

Accountability in Christian Organizations

By Kevin Scheid

Is holding people accountable in Christian organizations really necessary? After all who needs some authoritarian manager looking over your shoulder when you have sacrificed to work in a Christian organization? Moreover, you were called to the work and you are 100% accountable in everything you do to Jesus Christ. Is it not presumptuous for managers to put themselves in the place of the judge and call people to task?

If this makes sense to you then you may be surprised by what our survey results say about accountability.

In the Best Christian Workplace annual survey people were asked 56 questions including: "At my organization, people are responsible and held accountable for doing what they say they will do." Correlation analysis was conducted to see which questions in the survey most closely relate to the question on accountability. Higher correlation values indicate a stronger relationship between the questions. Any correlation above 0.50 is considered a significant relationship. The table below shows the questions with the top correlation to the question on accountability.

Survey Question	Correlation
My organization is well managed.	0.65
My organization conducts its activities openly and honestly	0.65
My organization promotes the most qualified employees.	0.63
There is a high level of trust at my organization between senior leadership and employees.	0.62
My organization's leaders behave with fairness and integrity.	0.62
My organization acts on the suggestions of employees.	0.60
My organization's leaders keep a focus on putting Christ first in daily decision-making.	0.59
My organization's leaders demonstrate compassion for people at all levels	0.59
My organization's leaders exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, kindness, etc.).	0.57

The relation between accountability and the perception of a well managed organization may be intuitive since accountability is one of the principle elements of nearly every definition of management. However, the relationship between being open and honest, promoting the most qualified employees and trust with accountability is surprising. Do



your employees trust you more, believe you are more open and honest and act fairly in promotions when you hold them accountable? Apparently so!

Employees also see leaders who hold people accountable as fair, acting on their suggestions and putting Christ first in daily decision-making. So employees see their leaders as creating a fair workplace where everyone is held accountable and good suggestions are put into practice. More importantly, managers with high accountability are also perceived as putting Christ first. Of course it follows that organizations with low accountability would usually have low scores in all of these categories.

Of the results, the correlation between accountability and compassion as well as accountability and leaders exhibiting the fruit of the Holy Spirit are the most surprising. One might expect a negative correlation between these two issues and accountability. In other words, it would make some intuitive sense if an organization which was high in accountability would then be low in compassion. These two issues would seem to be mutually exclusive and yet they are mutually supportive.

A Christian manager can conclude from these results that it is very important to hold people accountable in Christian organizations. If you do not, they will likely perceive you as not putting Christ first in decisions, the organization as being poorly managed and little existence of openness, honesty, fairness and trust. But most of all, the virtue the managers may believe they were practicing, compassion, is actually perceived as being lower in truly caring about someone.

An example can be drawn from doing an academic search for material relating to accountability in Christian organizations. All the research in the past years has looked at the Catholic church's failure to hold their priests accountable for the sexual abuse they perpetrated over the last decades. The lack of accountability in this extreme context may help illuminate why employees not only feel a sense of fairness and good management, but also that Christ is placed first in decision making and that management is high in compassion when there is accountability.

