

# Leadership accountability – why management must set the precedent



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**E** Everyone is watching the CEO, divisional managers and store managers. They take their cues from what they see. If managers say one thing and do another, they should not be surprised if their employees model their actions rather than follow their words. Their actions are more important than their words in communicating to their employees what is appropriate and what is not.

Getting all members of management on the same page in relation to performance expectations and agreed values and behaviours takes time, but it is a critical investment. If some managers set high performance expectations and model the agreed values, but one or more do the opposite, employees will be confused as to what is expected. High performing workplaces ensure subordinates as well as managers can pull up any manager or employee who does not exhibit the agreed values or perform to expectations.

Managers that actively demonstrate that they listen to and adapt to their customers' needs set a great example for their employees to follow. If an employee shows a lack of customer care, the manager will have no problem pointing that out to the employee as he or she will have already set a good example of the high standards that have been set.

Accountable managers understand that they need to take full responsibility for the culture of their workplace. They do this by modelling, and being great exemplars of their business' agreed values and behaviours as well as calling out bad behaviours by others. Employees will take their cue from their CEO and other managers. Acceptable behaviours will become those that are consistently modelled by them.

If a manager sets a high bar and high expectations for performance, that bar and

those expectations become the benchmark for their employees. Employees are very unlikely to set a higher bar or higher expectations than their direct manager. Similarly, managers are unlikely to set a higher bar or higher expectations than their boss, whether that be another manager or the CEO. Many businesses set their ambitions and expectations at too low a level.

Good managers don't just get the rational buy-in from their employees, but also their emotional buy-in. They inspire their employees to take a longer term view and buy-in to a picture of a more compelling and positive future for their workplace and business. As those employees become more engaged, they apply extra discretionary effort for the benefit of the business.

Good managers also set very clear strategies and goals but also seek input and ideas as to "how" that strategy and those goals will be achieved. They seek to use that input and those ideas knowing their employees will buy-in even further and are more likely to act as if their workplace and business was their own.

Most employees have very good 'bullshit' detectors. Most can spot a fake person a mile off.

If employees sense that their CEO or manager has a primary aim of looking after themselves and their own ego and that the desires and feelings of their employees are secondary, those CEOs and managers will gain very little backing and support for their goals and objectives.

Managers who genuinely serve their employees, by going out of their way to develop them, recognise them for their contribution and do all they can to make them as effective as possible, will have a far more engaged and productive team due to the significant extra discretionary effort, focus and energy that will result. 