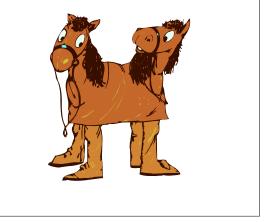# 40. Define Responsibility

Description:

Getting things accomplished is more effective when people know who is responsible. Leaving responsibility open for discussion causes you to lose productivity, allows finger pointing when the work doesn't get done, and confuses your staff and clients.

When assigning responsibility for tasks in a project, limit it to one person. It's easier to hold one person accountable, even if he/she does not do the work, than it is when multiple people share a responsibility.

Define Responsibility

Key points:

- Everyone needs a clear set of responsibilities
- Detail oriented people need defined responsibilities
- Quantify
    - Responsible areas
    - Processes to handle situations
    - Escalation guidelines
    - Backup guidelines
- Incorporate responsibilities into Performance Plans
- Measure performance as quantitatively as possible
- Assigned responsibilities empowers people to achieve more

Category:

IT Assessment
IT Strategy & Planning
x IT Project Management and Processes
x IT Organization and Staff
IT Financial Management
IT Measurements and Communication

Discussion:

Define Responsibility

Every person in your organization should have a specific set of responsibilities and all members of the team should know what they are. When you don't define people's responsibility, you create too much opportunity for confusion.

Defining responsibility allows you to hold people accountable and reduces the potential of people pointing fingers at one another when things go wrong.

Everyone needs a clear set of responsibilities - We all work better when we know our responsibilities and have the ability to handle them. Everyone needs to have a clear set of responsibilities that should be conveyed to others that you work with.

Detail oriented people need defined responsibilities - Detail oriented people like we have in IT want the "book" that describes their responsibility and if possible how to go about the work to be successful. We owe it to our people to define their responsibilities and give them the first part of being able to be successful in the company.

    1. Quantify - Quantify people's responsibility and communicate it to others as specifically as possible.

    2. Responsible areas - Articulate to the individual what it means to be responsible for a given area of responsibility and how to achieve success.

    3. Processes to handle situations - Help your people be successful by incorporating processes within the organization that facilitates the action necessary to be successful.

    4. Escalation guidelines - Define escalation guidelines to bring in more skilled resources and experience when necessary to prevent bigger issues from developing.

    5. Backup guidelines - Define each individual's backup in case he/she is not able to perform due to absence.

Incorporate responsibilities into Performance Plans - Focus each team member on their set of responsibilities by incorporating them into their Employee Performance Plan.

Measure performance as quantitatively as possible - Establish measurement criteria that helps you measure performance as quantitatively as possible. It helps everyone when you can see objective measurements that determine levels of success.

Assigned responsibilities empowers people to achieve more - People generally respond to having responsibility assigned to them. Be clear as to the responsibility and support them in their effort to take charge of it.