

# SERVANT LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

*"Servant leaders encourage, empower, and equip team members and don't control."*

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**TOPIC THIS ISSUE:**

**Creating a Culture of  
Accountability**



## **Are You a Leader?**

**QBQ**

By: John B. Miller



### **Are you a leader?**

Many people wrestle with this question. "Am I a leader or is my manager the leader? Is the company president the leader? The vice president of my division?" Or they think, "Maybe the leader is my peer who was granted the

*title of 'Team Leader'."*

I have not met many who had no question about it at all. I had just asked a group, "Are you a leader?" when he jumped up in the back and yelled, "I'm a leader, John." You bet—I am a leader!"

I asked him, "What's your name, Sir?" and he said, "Jim Leader." True story. Jim Leader, I checked his license to be sure. **James D. Leader, 33 years old.** You know what that means? For at least 31 years now he's been able to say confidently not only, "I'm a leader" but also, "I'm a born Leader!"

For most of us though, it's not that simple. Too often, we think leadership is about title, position, the number of people or dollars we manage or tenure. I find the tenure thing especially funny. When I hear someone say boastfully, "I've been here over a dozen years!" I can just imagine someone else in that organization saying, "Yeah, and that

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may be your problem!

Don't get me wrong loyalty is an admirable quality. But the number of years one has been around does not automatically equate to merely having a title of manager or vice president. And certainly things acquired—fine cars, nice homes—are not measures of our leadership ability.

**Leadership, more than anything else, is about the way you think.** It's a moment-to-moment disciplining of our thoughts. **It's about practicing personal accountability and choosing to make a positive contribution, no matter what our role or "level."**

A receptionist, an engineer, a salesperson, a temp worker, a cashier: **They all can be leaders.** Parents? Absolutely. Parenting may be the most important leadership role there is. Are you a friend, little league coach, volunteer, and someone who has influence with others at work? The same principle holds true: **If we think like leaders, we are leaders.**

**So I'll ask you again. Are you a leader? Think about it.**

## ACCOUNTABILITY

By: Greg Bustin



**As leaders, we get the behavior we tolerate.** When it comes to holding people accountable, we are often our own worst enemy.

We accept excuses that sound logical even when we know better. We allow emotions to cloud our decision-making. We delay having a conversation with an underperformer because it's easier to avoid a difficult conversation than have one. *Instead of practicing accountability, we practice avoidance.*

**Three valuable lessons about accountability are:**



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1. When your purpose, expectations and rewards are crystal clear, your employees will embrace accountability as a way to become even more successful.

2. Bad news does not improve with age. As soon as you see a problem, it's best to address it immediately. Failure to speak frankly with the person about his or her performance means nothing will change.

3. It's not personal. Leave emotions and opinions behind. Stick to the facts, set a plan to get performance back on track, and communicate specific consequences for underperformance.

In organizations like The Container Store, Ernst & Young, Herman Miller, Marriott, Nucor, Sony and Southwest Airlines, accountability is more than a conversation. It's an attitude and a set of expectations that show up in every aspect of their firms' operations: how they hire, communicate, develop people and make decisions.

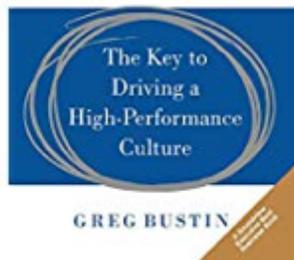
Organizations wrestle with accountability in similar ways, and exceptional organizations succeed by following principles and practices that are similar regardless of age of the organization, geography, industry or size.

## The Seven Pillars of Accountability

By: Greg Bustin

"What's holding the new wave of firms accountable and inspiring individual and organizational performance, and the book?"  
©2013 by Greg Bustin, author of *Accountability: The Key to Driving a High-Performance Culture*

### Accountability



High-performing organizations share seven distinct characteristics called the Seven Pillars of Accountability:

**Character:** An organization's character is shaped by its values, and these values are clearly defined and communicated. The organization does what is right for its customers, employees, suppliers and investors, even

when it's difficult to do so.



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**Unity:** Every employee understands and supports the organization’s mission, vision, values and strategy and knows his or her role in helping to achieve them.

**Learning:** The organization is committed to continuous learning and invests in ongoing training and development.

**Tracking:** The organization has reliable, established systems to measure the things that are most important.

**Urgency:** The organization makes decisions and acts on them with a sense of purpose, commitment and immediacy.

**Reputation:** The organization rewards achievement and addresses underperformance, earning the organization and its leaders a reputation both internally and externally as a place where behavior matches values.

**Evolving:** The organization continuously adapts and changes the organization’s practices to grow its market-place leadership position.

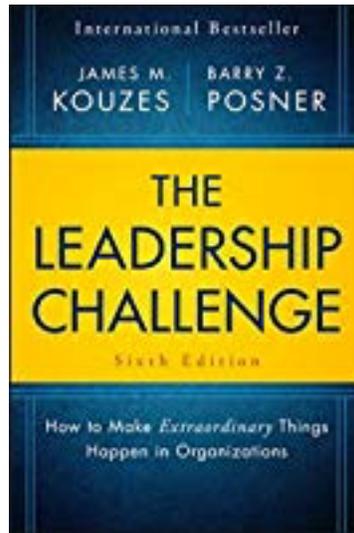
The acronym: **C.U.L.T.U.R.E.** will help you remember the seven pillars and that your culture is a significant predictor of your future performance.

Imagine a bridge spanning an abyss supported by seven pillars, each representing one of the seven characteristics that are essential in high-performing cultures. **Crossing the abyss — moving your organization from Point A to Point B — requires the commitment of you and your team.**



## The Struggle to Be Human

By: James Kouzes & Barry Posner



Organizational life is full of struggles and tensions. Leaders feel these tensions acutely because of their responsibilities to set the example and inspire others to work collaboratively toward a shared vision of the future. The leaders who are the most in touch with their constituents -- and therefore likely to be the most credible -- will experience the pain most intensely.

Let's acknowledge these tensions and, furthermore, let's even suggest that leaders would do well to learn to love the struggles. Where there is tension there is also energy. And where there is energy, there is also the possibility of movement. And where there is movement, there is the chance for progress. Making forward progress is the measure of leadership. So let's wrestle with three of the tensions and dilemmas that leaders experience as they stretch to strengthen credibility:

- **Tension Between Freedom and Constraint**

Leaders demonstrate their commitment to a consistent set of expectations by clarifying meaning, unifying constituents and intensifying actions. This process tugs at an uneasy tension between liberty and limits. Be clear about the fact that people will have choices, but be equally clear that choices are constrained. They are constrained by the owners, the shareholders, the customers, the economic system, the idiosyncrasies of the founders, the executives in power and the people in the room at the time, along with a host of other forces, seen and unseen.

It is the leader's responsibility to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to express opinions and get a fair hearing.



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Provide the forum for discussion, debate and reconciliation.

• **Tension Between Leading and Following**

There is a crucial difference between a pioneering leader and a dependable colleague. While success in both is founded on personal credibility, leadership requires the realization of a unique and ideal image of the future. Teamwork requires cooperation and reliable adherence to that common vision. Leadership and teamwork are certainly not mutually exclusive — in fact, exemplary leaders foster collaboration — yet there is a dynamic tension between them.

In these uncertain times it is absolutely necessary for leaders to encourage and tolerate more internal conflict than has been allowed in the past. If organizations expect people to show initiative in meeting today's business challenges, then they have to relax their expectations of abiding devotion. Instead, they must support efforts of honest and competent people to find solutions to the problems that are confronting their companies. In short, they must develop the leader in everyone.

• **Tension Between Definitions of Success**

Leadership is both local and global. Acts of credible leadership come in all sizes. You can lead people to change the world, the state, the community, the work- place, the neighborhood and the family. Or you can just lead yourself to change. Leadership is also transitory and most often lasts a relatively short time. There are those whose influence has spanned centuries and crossed continents, but they are not the only ones who have led. Those whose influence has spanned only a few days and a few blocks can still have taken people to places they have never been before.

**So what defines success?** When it comes to leadership, perhaps the most appropriate response is the one adopted by such organizations as the Scouts and the Sierra Club. Whether your leadership is confined to your own 25 square feet of campground or extends to the plant's 250,000 square feet or to the corporation's 2,500,000 square feet, success is leaving the place better than you found it.

The more we study leadership, the more we're persuaded that leadership development is not simply about skill development. It's also about character development. Building upon previous

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wisdom, we offer this poetic inspiration:

*Be careful of your thoughts, for your thoughts become your words;  
Be careful of your words, for your words become your deeds;  
Be careful of your deeds, for your deeds become your habits;  
Be careful of your habits, for your habits become your character;  
Be careful of your character, for your character becomes your destiny.  
Be careful of your leadership, for your leadership becomes your legacy.*

**Read these six simple lines at the start of every day.** They will remind you that what you do as a leader begins in your mind, gets expressed in your words and then gets translated into your actions. Over time those actions become who you are, determine the credibility you earn and shape the legacy you leave.

