

Filling in the blanks in the leadership contract

Vince Molinaro, author of *The Leadership Contract*, confirmed what we see all around us: Leadership is broken and we're not able to fix it. To deal with this, Molinaro is proposing his "leadership contract:" Adopting four tenets to create the accountable leader.

The contract is a fine idea — though not so common sense, actually — but the "what and how" of it was lacking in Molinaro's brief presentation. Importantly, he missed the opportunity to discuss holding leaders accountable to be effective leaders of people.

Accountability (and the application of positive and negative consequences) is ultimately the mechanism for making any behaviour stick in an organization. Subsequently, there already is a leadership contract and it's called "role clarity:" The accountabilities and authorities a role must have to achieve that role's portion of strategy. So, let's add some meat to Molinaro's bones:

Leadership is a decision

"Today's leaders must make the de-



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liberate decision to lead." Great, but what does it mean to lead? In my experience, there are four principles to which all leaders must abide:

- Managerial accountability: All leaders are held accountable by their leader for the output of their direct reports. If an employee fails, it is her leader who is held to account.
- Judgment and discretion: All leaders must make decisions, even the hard ones. A leader is expected to put his neck on the line.
- Dialogue: All leaders must lead

their team in dialogue, being willing and able to elicit advice and feedback from their directs while providing the same through coaching.

- Trust: All leaders must create environments of trust by being rational, consistent and fair.

Leadership is an obligation

"Leaders must step up to their accountabilities as a leader." Agreed, but what are those accountabilities? All leaders are accountable to their leader for the following:

- The outputs and working behaviours of their direct reports.
- Leading their team to the accomplishment of team goals.
- Building an increasingly capable team.
- Practising continuous improvement regarding products, policies, processes and procedures.
- Having commensurate authorities to fulfil these accountabilities.

Leadership is hard work

"Leaders must resolve to tackle items they may normally avoid." Absolutely — and how do you make

that happen? See the principles above but also consider role clarity. If an organization has done the heavy lifting of determining exactly who is accountable for what, and with what authority is to be used in which situations, then "hard work" is less about moral obligation, courage and difficult conversations, and more about accountability, the work and dialogue.

Leadership is a community

"Today's best leaders actively participate in leadership communities." Sounds good but the priority should be ensuring every employee turns first to her manager for coaching on how to be a better leader. Support groups of peers are always a good idea, but if every leader of people is actually being held to account to be a good leader, then there will be a cascade of leadership ability.

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