

## CEP Magazine – February 2020

### Teaching your staff to be accountable

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By evaluating learning and development programs and leadership in public, private, and nongovernmental organization spaces, I have found a myriad of substantial differences, but I have also identified many things they all have in common. Qualitatively, the differences are more substantial, but quantitatively, the *number* of things they do similarly, in many instances, is identical. The reason for the similarities has nothing to do with any former education or previous employment, and it has everything to do with basic human nature.

### The foundation of behaviors

If you've had an occasion to travel, you know that a four-year-old in America makes the same facial expressions when confronted with the same situations as a child in Haiti. No training is needed. This concept transcends race, ethnicity, color, creed, gender, religion, education, and socioeconomic standing. It is only after we get older that certain other behaviors are molded from what we've been exposed to and help to shape who we become. But the baseline for a lot of human behavior, especially what drives and discourages us, is the same. And it is those baseline behaviors that serve as the foundation for a lot of behaviors prominently displayed in today's workplace, from a new hire to the CEO.

If we throw in some universally institutionalized tracks of thinking in business, leadership, training, risk, and compliance, we get varying groups of people from all over the world doing a lot of the exact same things. From a business uniformity standpoint, that can be a good thing, but in certain instances, it can also be problematic, particularly when it comes to how we think, perform, and mitigate risk through training and leadership.

In my leadership accountability courses, for example, I teach that if you expect your staff to be accountable, it's best that you show them how before demanding it. On the surface, it seems like a simple enough concept. The current and universal standard for teaching accountability is to ensure that everyone knows that if they mess up, they'll get in trouble. So when someone fails, we make an example of them for everyone to see. But I submit to you, that's not training staff to be accountable; that's "consequence training," which is the least effective way to teach anything. It's training staff to simply understand punishment and consequences instead of teaching an actual skill—a mistake of epic proportions. This kind of approach to learning and development is a rank display of compulsion training as the foundation of a critical training objective, which is never the recipe for success. If that's all it took to gain compliance, then everyone would be accountable!

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