section below.
- We have included all worksheets needed to complete the activities for this topic.
- You may want to suggest means by which your students can save, retrieve, and send their activities. This is usually determined by you and the LMS used at your institution.
- The activities provided for this module are intended to give you suggestions that may assist you in providing students with activities, journal writing, thought-provoking situations, and group activities. You probably have many activities in addition to the ones found here. Use them to your best advantage. You and your ideas bring the class to life.
- TALK IT OUTS are found throughout the chapters and are set up to be used as in-class activities or may be assigned for homework.
- ACTIVITIES are found at the end of each chapter and are set up to be used as homework (some may be used as in-class activities).
- SELF-QUIZ is used as a review of key terms.

<b>Activity #</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Related Skill and/or Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Applications</b>
<b>Talk It Out</b>	Apply concepts of appropriate work relationships. Why students should not speak poorly of others when networking	expectations regarding office issues, appropriate and inappropriate relationships, expectations at social functions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online

<b>Topic Situation</b>	Identifying methods to improve already stellar performance. Discuss how to handle gossiping coworkers. Identify how to respond when employee gives someone the cold shoulder	link empowerment, responsibility, accountability, relationships and workplace success, responding to negative relationships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Think Like A Boss</b>	Motivation, referee between feuding coworkers, gift giving	expectations – gift giving	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Text Activity #1 Improving Morale</b>	Identify how to increase morale at work	relationships and workplace success	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Text Activity #2 Workplace Issues That Cause Conflict</b>	Identify additional workplace issues that have the potential for conflict.	workplace expectations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Text Activity #3 Family and Work</b>	Family emergency	accountability and how to improve accountability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Text Activity #4 Bad Boss</b>	Boss bad-mouths	Appropriate behavior How to respond to negative behavior	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Text Activity #5 Work Relationships</b>	Dating a vendor	Workplace expectations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Text Activity #6 Accountability Measures</b>	Life plan	Personal accountability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Writing Exercises</b>	Ideas for further discussion	All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Additional Activity #1 Discussion Questions</b>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online
<b>Self-Quiz</b>	Match key terms/definitions	All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hybrid or Blended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online

**MyStudentSuccessLab ASSESSMENTS and ACTIVITIES**

MyStudentSuccessLab ([www.mystudentsuccesslab.com](http://www.mystudentsuccesslab.com)) is an online solution designed to help students acquire and develop the skills they need to succeed. Here students can access peer-led video presentations and develop core skills through interactive exercises and projects. Rich assessments based on Bloom's Taxonomy and tied to learning outcomes provide students with the opportunity to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to communicate them more effectively. MyStudentSuccessLab helps students develop academic, life, and career skills that will transfer to ANY course or experience

**TALK IT OUT*****1. Why should you not speak poorly of others when networking?***

Speaking poorly of coworkers is not only damaging to the unity and morale of the workplace, it harms productivity and, on a personal level, reflects poorly on one's character. The purpose of networking is to build credibility and create favorable, reciprocal relationships. Business professionals will not want to associate with individuals who are negative and/or speak poorly of others. Professional networks frequently provide personal references, job leads, and leads for potential customers.

***2. What additional distractions should employees avoid creating in a common work area?***

If the area is not an area where employees should be gathering, remove items that would cause employees to gather in that area, including seats, candy dishes, etc. Every employee needs to take personal responsibility for their actions. Clean up a mess or rectify (or find a solution) to a problem (e.g., if a piece of equipment is broken, don't ignore the problem – report it). Conflict in common work areas is usually a result of lack of courtesy for others.

**TOPIC SITUATION RESPONSE*****1. What additional activities could Christine perform to demonstrate she is responsible and accountable?***

Christine is already performing well and her boss has taken notice. The challenge is to identify what additional activities Christine could perform to demonstrate her responsibility and accountability. Additional activities include volunteering for a new project; increased participation in committees; taking additional classes and/or reading books related to her job; arranging teambuilding activities for the workplace, etc.

***2. Are there other ways Julian could have appropriately responded or handled the situation?***

Evan, Julian, and the gossip: Julian is dealing with the workplace gossip and politely but firmly informs the gossip that he will not tolerate gossip. Students are challenged to ID additional methods Julian can use to respond or handle the situation. The easy way out is to do nothing. Remind students that doing nothing rewards poor behavior. Julian's method is not offensive and quickly deals with the situation.

***3. What steps should Monique take at this point?***

Josh gives Monique the cold shoulder because Monique couldn't take Josh up on his lunch offer. Monique apologizes but Josh will not accept her apology. Following the recommendations in the book, Monique needs to continue to be kind to Josh but give him his space. She already apologized and she may need to let that workplace friendship go. Hopefully, with time, Josh will reestablish the friendship. Challenge your class to identify potential reasons Josh overreacted – perhaps he was stressed and needed to talk, jealous of Monique and a workplace situation, etc.

**THINK LIKE A BOSS*****1. How can you get employees excited about assuming additional responsibilities?***

Employees are excited when their jobs have meaning and when they are appropriately valued, recognized, and rewarded for a job well done. This starts with communication.

***2. If you were to notice employee morale dropping in your department, how would you respond?***

The first step is to observe specific actions that indicate declining morale. The next step is to probe or ask open-ended questions about what employees like or dislike about their current work environment. At that point, solicit ideas for improvement. Remind students that once they have gathered input from their employees, they need to integrate the key concepts of empowerment, responsibility, and accountability into their solutions.

***3. How would you handle two employees whose friendship had turned negative?***

A supervisor should never become involved with employee relationships unless they negatively affect performance. If the negative relationship begins to affect the workplace, the supervisor must remind the employees that they do not have to like each other, but they are expected to be consistently respectful and professional to each other. If one or both employees continue to behave inappropriately, you need to formally discipline them.

***4. You never give your employees gifts, but one of your employees always gives you gifts for holidays, birthdays, and Boss's Day. Is it wrong for you to accept these gifts?***

If the gifts are minor (less than \$10), then accepting the gift may not be inappropriate. However, it could certainly convey reciprocity or favoritism from the giver or against employees who do not give you gifts. Confidentially pull the employee aside and thank him or her for the kindness, but tell him or her that gifts are unnecessary. If he or she insists on giving you something for special events, tell him or her that you always appreciate cards. Remember to always graciously thank the employee with a handwritten thank-you note.

**Text Activity #1: Improving Morale (Exercise 6-1)**

*What can you do to increase employee morale in your workplace?*

In this exercise, students are challenged to identify factors that contribute to poor morale and what specific activities can be done to improve poor morale. Make sure students are specific with their answers. Remind students that money (monetary reward) is not always the answer. Ways to improve morale in the workplace may include having a positive personal attitude, being open to change and/or new ideas, being friendly, being considerate, being professional, being open to taking on new responsibilities, learning new skills, expressing appreciation, using positive communication, and giving positive feedback.





**Text Activity #2: Workplace Issues That Cause Conflict (*Exercise 6-2*)**

*What are other workplace issues that have a potential to cause conflict?*

Relationships that contribute to poor employee morale may include negativity, no concern for quality, and rudeness toward others, poor communication, unsafe work area, no positive feedback, favoritism, no incentives, and no rewards for good behavior.


**Text Activity #3: Family and Work (Activity 6-1)**

***You have a meeting you are to attend on Wednesday. On Tuesday evening, you have a family emergency. What should you do? Explain your answer.***

Your first priority is to take care of your immediate family member. If the family emergency does not involve immediate family, your first priority is your job. Very early in the morning (around 6 a.m.) call your boss or workplace and leave a message explaining the situation. Leave a number where someone can contact you. Call again every hour until you are able to directly speak with your boss to explain the situation and provide information to assist whoever will be attending the meeting in your place.


**Text Activity #4: Bad Boss (Activity 6-2)**

*Your boss bad-mouths or belittles coworkers. You do not like it, and you wonder what he or she says about you when you are not around. What should you do?*

Next time your boss says something negative, politely defend your coworkers. Doing nothing implies that you agree with your boss. You cannot change your boss's poor behavior, but you can communicate to your boss that bad-mouthing others is not acceptable behavior to you.


**Text Activity #5: Work Relationships (Activity 6-3)**

*The company that services your office equipment has hired a new salesperson. This person does not wear a wedding ring and flirts with you. If you go out on a date with this person, what are three potential problems that could occur (work-related)?*

- Breach of confidentiality
- Bad breakup that results in bad service (avoiding each other in the future)
- Salesperson might be married (some choose to not wear wedding rings)
- Ethical dilemmas with respect to pricing and supplies


**Text Activity #6: Accountability Measures (Activity 6-4)**

*Identify tasks required to complete major goals in your life plan, and then list how specifically you will be accountable to yourself to accomplishing these goals. There should be several accountability measures for each life plan goal.*

Life Plan Goal	Task Required (be specific as possible)	Accountability Measures (be specific as possible)
Each student response will be based upon individual goals. Most tasks will include completing educational goal, with accountability measures addressing grades, finances, and or securing quality employment.		

Life Plan Goal	Task Required	Accountability Measures

## **WRITING EXERCISES**

1. Describe a time when one of your relationships went sour. How would you have handled the situation differently?
2. Write a (professional) memo to your boss asking for additional responsibility.

**Additional Activity #1: Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the link among empowerment, responsibility, and accountability. What can you do to make sure you use these?
2. Why do you feel some employees resist empowerment?
3. Why do you feel some managers resist empowerment?
4. Discuss a time when a friendship has gone awry, what did you do? If you worked with that person, what should you do?
5. What can you do to help improve employee morale in the workplace?

**Self-Quiz**

**Matching Key Terms:** *In the blank column match the definition to the key term using the identifying number.*

<b>Key Terms</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
accountability		1. the attitude employees have toward a company
corporate culture		2. pushing power and decision making to the individuals who are closest to the customer
employee morale		3. the company's personality reflected through its employees behavior
empowerment		4. accepting power that is being given to you
responsibility		5. reporting back to whoever empowered you

**Self-Quiz Answer Key**

<b>Key Terms</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
accountability	5	1. the attitude employees have toward a company
corporate culture	3	2. pushing power and decision making to the individuals who are closest to the customer
employee morale	1	3. the company's personality reflected through its employees behavior
empowerment	2	4. accepting power that is being given to you
responsibility	4	5. reporting back to whoever empowered you



## ACCOUNTABILITY AND WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Assignment	Points	Notes
Read Chapter		
Exercise 6-1		
Exercise 6-2		
Topic Situation: Improve Performance		
Topic Situation: Evan, Julian, And The Gossip		
Topic Situation: Josh And Monique		
Think Like A Boss #1		
Think Like A Boss #2		
Self-Quiz		
Activity 6-1		
Activity 6-2		
Activity 6-3		
Activity 6-4		