



ACCOUNTABILITY by design

1. Prepare your brief
2. Create the space
3. Present the brief
4. Make it theirs
5. Elicit commitment
6. Design Accountability

if you are leaving accountability to chance, you are introducing waste
feedback is a function of accountability
to reduce waste, you need at least an equal ratio between
work breakdown and feedback in any system

1. Prepare your brief

Bottom line the problem and the need, the WHY and the WHAT.
Bring the facts, not your opinions or perspectives, but know them;
be clear on what biases, assumptions and beliefs they are based.
Can you succinctly, in one sentence, state:
the Context
the Why and What?
and the Outcomes?

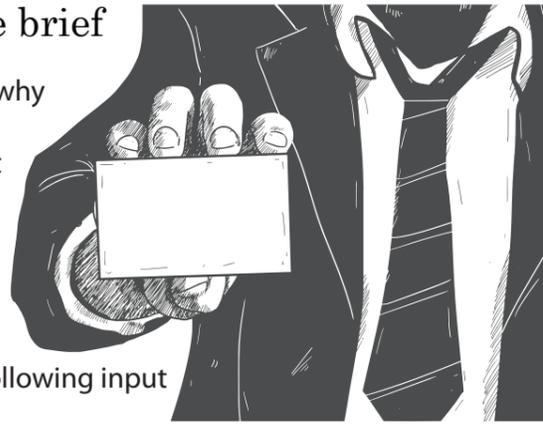


2. Create the space

Prepare the environment for the conversation. Do this by setting
the time, inviting the right people, sending relevant info, or having
prepared data.
Set the temperature in the room by stating what is going to happen,
what you are going to expect them to do, and what your role is.
If decisions need to be made, clarify how they will be made:
(Majority rules, Consensus, Veto Power, Informed Decision,
Servant Leader, FYI).
Clarify your role in the conversation - are you actively involved,
a fly on the wall, the product owner, the manager, a team mate?

3. Present the brief

Now that they know why they are in the conversation, present data, facts, the problem statement and restate the expected outcomes. Make sure that you cover AT LEAST the following input mechanisms:
Talking, Seeing, Feeling, Hearing, & without talking about the HOW, doing.



4. Make it theirs

There are three parts to making it theirs:



PART 1: PLAY BACK

Ask them to play back what they have heard. This gives them the means to think it through, confirm their understanding, and make connections between the types of inputs you gave them (seeing, hearing, talking...).

PART 2: POWERFUL QUESTIONS

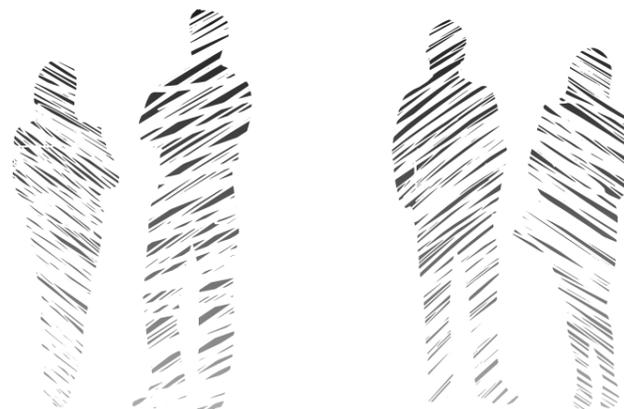
Ask powerful questions. This means that you ask only WHAT and HOW questions. The questions are not data gathering questions meant to give you information, but instead, prompting questions to get them to think deeply about the WHAT and the HOW.

You are effectively coaching them through their wrestling with the topic.

PART 3: MINE FOR CONFLICT

Challenge people to argue different perspectives. If there are opposing stances, ask them to swap. If there is agreement, ask someone to take a disagreeing stance. If someone brings a perspective, actively ask "Who disagrees with...?"

Remember, productive conflict that is built on vulnerability based trust, leads to creativity, innovation, collaboration and ultimately is the ONLY way to get to commitments that last.



5. Elicit Commitment

Using powerful questions, lead them to think about multiple options. Where there is uncertainty, define operating assumptions as hypotheses that can be tested as we learn more. Identify the risk and make it part of the task list to actively work with. Ask who will own it, and what will they do, by when.

Ask them to walk you through their thinking of where they will start, what their approach is, what they know and do not know, what resources they have available to them, who can support them.

Whatever is committed to needs to be realistic, time bound, outcome oriented, time boxed, measurable, testable, valuable and fallable. What are the failure possibilities - and what is within range of acceptable failure?

Remember, if everyone is not able to live with the commitment decision, your work is not done. Do not push for commitment, keep asking questions. Whatever you do, do not ask WHY or WHEN. Ask How, What, Who, Which questions.



6. Design Accountability

Ask them what forms of accountability they will design for themselves. How will they know they are done? What is an acceptable level of quality? What is a reasonable timebox to realistically achieve this? Remember that their time commitments are only as accurate as their best thinking about the details, risks and the quality of their collaboration. They need to say what they are being kept accountable to, and they need to say what the consequences are of not making their commitment.

You need to help them define the criteria for accepting their commitment having been delivered. Consider the Behaviour Driven Development format of "Given... When.... Then...." for defining Acceptance Criteria.

Ask them what is reasonable to expect. Invite them to compare this approach / task with something similar from the past to compare & contrast with relative estimation. This encourages better judgement and recollection of learnings, processes and approaches that did / didn't work before.

Use Acceptance criteria and Feedback techniques to explore accountability together. Ask them what they think about their delivery first. Keep your feedback based on facts, agreements and outcomes - then ask them to reflect.