

## Accountability and Trust

At our recent leadership retreat our team focused on two topics: Trust and Accountability. After reading several books and having lively discussions for two days it became crystal clear that a firm must have trust in order to hold people accountable. This is not a new or difficult concept to understand; however, becoming a true, high trust organization can be very difficult.

I am often asked, “How am I suppose to hold my other partners accountable?” while working with firms. This statement is usually included in a discussion about partners being peers and, although partner accountability is much needed, there has been an unwillingness to create it. According to Patrick Lencioni’s book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and Stephen M. R. Covey’s book *The Speed of Trust*, the breakdown here is one of trust or simply a lack of trust. Covey outlines 13 behaviors of high trust teams, four of which are:

- Straight Talk
- Create Transparency
- Deliver Results
- Practice Accountability

If you do not have these four behaviors consistently within your firm then you most likely have a breakdown of trust. Lencioni outlines what happens when you have an absence of trust and how it creates: invulnerability, artificial harmony, ambiguity, low standards and a reliance on status and personal ego. When you have these things within your firm, you do not have trust and you cannot have accountability.

Creating accountability starts with creating real trust by becoming vulnerable to each other, gaining buy-in, holding each other accountable to established goals, and producing results. The leadership of any firm is responsible for holding each other accountable. Trust and accountability are obtainable, you are just going to have to work hard to get them.

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