



# talking about...

April 2012

CREATE **NEW** THINKING

## More on Accountability

*"Promises may fit the friends, but non-performance will turn them into enemies."*

... Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) US statesman and inventor

When people are asked about the cultural challenges in their organisation, it is not uncommon to hear them express a concern about accountability. Like many issues, much has been written on the subject yet somehow the issue persists and seems widespread.

Why is this?

In some ways, the cause of this ongoing concern is found in the human condition. Accountability lies near the heart of three key areas of life – our sense of self, our relationships and coordinating action with others. Therefore when it comes to being accountable or holding others accountable, our sense of self and relationships with others is an ever present context. That context establishes our capacity in the domain of accountability.

From an individual perspective, we all know when we have not done something we should have done and in doing so, we have not been accountable for our actions. This has an impact on our "self" story as we seek to compensate in some way for that lack. For example, we may feel guilty and seek to cover up our lack of action or we may feel overwhelmed by what we believe we have to do and, as a result, feel incompetent. On the other hand, we may believe that we do not have to keep our promises. By holding this view, our promises don't really matter all that much. Regardless of how we interpret such a situation, it plays a part in how we generate our "self" story.

Apart from what we do, we also expect those around us to do the right thing by us, particularly if they have explicitly committed to do so. When they don't, it creates a problem for us and we have two options. We can avoid dealing with the fact they have made a commitment to us and do something else to fill the gap they have left us, such as taking action ourselves or finding someone else to do what is needed. In taking this option, we have to do something we did not expect to have to do, leading us to develop a story about the other person and their lack of reliability. The next time we have to deal with them, we take into account their past failings. This is often a slippery downhill slope for the relationship leading to resentment and frustration.

The alternative is to hold them accountable and take action to address

their lack of completion of their commitment. This is often a more challenging path to take as it involves potential conflict, which is one of the major, if not the major, reason for poor accountability. Once again, there will also be some impact on our sense of self. What does it mean about us if people do not take the commitments they make to us seriously? At some level, this goes to the heart of our dignity – do we matter?

It is easy to stand on the sideline and say people should be accountable when they are not or they should hold others accountable when they don't. It is something else when it applies to us. If we are to understand how we can be accountable and hold others accountable, and develop "accountable" relationships and cultures, we have to understand the roots of accountability and the skills needed to achieve it. Added to this there is the challenge of creating accountability in a manner that ensures sustainable healthy relationships and constructive organisations.

If you are interested in reading more about this topic, I have written an extensive paper on accountability and how to create it. And it is FREE!

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Talking About Pty Ltd  
PO Box 6652,  
St Kilda Rd Central,  
Victoria, 8008.  
Ph: +613 9504 3558  
info@talkingabout.com.au  
www.talkingabout.com.au



This paper is supported by a seminar we are running on from 8am to 11 am on 1st June called "STOP Pointing the Finger". To download the paper or find out more about the seminar, simply go to [www.talkingabout.com.au/talkingaboutaccountability](http://www.talkingabout.com.au/talkingaboutaccountability) and follow the links. To get the paper all that we ask of you is that you leave your details for us as we are interested in who is interested in this topic.

*"We must not promise what we ought not, lest we be called on to perform what we cannot."*

... Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) US President and lawyer

## Bedside Manners ...

One from the web.

Susie's husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months. Things looked grim, but she was by his bedside every single day.

One day as he slipped back into consciousness, he motioned for her to come close to him. She pulled the chair close to the bed and leaned her ear close to be able to hear him.

*"You know" he whispered, his eyes filling with tears, "you have been with me through all the bad times. When I got fired, you stuck right beside me. When my business went under, there you were. When we lost the house, you were there. When I got shot, you stuck with me. When my health started failing, you were still by my side. And you know what?"*

*"What, dear?" she asked gently, smiling to herself.*

*"I think you're bad luck."*

## Talking About Facebook

We have begun conducting a 'Quote of the Month' photo competition through Talking About's Facebook page.



If you think that you can't make a difference in this world, think about what a single rock can do.

- Kester Naismith

For each original photo that is posted we invite you to create or source a quote that you think best fits the picture.

Also, if you are a photographer and would like to submit an original picture of yours for us to use in the competition email Jacqui at [jchaplin@talkingabout.com.au](mailto:jchaplin@talkingabout.com.au)!

The April prize will be announced in our May newsletter!

CONGRATULATIONS! Kester Naismith as the winner of Talking About's inaugural photo quote challenge! Her winning quote is shown with this month's picture. Kester has won a complimentary ticket to Talking About's "STOP Pointing the Finger!" Seminar !

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ACN 112 307 892  
[info@talkingabout.com.au](mailto:info@talkingabout.com.au)  
Telephone: +61 3 9504 3558

