



Customer Service  
Leaders

The Association of Customer Service Leaders & Innovators

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOR MEMBERS

OVERVIEW

## Keys to Real Accountability That Drive Performance.

by Carol Marshall, Vice President of Operations, Active Engage.

**In a direct and concise manner, Marshall delivers her points on how to achieve a culture of accountability within the workplace. Point by point, she offers sound advice from defining accountability to making it part of the company culture.**

Carol Marshall is the Vice President of Operations at Active Engage, Inc. and has been helping Active Engage become an industry leader for the past ten years. Carol's messaging and customer experience teams achieve outstanding results because of the culture of accountability she's developed, the associate training she's evolved, and the trends she continues to analyze. She has more than 20 years of automotive industry experience and has held executive in-store positions such as General Sales Manager. She has also held positions with Mazda and Auto Nation.

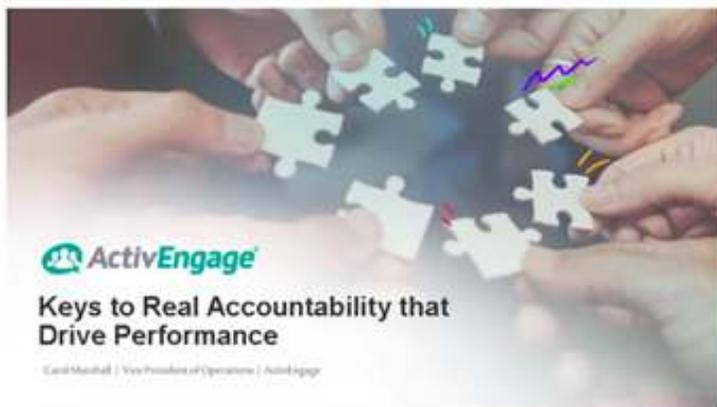
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*“Accountability is about high performance, not fear or stress.”*

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Marshall shares the tools that she has used and developed over the years to create a culture of accountability. She begins by defining what accountability means, so that everyone is on the same page. Then she goes on to speak about perception and how to make sure someone

perceives you the way you want them to. She goes on to speak about front loading, language, and tone. These are all very important to create and maintain a culture of accountability.



## 1. The Keys to Accountability.

- **Let's define what it really is.**
  - Carol notes that accountability has a bad name. She notes people take it to mean, “who’s in trouble?” This definition makes it entirely negative.
  - Carol defines it as, “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility for one’s actions,” changing from a negative to positive connotation.
  - We need to, “streamline what accountability means.” Accountability need not be complicated.
  - We need clear commitments which others can easily see have been met.



People perceive you **differently** than you think

## 2. Perception

- **The eyes of others**
  - People have different perceptions. No one sees things exactly like someone else.
  - What others think and perceive matters more than what we think when it comes to accountability.
  - Commitments must be fulfilled in the other persons eyes and there must be an agreement as to when and how the commitment will be fulfilled.

- Accountability is about high performance, not fear or stress. Someone does not have to be constantly fearful of consequences to be a high performer.
- A culture of accountability generates a team focused on a mission.



The key to accountability is  
**front-loading**

### 3. Front-Loading

- **Expectations should be crystal clear.**
  - Clarity is key to creating a culture of accountability
  - Marshall notes that when you back-end accountability, or enforce it after the fact, it sets your team up to fail. Expectations should be addressed from day one.
  - She goes on to say that regular check-ins are key to maintaining accountability. Make sure people are staying on track and that they are understanding the expectations as they move forward.
  - Questions are king – people shouldn't be afraid to speak up or ask questions. If they are, productivity will suffer, and the team won't work cohesively.
  - Questions should be encouraged and answered directly and honestly.
  - Allowing questions and answering them openly and carefully encourages your rapport with members of your team.
  - Encourage them to think of questions if they are not used to asking questions.
  - Create a level of trust instead of a level of fear. Setting expectations and allowing an open and honest system of communications will create trust and teamwork.



Language is the **quickest way**  
to impact company culture

#### 4. Language

- **The easiest way to impact culture at work**
  - Making ourselves accountable for the language we use is the first step to achieving an accountability culture.
  - Marshall goes over the four steps to learning a new language, as the language of accountability can be new for some people.
  - Those steps are hearing, recognizing, understanding, and speaking. This is a great model for implementing an accountability culture in the workplace.
  - Common language allows for accountability. It prevents suspicion or miscommunication due to not understanding intent.
  - Carol goes on to say that speaking activates a different part of your brain than reading does, so it is important to talk about accountability with others. You can't create a culture of accountability entirely based on written communication.



#### 5. Tone

- **Accountability changes the tone of a workplace**
  - People need to meet with a purpose and focus on a timeline. Meetings can keep teams on task or throw them off track.
  - Once you change the tone, you are set to have the real and direct conversations needed to achieve a culture of accountability.
  - Better accountability makes it easier to see where things went off track.

- The language of specificity makes it easier to be accountable.
- “People don’t know how much something means unless you let them know.” Let your team know what’s important.
- People don’t come to work to fail. Everyone wants to do a good job, accomplish the task, and be productive. A good accountability process makes this easier.
- As a leader, your tone should be communicative and clear. How you lead makes all the difference. Marshall reiterates that you should be honest and direct as a leader.
- Marshall notes that finding help can be better than offering it yourself.

## Conclusion

Marshall discusses the tools necessary to develop and maintain a culture of accountability within the workplace. She gives simple and direct guidance to achieve this goal. She begins by defining what accountability actually is, since she feels it has a bad reputation. Then, she goes on to list the most important aspects of a culture of accountability. They are frontloading, language, tone, and perception. Taken together, these tips can help change the culture of your organization into one of productivity and teamwork.



The executive summary above was written by staff from watching the presentation and many other ideas were presented. Members may watch the full presentation if wished by logging in.