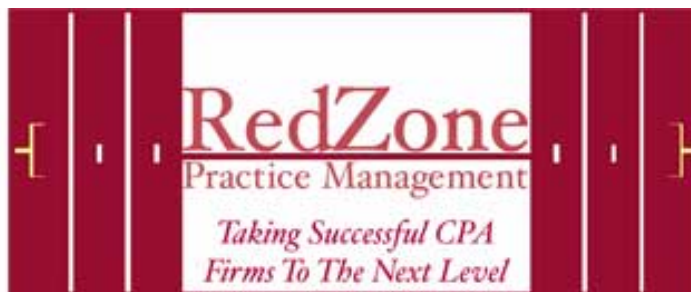


Play of the Month

SEPTEMBER 2013



Beyond Partner Accountability

There has been a significant amount of articles and discussions concerning partner accountability in the last 5 years. Additionally, partner accountability has risen to the number one issue in CPA firms according to a recent AICPA survey. So why is it that so many firms struggle with this issue? Why is it that even after implementing an accountability based system many firms fail to get to the next level of success through higher degrees of partner performance? Do firms use the lack of partner accountability as an excuse because they are in denial for the real underlying problems that exist in their organizations?

Partner accountability programs are meant to provide guidance to partners in developing their goals and objectives and to be used as a measuring process for performance not a solution to increasing partner results. The solution to achieving greater levels of firm and partner success extends beyond partner accountability. Here are some examples:

- "If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings and put compensation as a carrier behind it, you almost don't have to manage them. The whole game of business revolves around one thing—you build the best team, you win."—Jack Welch.

The same is true in accounting firms- the best accountability system will be useless if a firm doesn't have a winning partner team. A firm can't win with the team they need but don't have-this is a significant element in the denial syndrome at many firms that have plateaued. Demanding that partners be accountable for performance that they are not capable of achieving is only delaying inevitable failure.

- Partner accountability is flawed from the start in firms that don't provide the proper infrastructure for Marketing, HR and IT to support the partner's goals and objectives.

Investing in the infrastructure is a prerequisite to holding partners accountable for above average performance.

- The most fundamental of all management skills is delegation—getting things done thru others. Partners need the appropriate number of talented staff to delegate tasks and projects whether they are professional staff or administrative staff. Effectively using delegation to achieve higher levels of partner performance is a significant factor in building a successful firm of the future.
- It is important to have strong leadership that has the ability to make tough decisions and is held accountable for ensuring that partners are a united, synchronized group that are capable of achieving the goals and objectives of the firm. Good leaders encourage investment in their firms and motivate their people to be passionate innovators to gain an edge on their competitors. Accounting firms that are willing to redefine themselves and how they operate in order to achieve higher levels of success understand the need for good leadership. Good leaders play to win, and that is often the difference between success and mediocrity.
- Some partners possess natural talents to achieve the required performance competencies on their own. Nonetheless, all partners can benefit from a formal professional development training plan. This process should include structured and ongoing efforts to assess partners' progress toward developing expected competencies. Partners can also benefit from regular reviews that tell them if the firm is satisfied with their progress during the year and what additional steps they need to take.

Put together a winning team with good leadership that is accountable with the passion to take the firm to the next level of success and don't let partner accountability be the number one issue in your firm.



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