DEVELOP MANAGEMENT SKILLS
WITH THE ACCEL MODEL

Katy Tynan
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AUTHOR

Katy Tynan
Katy Tynan is the managing director of CoreAxis Consulting, a talent strategy, e-learning, and training firm. She is also a bestselling author and internationally recognized expert on the evolution of work.

Community Manager, Career Development
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ACCOUNTABILITY ................................................................. 2
COLLABORATION ............................................................... 4
COMMUNICATION .............................................................. 5
ENGAGEMENT .................................................................. 7
LISTENING AND ASSESSING .............................................. 8
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER .................................................. 12
CONCLUSION ..................................................................... 13

REFERENCES & RESOURCES .......................................................... 14

JOB AIDS

Goal Planning Template .......................................................... 15
GRASP Model Goal Planning Template ....................................... 16

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What makes a manager effective? It seems like a simple question, yet many individuals and organizations struggle to find an answer. In this issue of TD at Work, we're going to explore five key practices of effective managers. These elements make up the ACCEL model—a framework that helps new and experienced managers develop the skills they need to be successful in their roles.

These five core skills are:
• accountability
• collaboration
• communication
• engagement
• listening and assessing.

When we look at each key skill individually, none of them seems overwhelming. But integrating these practices into daily activities in a balanced way is the key to overall success as a leader. As we dig into each of these skills, we'll talk about practical ways to develop and practice each one of them individually and consider how they interrelate to form the foundation of management success.

Great leaders don't wake up one morning with all of the skills and abilities they needed to be successful. Leadership is a set of learned practices and a mindset that develop over time. Although the behaviors of those we consider leaders can vary widely, the core of what every successful leader must do remains consistent. So what do these core practices look like?

• **Accountability.** Today's organizations are tightly integrated networks of talented professionals. With things moving at such a fast pace, we're solving new problems every day and working more collaboratively than ever. Accountability is the glue that holds a team together. When we can rely on each member of our team to be as committed to success as we are, that builds trust. The manager's role is to foster that culture of mutual accountability.

• **Collaboration.** Building on the concept of mutual accountability, today's organizations also are highly collaborative. No single individual can do all the things that are necessary to move business initiatives forward. Collaboration is at the core of the work we do. For managers, the goal is to both facilitate collaboration and identify barriers that may be preventing it.

• **Communication.** The ability to communicate clearly across many forms of media is a key skill for every team member, but it is particularly critical for managers. Communicating expectations, giving feedback, clarifying objectives, and reinforcing goals enable managers to guide and support their team.

• **Engagement.** Managers play an essential role in creating an inspiring and engaging team culture. This level of mutual trust comes from sharing a values-driven vision of future success. The manager's role is to develop and communicate this vision, along with each individual's role in bringing it to life.

• **Listening and Assessing.** Skilled managers know that listening and seeking to understand are the most important tools in their toolbox. Today's teams and organizations are complex networks of interrelated initiatives and personalities. Managers who are able to listen, assess, and synthesize information are better equipped to perceive obstacles and facilitate collaboration within their own team as well as among other parts of the organization.

There's broad agreement among management practitioners, HR professionals, and organizational development experts that the five skills that make up the ACCEL model are critical to individual leaders' success. But when ATD surveyed 847 talent development professionals, the gap was clear. Fewer than one-third of the people who responded felt that the managers in their organization demonstrated these core competencies to a high extent.

To close that gap, we need to look more closely at each of the individual practices in detail and understand how they come together to form the basis of effective leadership.
ACCOUNTABILITY

In April 2017, a doctor named David Dao was dragged off a United Airlines flight by airport security. The video of him, clearly injured and unconscious, being manhandled up the aisle sent shock waves across social media and major news outlets. An innocent man was forcibly removed from a plane, and injured in the process, so that the airline could make space for some crew members who needed to move between airports.

The public response was immediate and scathing. It was a public relations nightmare for United Airlines. Within 24 hours, CEO Oscar Munoz publicly took accountability for the incident and assured the public, the employees of United, and the injured doctor that United would make things right.

Although the behaviors of those we consider leaders can vary widely, the core of what every successful leader must do remains consistent.

When we think about accountability, this is often the type of example that springs to mind—a leader announcing that they are going to take it upon themselves, personally, to right a wrong or solve a problem. At a macro scale, this is what we mean by accountability. We mean ownership, responsibility, and a personal commitment to see something through.

The challenge with accountability is that it is so often associated with blame. While the United CEO’s actions resolved the issue, it happened after the fact, when things had already gone wrong. But accountability as a skill for managers means creating an environment of proactive accountability, rather than reactive accountability. What does that look like?

**Proactive Accountability**

Imagine that your team is planning an event to thank your clients for working with your organization. You know everything that needs to get done—you need to find a location, hire a caterer, invite the guests, and engage a band. You also need to have the vice president of sales deliver a speech to thank your clients for their continued relationship with your firm. There’s a lot to do, and you’re feeling stressed about getting everything arranged in time. You pull together your team, run through the list, and give each person on the team a task to complete.

Having delegated all of the tasks, you’re done, right?

The answer to that question depends on how confident you feel in the proactive accountability of each member of your team. Do all of your team members understand and share your vision for this event? Do they each care as deeply as you do that it all goes off without a hitch? In this scenario, you have 100 percent accountability for the results of the event, and you want to be sure that everyone, from the CEO to the sales team to the clients who will be attending, gets the best result.

Do your team members feel the same way?

Let’s take this a step further. Two members of your team—Emily and Marcus—are working on this project with you. Emily is responsible for catering, and Marcus is sending out the invitations. Because Marcus used to work on the sales team, he knows many of the clients personally and is excited to see them come to the event. He drafts the invitation emails, double checks everything multiple times, and works closely with the marketing team to make sure the design looks great and that the emails go out in plenty of time.

Emily, on the other hand, thinks this whole project is a drag. She has other projects on her plate and wants to get the catering task done as quickly as possible. She does a quick Google search and calls the first catering company that comes up. She emails the company requesting food for 100 people, giving them the date but no location, because that hasn’t been decided. Once that email is sent, she checks the task off her list and goes back to working on her other projects. Do you think there will be food at the party?

**Avoiding Command and Control**

We’ve all experienced the disappointment of having someone tell us they would take care of something and then not do it. At the core of
accountability is the concept of ownership and personal commitment. When someone feels a personal connection to the outcome, you can feel confident that they will do two things. First, they will put time and effort into accomplishing the goal at a high level. Second, if they run into an obstacle or challenge, they will be much more likely to try to solve that problem or alert you to it.

How can you foster a feeling of accountability on your team? The answer is surprisingly simple. Most people don’t like to be told what to do. When someone gives us an order, we resist. But if we’re given a choice, the whole dynamic changes.

Going back to our thank-you event, what if we had asked at the outset who was interested in working on the project? It’s likely that Marcus would have volunteered to take on more than just the invitations, given his connection to the team. Emily, on the other hand, might have said she had too many other things on her plate and asked not to be involved.

When we tell people what to do (the old “command and control” model), they respond because of external factors, such as the fact that they are being paid or are worried that they might get fired. But when we ask people what to do, we tap into a different type of motivation— intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is what we feel when we are doing something because we want to, because the work itself feels rewarding. This is what drives true accountability.

As managers, we often fall into the trap of being too busy. We have so much on our plates that it’s hard to slow down and think about how we present things. We fall back to handing out orders instead of engaging with our team to figure

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**THE MOTIVATION MATRIX**

Ideally, employees will always have the skills and willingness to accomplish tasks assigned to them. But sometimes they will have to do tasks they don’t want to do or don’t yet have the skills to accomplish well. Here are some suggestions for working with employees at various points on the spectrum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willing</th>
<th>Unwilling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide training and opportunities to continue growing their skills.</td>
<td>• Have a one-on-one conversation to uncover what motivates them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Watch for burnout.</td>
<td>• Create a structured plan with the team member to move them toward a higher level of motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus on the results and not the process. Give them room to figure out the best way to accomplish a task.</td>
<td>• Watch for turnover if there is no way to adapt the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partner these employees in a mentoring relationship with those in the quadrant above or coach them yourself.</td>
<td>• Employees in this quadrant may not be a good fit for the position. You will get a better return on investment developing employees in other quadrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide a structured plan to grow their skills.</td>
<td>• Evaluate whether this team member’s job can be restructured or whether another position is available that offers a better fit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Watch out that they don’t reach beyond their limits and ask for too much responsibility too fast. Don’t set them up for failure.</td>
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