

Crib Sheet: Seven-Step Process for Creating Accountability

Structured Steps and Tips for Building Accountability in Teams and Organisations

Purpose

This crib sheet outlines a practical, seven-step process to create accountability. Reference it to ensure that expectations are clearly set, progress is transparent, and outcomes are owned throughout your team or organisation.

1. Set Expectations

- Define clear goals, roles, standards, and timeframes for every task or project.
- Make sure goals are **SMART**:
 - **Specific**: Clearly state what needs to be accomplished.
 - **Measurable**: Establish how progress and success will be assessed.
 - **Achievable**: Ensure the goal is realistic given resources and constraints.
 - **Relevant**: Align goals with overall team or organisational priorities.
 - **Time-bound**: Set a clear deadline for completion.
- Clarify who is responsible for each task and the standards expected.
- Document and communicate these expectations to everyone involved.

2. Get Commitment

- Secure agreement from all participants on their roles and responsibilities.
- Confirm that everyone understands what good performance looks like, including quality and deadline standards.
- Ask each team member to articulate their understanding to reinforce clarity and buy-in.

3. Resources and Support

- Identify what resources (tools, information, training, people) are required to achieve each goal.
- Discuss and agree on any other tasks or responsibilities that may need to be deprioritised to focus on the agreed objectives.
- Arrange ongoing support, guidance, or escalation points as needed.

4. Transparent Progress Checks

- Schedule regular check-ins (e.g., weekly stand-ups, progress meetings, or status updates).
- Keep progress and any obstacles visible to all, using dashboards, project boards, or shared documents.
- Challenge constructively—ask questions about progress and help problem-solve barriers.
- Encourage candid updates; make it safe to share setbacks as well as wins.

5. Feedback and Correct Course

- Give regular, actionable feedback focused on solutions and next steps, not blame.
- If things go off track, focus on how to correct and support improvement rather than dwelling on mistakes.
- Make course corrections together, involving the person or team responsible.

6. Celebrate Wins

- Recognise and celebrate achievements, big and small, publicly and privately.
- Highlight progress toward goals, not just final results, to maintain motivation and momentum.

7. Consequences and Learning

- Follow up on whether commitments and expectations have been met.
- If not, challenge constructively—ask why, explore obstacles, and illustrate the impact of missed commitments.
- Encourage reflection and learning from mistakes to drive continuous improvement and avoid repeat issues.

Quick Reference Table

Step	Action	Tools/Examples
Set Expectations	Define SMART goals, clarify roles, standards, deadlines	Goal sheets, role descriptions
Get Commitment	Secure agreement and understanding	Kickoff meetings, written confirmations

Resources & Support	Identify needs, provide support, clarify priorities	Resource checklists, prioritisation exercises
Transparent Progress Checks	Monitor, challenge, and make progress visible	Project boards, progress updates
Feedback & Correct Course	Provide solution-focused feedback, adjust approach	Feedback, coaching sessions
Celebrate Wins	Recognise achievements	Praise, team emails, recognition
Consequences & Learning	Challenge missed commitments, encourage reflection	Reflection, post-mortem reviews

Useful Phrases

- “What exactly are we aiming to achieve, and how will we measure success?”
- “Does everyone feel clear about their role and what’s expected?”
- “What support or resources do you need to deliver on this?”
- “Let’s review progress—what’s working and what’s getting in the way?”
- “How can we adjust our approach to get back on track?”
- “Great work on moving us closer to our goals!”
- “Let’s reflect on what happened and what we can learn for next time.”
- “What does good look and feel like?”

Use this crib sheet to establish and reinforce a culture of accountability, continuous learning, and shared success in your team or organisation.

