



The Oz PRINCIPLE

'The Oz Principle' takes its name from The Wizard of Oz, which the authors say captures perfectly the importance of personal accountability. The journey of Dorothy and her friends is the metaphor that is used throughout the book to highlight our own journey to accountability. Dorothy, the tin man, the lion and the scarecrow all went in search of the wizard to solve their problems. If you are familiar with the story, you know what happens in the end.

In this summary we have condensed the key lessons from the book and added in exercises for you to do along the way to cement your learning of the content and ensure you can take the steps to being fully accountable in your organisation and your life.

We hope you enjoy it and wish you every success on your own journey to above the line accountability!



PART 1

THE OZ PRINCIPLE - GETTING REUSLTS THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

CH. 1

OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD:

SEARCHING FOR GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY IN BUSINESS

In the beginning the characters in the book are seeking the wizard to solve their problems, they are helpless actors in an unforgiving world and void of any power. They are victims.

Accountable Companies

When things go wrong in businesses in average companies the leaders will look outside to explain why the numbers are down – the economy is bad, trade regulations worked against us, the weak currency hit us hard. The best companies will look internally and accept accountability and address bad news head on, understanding what is going wrong with the business and changing it. Accountable companies take action when the market changes or economy drops and do something about it to ensure their success. This can mean making hard decisions.

Victim attitudes - where employees look for the quick fix and worry more about perception than results - can erode productivity, competitiveness, morale and trust. Your organisation will not succeed in the long run unless people take accountability for long term results.

The power and ability to rise above your circumstances and achieve what you desire resides within you, not in the latest management fad or promise from management consultants.

Key Point:

Accountability = SEE IT, OWN IT, SOLVE IT, DO IT

Victimization vs Accountability

Victim mentality – other people and circumstances prevent you from achieving your goals. **Accountability** – a personal choice to rise above ones circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results to see it, own it, solve it and do it.







LESSON:

Don't look for a magic wizard to solve your problems (you are the wizard)

Activity: Consider examples where you have acted below the line and consider what else you could have done in that situation to take more control over your circumstances.



THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD: GETTING STUCK IN THE VICTIM CYCLE

Everyone can fall below the line. Invoking excuses is easier than accepting responsibility. It's safe and comforting below the line, but you are trapped and cannot move towards results.

To be able to move towards accountability you need to be able to recognise that you are in the victim cycle. Once you can see the signals you can start to move out of it.

Stages of Victimization

- 1 Ignore/Deny you pretend not to know there is a problem or act unaware that the problem affects you.
- **It's Not My Job** you duck responsibility because you don't want the hassle or extra work. "That's not my responsibility someone else needs to take care of it." In days where roles where heavily reliant on the job description this approach may have been valid, but nowadays roles are a lot more fluid.
- Finger Pointing you blame others and excuse your own contribution to the problem. This happens all the time between individuals departments and different management levels. "If only they would change, all my problems would be solved.
- Instead of the constant blame game accept responsibility for your own role and take action.
 - Confusion you claim confusion and ask others what you
- should do or complain of mixed messages so use that to defend inaction. "Tell me what to do" going into child state. Some corporate cultures may encourage this 'just do what you are told!'
- Cover Your Tail you craft and elaborate story to explain why you can't be to blame.
 Could involve documenting absolutely everything, building alibis or sending emails for

sake of proof that 'I did my part.' Most of the time this just uses unnecessary energy and resources.

Wait and See – you withhold action in the hope that things will miraculously improve. Usually while you wait, your competitors (or colleagues) will act and you will be left behind (or sacked!)

How to Know you are **Below the Line**

Are you stuck in victimization? Look for these signals -

- You feel you lack any control over your present circumstances
- You don't listen when people tell you that you could have done more
- You find yourself blaming others and pointing fingers
- Your discussions focus on what you can't do rather than what you can do
- You fail to confront the toughest issues you face

- You think you are been treated unfairly and can't do anything about it
- You find yourself acting defensively a lot of the time
- You spend a lot of time talking about things you cannot change
- You say 'It's not my job' 'there is nothing I can do' 'let's wait and see'
- You talk about being taken advantage of

Key Point:

It is human and natural to fall into the victim cycle from time to time



LESSON:

We can all get stuck in the victim cycle but we can choose whether we stay there!

Activity: Consider what is going on in your life right now and ask yourself these questions:
Are there any issues you are ignoring?
What are you spending a lot of time talking/thinking about over which you have no control?
Who are you blaming for things that are happening?
What do you think is unfair in your life?



THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME: FOCUSSING ON RESULTS

Common Misconception: Accountability is something that comes up when there is a problem in order to allocate blame.

This is how many people experience accountability and so no wonder people resist it. When things go wrong often organisations get locked in a blame game of finding who is accountable for the mistake. We must move away from this 'who done it' and 'craft your story' game if we are to start to see the true benefits of accountability.

Remember the Oz Principle definition of accountability - a personal choice to rise above ones circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results to see it, own it, solve it and do it.

This definition helps us to see accountability in a positive perspective where we focus on what we can do to overcome challenges. It focuses on holding people to account for current and future actions whereas traditional interpretations of accountability focus accountability on past actions. The later approach encourages blame and story-telling to avoid accountability. The former approach focuses on what you can do to achieve the results you have set for yourself.

Key Point:

Assigning blame does not remove your accountability to deliver results

When we view accountability from only an individual perspective things slip through the cracks because, we reason, that is someone else's responsibility. Accountability is a team commitment to achieving results, it is not just about doing your job.

Joint accountability is hard to find because it is difficult to create. It comes from a laser focus on the results of the organisation. It takes time, effort and commitment to this. But when organisations stay above the line the benefits are so strong they do not want to slip below it again.

Even when we are truly victimised we must show some accountability for the outcomes we experience. Rarely is someone 100% victim.

Signals you are operating above the line:

- You invite candid feedback from others about your performance
- You don't want anyone to hide the truth
- You acknowledge reality including problems
- You always commit 100% to what you are doing
- You own your circumstances and your results
- You recognise when you are dropping below the line and act quickly
- You make things happen
- You ask 'what else can I do to drive my results?'



LESSON:

Accountability works best when people share ownership of responsibilities and tasks

Activity: Clarify the results you are working towards.
What are the 2-3 big picture goals that you are working towards in your role?
Why are these goals important to you?
How will you know when you have achieved them?



PART 2

THE POWER OF ACCOUNTABILITY: MOVING YOURSELF ABOVE THE LINE

CH. 4

THE LION: MUSTERING THE COURAGE TO SEE IT

Taking accountability and admitting that you have the means to overcome your circumstances takes courage.

Failing to accept changing external circumstances or resisting change is a below the line behaviour.

It takes courage to:

- 1 Recognise when you have fallen below the line
- Realise that remaining below the line leads to poor results
- 3 Acknowledge and accept reality as the first step in taking accountability.

Embracing reality involves seeing a different perspective than the version you have been telling yourself up to now and may involve admitting you are at fault or doing something that you don't want to do. In this process you shed the protective cocoon of the victim story. You must recognise your victim story and start to see things as they really are.

If you fail to see reality the consequences will be severe – failed company strategy, lost jobs and company losses.

Key Point:

Facing reality
means facing your
fears – fear that
you are not good
enough and fear of
rejection.

SEE IT

To start to see reality more clearly, review the victim cycle symptoms from Ch2 and see if you can relate to any of them. These are signs that you may be hiding from reality. Other people can be a great source of feedback that can increase self-awareness. Approach colleagues for feedback and let them know your motivation for wanting feedback and that you would like them to be honest with you. When receiving the feedback listen carefully, ask questions and don't get defensive. Once you start to get more feedback you will start to see things as others see them. If you get negative feedback in a performance review or informally, instead of leaning away from it, lean into it. Seek more feedback in this area and act with courage to face the fact that you might wrong and acting below the line. However by seeking feedback you are immediately starting to act above the line and taking the first steps in your road to accountability.



LESSON:

It takes courage to see things as they really are and to step out of the victim cycle.

Activity: Consider some negative feedback you have received recently or at any time in your professional career.
At the time what was your response to that feedback?
What were you choosing not to see?
What new perspective could you take on it now?
How can this situation help your future development



THE TIN MAN -FINDING THE HEART TO OWN IT

Only by accepting full ownership of all the past and present behaviour that keeps you in your current circumstances can you hope to improve things. This is the second step of acting above the line. Ownership shouldn't depend on circumstances. We tend to take credit when things are going well and distance ourselves when things are bad. But ownership is ownership regardless of outcomes.

In the victim cycle we usually see things in black and white. In reality things are mostly grey and things are not as clear cut as we like to think. There is really a situation where we are completely innocent of any blame.

To help you take more ownership, consider:

- 1 What facts which you knew to exist did you choose not to acknowledge?
- If you were to face the situation again what would you do differently?
- What were the warning signs along the way?

- 4 What could you have learnt from similar experiences that could have helped you to avoid a negative outcome?
- 5 Can you see how your behaviour and actions prevented you from getting the results you wanted?

Once you start to answer these tough questions you start to see where you had opportunities to take more ownership and shoulder some responsibility for things that have gone wrong.

OWN IT

Too many people have lost the heart to own their circumstances and this erodes organisational performance. In the new knowledge economy, geographies are dissolved and workers increasingly become disposable and part of the freelance economy. Are these freelance workers as engaged as full time staff and does their employment status give them another reason to not take full

Key Point:

Most admired companies treat their employees exceptionally well which is a factor in and a result of their success

accountability in their role? Companies that fail to address these challenges and consider how they can structure service and incentives to place accountability on their employees will ultimately build a culture of covering up, blame and inaction.

Truly owning the circumstances that you face requires you to make a link between what has happened and all the factors contributing to the problem, however much that may implicate you. Then can you move to ownership – the ability to connect current circumstances with what I have done and the ability to tie future circumstances with what I am going to do.

To assess your level of ownership work through the ownership self-assessment on the following page.



LESSON:

Owning it requires a candid acknowledgement of things that you and others would probably rather sweep under the carpet. See both sides of the story.

Activity:

Ownership self-assessment

Consider a situation where you see yourself as the victim of circumstance

Now consider the other version of the story – how did you contribute? Answer these questions

- 1. Can you cite the most convincing point of the 'other story' that 'they' are telling?
- 2. If you wished to warn someone else in a similar situation not to make the same mistakes what would you tell them?
- 3. What facts did you choose to ignore
- 4. What facts should you add to the story that you have left out?
- 5. What would you do differently if facing this situation again?

Now list 4 accountable facts about the situation.

Then score yourself on how accountable you feel for that fact on a scale of 1-10, a score of 1 means you do not feel at all accountable, 10 means you feel fully accountable.

Add up your total score and divide by the number of facts you listed.

A low score can indicate that you are failing to take accountability or that you truly are a victim of circumstance – either way it is not helpful to stay here. The accountable accepts whatever ways they contributed to the situation and tries to overcome them. Even true victims cannot move forward until they can be accountable for where they go from here. Owning your circumstances gives you the strength to overcome the powerlessness of being a victim.

A high score indicates you are acting above the line and now taking accountability for your role in the situation.



THE SCARECROW – OBTAINING THE WISDOM TO SOLVE IT

Solve it means to discover and tackle real problems, not changing things for changes sake. Acknowledging reality and accepting your role in creating your circumstances will achieve little if you fail to tackle problems and remove obstacles on the road to results. To do so you must exercise wisdom.

Solve it can come before problems even arise – it can look like anticipating what problems could occur and preparing for the worst. This allows you to be on the front foot when problems

occur. The solve it attitude and behaviour stems from continuously asking, What else can I do? By doing this you avoid slipping into the victim cycle when challenges arise.

Many within organisation become passive and a product of their circumstances. They get stuck in the victim cycle and bemoan that there is nothing they can do to improve their situation. Anyone at any level of an organisation who acknowledges reality and owns the circumstances surrounding the dissatisfaction with their job can develop the wisdom to solve it and removes the obstacles preventing them from attaining full job satisfaction.

Key Point:

Even intelligent,
hardworking,
accountable
employees can get
stuck at the solve it
stage as they fall
back into old habits

How to find the wisdom to solve it:



Stay Engaged – keep trying and keep focussing on what solutions can be done



Create New Linkages – look for ways you can build new connections and relationships to address challenges



Persist – continue to ask the solve it question – what else can I do?



Take the Initiative – take accountability for delivering solutions



Think Differently - look for creative ways to solve problems



Stay Conscious – overcome your auto pilot mode and pay attention to everything

The scarecrow always had the brains he needed, just as you have the wisdom to solve your own problems. Those acting above the line in solve it mode continue to look for new ways to achieve goals and refuse to be defeated.



LESSON:

Push the question – 'What else can we do to achieve the result?' to your team and challenge them to come up with the answers.

Activity: Challenge yourself to do more.
Consider the three big picture goals you wrote down in the activity in Ch. 3. Now ask yourself, what else could I be doing that I am not already doing to make progress towards those goals? Come up with at least 10 ideas for each goal. Make no decisions yet about what you will do, the purpose is to generate as many ideas as possible.
Goal One
Goal Two
Goal Three



DOROTHY:

EXERSISING THE MEANS TO DO IT

The final step of living above the line is to 'do it'. If you don't get it done you will never see the full benefit of achieving accountability.

'Do It' means embracing your full responsibility towards results and remaining answerable to your progress towards those results.

Any effort that falls short of making it happen and getting it done indicates a lack of full acceptance of accountability. Doing it requires that you work continually to stay above the line. Accountability is a process and you can fall below the line at any stage. Fear of failure may cause people to stop after solve it and not take the risk into execution. Most people fail to 'do it' because they get pulled back below the line into the victim cycle. There is a natural resistance to the perceived risk of taking full accountability for your actions.

Key Point:

The line between solve it and do it separates good companies from great ones.

The line between solve it and do it separates good companies from great ones. Great organisations welcome the risks that comes with actions. In these organisations they create a sense of urgency over taking action. They give real autonomy and responsibility to the people on the ground who need to take action, rather than getting lost in micromanaging and layers of approval and bureaucracy.

If you fail to 'do it' continuously you set yourself up for failure in the long run. Don't sit back and fail to take action even if things seem to be going well. The lack of company-wide accountability will cause steep declines for the business as soon as problems occur.

The 'do it' attitude helps you recover from failure faster. As soon as you take accountability for your role in the problem you can work through the steps and commit to take action to overcome the current circumstances. Without action you will remain stuck and continue to under achieve. This ability to take action means tackling issues head on and having the tough conversations that you don't necessarily want to have.

Only when Dorothy was able to utilise the skills and talents that she possessed all along could she cement her own accountability for her circumstances and the results that she wanted. She always had the means to get home but wasn't able to action it until she understand the power of personal accountability.



LESSON:

To Do It is a continuous process, face the risk every day to take action and get it done.

Activity: Take Action
Review the ideas you came up with in the previous chapter. Select the ideas from each goal that you feel the most energy behind and want to take forward.
What are the ideas you want to act on?
What is the very next steps you need to take?
Can anyone else help you?



PART 3

RESULTS THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY: **HELPING YOUR**ORGANISATION PERFORM ABOVE THE LINE

CH. 8

THE GOOD WHICH GLINDA: MASTERING ABOVE THE LINE LEADERSHIP

Getting your organisation above the line requires every individual to take accountability for results. This requires above the line leadership.

Glinda mentors and coaches the group on their journey and guides them in the right direction. She doesn't do the work but encourages and supports them along the way. Glinda is our inspiration for above the line leadership.

An above the line leader, seeks and provides feedback, holds themselves accountable as much as others and desires to help others to follow their lead. These leaders are not immune to falling below the line but they don't stay there for long. They recognise when others are stuck below the line and want to help them get out of the victim cycle. They won't fall for a victim story and drive relentlessly to get to the core of what is going wrong. They dismiss the blame game and denial and uncover and solve the real problems.

Behaviours of an above the line leader:

- Constantly ask yourself what else can I do to achieve results and encourage your team to ask this question also
- Invite others to give you feedback on if they see you acting above the line
- Provide honest yet encouraging feedback when you see others acting below the line
- Actively observe activities and offer coaching rather than waiting for updates
- Don't delay reporting progress to your superiors
- Focus discussions on what you can control rather than on what you can't control
- Recognise when you fall below the line and avoid acting defensively when you get feedback from others.

Key Point:

Helping people to stay above the line involves helping them to see it, own it, solve it and do it despite the challenges they face that are beyond their control.



Coaching skills of above the line leaders:

- **Listen** remain alerts for signs of victim behaviour and listen sympathetically
- Acknowledge accept the victim facts and genuine obstacles
- **Ask** edge the discussion towards the accountable version what else can you do?
- **Coach** use the steps to accountability to identify where they stand and where they need to go. Explain the 4 steps to accountability and explain it is natural to fall below the line but that it never yields results
- **Commit** dedicate yourself to helping them create an action plan and set a time to follow up with thems

Accounting for progress

It is necessary for leaders to review the performance of individuals after the work in order for people to measure progress towards results, learn from their experience, instil a sense of accomplishment and determine what else could have been done.

Too many leaders fail to hold team members accountable, instead they:

- Adopt a wait and see approach and hope people do the right thing
- Avoid having the tough conversations about performance, assuming that this would damage the relationship
- Allow troublesome issues to stay locked away
- Tolerate excuses as true representations of reality in the hope the problem will fix itself
- Allow other responsibilities to consume their time and not make time for accounting for others
- Fail to convince people of the value in reporting for progress their low priority becomes their peoples low priority
- Insufficiently clarify expectation or inadequately explain progress of accounting
- Do not set a specific reporting time table or schedule
- Fail to coach individuals towards desired outcomes
- Do not understand that holding people accountable does not need to be an unpleasant experience.



LESSON:

Above the line leaders recognise that the above behaviours do not help them to reach their goals and take the action required to hold their team accountable.

Activity: Leading others to accountability
Consider what tasks are ongoing that you are failing to follow up on with others?
How regularly are you coaching your team?
Do you let others get away with blaming and victim stories as excuses?
Use the steps to coaching to have more positive interactions with your team/colleagues. How did the conversation go?



THE EMERALD CITY AND BEYOND: GETTING YOUR ENTIRE ORGANISATION ABOVE THE LINE

You can create and sustain a culture of accountability throughout your entire organisation by following these five steps:

1. Training everyone at every level



Everyone needs to understand what accountability means and know the positive relationship between accountability and results. Your training of everyone should include:

- Help people recognise below the line viewpoints
- Assist them in transitioning to a new view of accountability
- Work to lock in the new above the line perspectives

2. Coaching accountability



No organisation can consistently operate above the line without consistent feedback. Employees need to agree to provide honest, respectful and timely feedback to help everyone recognise when they fall below the line and help them to get above the line. Ask in a supportive and encouraging way - what else could you/we have done to achieve results?



accountability comes from role modelling and reinforcement from senior leadership

3. Asking above the line questions



Anyone trying to stay above the line can ask these questions:

What aspects of this situation will most likely pull us below the line in the future?	What aspects of this situation will most likely pull us below the line in the future?	What can we control and what can't we control?
Have we fallen below the line?	What are we pretending not to know about our accountability?	Which areas of joint accountability may allow us to drop the ball?
Which areas of joint accountability may allow us to drop the ball?	Does anyone involved fail to own the decisions we have made?	Who is accountable for achieving results and in what timeframe?

What have we learnt from our recent experience that we can apply as we move forward?



4. Rewarding accountability



The culture of the organisation needs to recognise and reward above the line behaviours. If below the line behaviours are tolerated these behaviours will spread. Align the performance management and promotion procedures with rewards for above the line behaviours. Recognise day to day behaviours of people who step up and take accountability. The leaders need to role model the way and highlight positive examples of living above the line.

5. Holding people accountable



Accountability should not mean that you overload people with projects to the point to which they cannot manage the workload. Often organisations end up in an unspoken contract where managers add project after project but don't follow through on holding the individual accountable for outcomes – because they know the workload is unattainable! In accountable organisations reporting on progress is critical, this accelerates and improves performance. Follow these steps to hold people accountable without punishing them:

- 1. Clearly define the desired result
- 2. Determine a mutually agreeable time for a progress report
- 3. Deliver praise or coach them to do better

Lesson: Building an organisation that stays above the line is a continuous process that requires culture change and ongoing monitoring and action

LESSON:

Building an organisation that stays above the line is a continuous process that requires culture change and ongoing monitoring and action

Activity:

Raising your whole organisation up

Of the steps above which can you influence in your organisation?

What steps can you start right now to build a culture of accountability?

Who can you get on board to support you?



SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW:APPLYING OZ PRINCIPLES TO THE TOUGHEST ISSUES IN BUSINESS TODAY

Here are the top 10 most threatening unresolved organisational issues according to the authors. These issues are stifling organisations in their quest to become more competitive, more profitable and more successful. What is the link between these challenges and accountability?

Key Point:

All of these key organisational issues can in part be tackled by an increased focus on accountability



Poor Communication – people complain of poor communication between team members, managers and employees, departments. This problem is pandemic. Accountability places more importance on communication – you need to know in real time what is working and what isn't. Communication is critical for accountability and accountability is critical for open communication. Instead of making excuses for a lack of communication and complaining about it apply the accountability steps to do something about it.



Empowerment – Is empowerment something that is given by management or claimed by employees? Empowered to get results and accountable for results are two sides of the same coin. Managers should empower their team yes, but also individuals should realise that they must empower themselves. Empowerment can come by seeing it, owning it, solving it and doing it.



People Development – people tend to blame their lack of advancement on the organisation for not providing the support, tools and training they need to develop. They wait and hope to be acknowledged and nurtured. Those that take steps to act above the line and play a role in their own development will see the benefits. They make it known they want to advance, take steps to improve their skills, seek feedback and look for mentors and coaches. Those who chose to stay victimised and not take action will seldom advance.



Misalignment – Organisations need a clear focus and strategy, often people within the organisation hold different views of that vision and how to execute it. To ignore the issues of misalignment is to act below the line. If you see it, say it. Accept your own role in perpetuating misalignment and take what steps you can to ensure you are in line with the company's focus.





Entitlement – Over time people can become accustomed to the organisations events, celebrations, special treatment, rewards and bonuses. They become to expect it and it is no longer a reward but an expectation. Demand for better bottom line results mean that many organisation must rethink their reward programmes. When they do people can quickly slip below the line and forget that benefits should be linked to performance. To be accountable means acknowledging that nothing is guaranteed and you must work for the privileges that come with excellent performance.



Poor Performance – By failing to confront poor performance organisations foster feelings of victimisation amongst people who perform poorly but don't know it and therefore cant improve. Poor performers, if not confronted will get worse and feel betrayed when feedback comes too late. Management must learn to confront performance issues in a direct, considered and timely manner.



Cross-Functional Strife – Sales v
Operations, Finance v Procurement, HR v
Management. Your organisations enemy
is not the other person or department,
the enemy is the cross functional strife
itself. You must step outside your
functional silo and reach across the lines
to focus on mutual results. Take
accountability to get to know people and
understand their perspective. This is
something that anyone at any level can
do, instead of playing the blame game.



Work and Personal life Imbalance –

Most high achievers struggle with the balance between work and home life. Work-life balance is an issue for the person themselves. Partners, colleagues and bosses cannot solve this problem. Use the four steps to accountability to gain understanding of the problem and decide what steps you need to take. Recognise how you are contributing to the problem and find the courage to take the action required to attain more balance. Managers must also build a culture where finding balance is encouraged.



Senior Management Development

– Senior managers are often unable to get honest feedback from their team members. Both employees and senior management must accept that feedback creates accountability. Managers assume accountability for getting feedback by making it known that they want it and value it. Employees must take the risk to give helpful feedback to their superiors.



Programitus – This is the endemic of new management fads that come around - core competencies, business reorganisations, business reengineering, total quality management, zero based budgeting, just in time production, learning organisations and so on. Consultants push the latest fad, pushing changes that fail to live up to their expectations. These management philosophies can produce results but too many organisations look for the latest saving tool when results will only come from building a culture of accountability to results. Almost anything will work once you get above the line.



LESSON:

The power lies within each employee to overcome some of the organisations most difficult challenges.

Activity: Identify and overcome challenges
Which of the above challenges do you recognise in your organisation?
What can you do for yourself to not fall victim to these challenges?
How can you encourage others to take more accountability?



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