



Business Mentors

Creating Superior Performance Through Accountability

Topic: Business Practices

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I would like to ask you a favor; I used to have a person working for me who might now be on your staff. Please examine your personnel files. He may be using an alias however, when he worked for me his name was Dead Wood.

Dead Wood, if he is working for you, was most likely one of your first employees. He doesn't like change, and as your business grows, he probably doesn't do his job as well as some of the new people that you have hired. Ironically, he may also be one of your highest paid employees. Now, he mostly keeps out of "Mr. Responsibilities" way.

When you think of Dead Wood, you think of the old days when you first started your business. He was your main man. He always did what you asked to the best of his ability. It was good enough in those days. He appears to have changed over the years, but this is probably an illusion as your business has changed, and he stayed the same.

One of my better qualities is loyalty. Most entrepreneurs have this same quality. However, loyalty in the absence of accountability is not really a desirable quality. Accountability is the key. You need to ask yourself, "What am I doing to be accountable?" Do you have a standard to measure accountability for yourself and others?

During your last evaluation of Dead Wood, you thought that he seemed to be doing an acceptable job and after all, he is a good employee that doesn't miss much work. Therefore, you gave him the raise that was requested. Without accountability, familiarity can breed complacency. While this is not true with all employees, it can become a problem as your company grows and changes. Complacency is not a sudden development. It slowly manifests itself and can smother your company

Accountability is vital in business. As your company grows, accountability systems for yourself and all of your employees will prevent good employees from turning into Dead Wood. Habits are at the core of all businesses. Develop the habit of being accountable to your organization and everyone associated with it, and then hold yourself and others to the standards that you have set.

Create complete and detailed job descriptions for all of your employees. Identify major tasks and responsibilities, and define areas in which all employees will be measured on a routine basis. Measured and defined tasks will lead to accountability in all areas of your company. It is



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essential that your employees receive regular feedback on their progress in achievement of these essential functions of their job. If they are not meeting their goals, then corrective action needs to be taken to get them back on track. If they are meeting their goals, then it is essential that they be recognized for these desired actions.

If these systems do not have their desired effect, what can you do? Remember that Dead Wood may have helped you build your company. Many times wise business decisions take a toll on you personally and can be emotionally draining. Due to this personal discomfort, difficult business decisions are postponed to the detriment of yourself, your company, your family, your employees and believe it or not, Dead Wood. Through enabling poor performers, you are not helping them grow personally, professionally or economically. If you give your employees every opportunity for success, and provide feedback when they are not meeting their performance requirements, then you should not feel guilty about firing this employee. Separate the person from the performance and realize that the performance is not keeping pace with the company. Keeping poor performers in the company takes your personal time, lowers morale, decreases productivity, starves the opportunities and is unfair to all interested parties.

Dead Wood is bad for your company's moral. He resists change, kills profits and slows progress. If you can't find him, ask your employees, because they probably know him.

Try and prevent good employees from becoming Dead Wood through accountability systems, measurement and proper feedback. If this does not prevent complacency, then don't be afraid to make necessary changes.

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