

# The CEO Advantage: How to Hold People Accountable for Results

By Nancy MacKay, Ph.D

## CEO challenge:

What is a CEO to do with a high-performing direct report who just won't get with the program?

In this case, a CEO was struggling to rein in his vice-president of sales, who was a rock star when it came to sales results but wasn't much interested in the executive agenda. The company was implementing a new customer relationship management (CRM) system and the VP was the executive responsible, but he was having no part of it. He thought the project was a waste of time and money because he had been extremely successful without it. Furthermore, he didn't want his sales team distracted with data entry and other administrative tasks.

It didn't stop there. The sales lead rarely showed up for executive team meetings and, when he did, he was on his BlackBerry constantly or leaving early. Needless to say, the CEO wasn't the only one frustrated, and it didn't help matters that the VP was adored by his staff.

## CEO mistake:

Naturally, the CEO didn't want to tinker with a good thing – the VP did turn in extraordinary results. Hoping that things would improve over time, the CEO decided to ignore the problem, which only made matters worse.

Other members of the leadership team began to complain about the renegade VP and speculate that the CRM project was a failure.

After a year, the CEO realized that he needed to hold the VP accountable. The CEO began holding monthly meetings with the vice-president, during which he expressed his disappointment and frustration. The meetings were painful and did nothing to create new attitudes or behaviours.

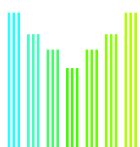
Six months later, the CEO gave up and took ownership of the CRM project himself. It seemed the only alternative, as losing such a star performer was not an option.

## CEO solution:

Holding people accountable for results is not about communicating blame, frustration and disappointment in a monthly meeting. Instead, accountability is about persuasion and motivating people to say "yes" to delivering results and new behaviours.

Here are six strategies to enhance your ability to hold people accountable by using persuasion versus playing the blame game.

1. People like people who like them. Before holding people accountable for new results and behaviours, make sure you have a solid history of praising their strengths.
2. Model the behaviour you want to see in others.
3. Persuasion is more effective when it comes from peers versus the boss. Other vice-presidents would have had more influence on the sales leader.



4. Make commitments written, public and voluntary. Getting the VP to commit in writing, in public (at leadership team meetings) and voluntarily would be far more effective.
5. Create a sense of urgency using “loss language”: “We will lose a lot of money if the CRM is not implemented on time and on budget.”
6. People defer to experts, but don’t assume your expertise is self-evident by virtue of your CEO title alone. Share your previous experiences (successes and failures) to have greater influence. •

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