

Cultivating Accountability by Eliciting Upward Feedback

Participant Questions

Throughout our 60-minute presentation, we'll invite you to reflect by responding to questions via this Etherpad (<http://tiny.cc/cultivatingaccountability>).

- Your responses are anonymous unless you choose to identify yourself.
- After today's session, along with our slides, we'll make this document (lightly edited for readability) available on the CALM website (<https://www.conferenceonacademiclibrarymanagement.com>).

Reflection Question 1. We must make explicit both *to whom* and *for what* we owe accountability. If managers are accountable to their direct reports (among other stakeholders), what are managers accountable to their direct reports for?

goalsetting and feedback, communication down and across the organization, putting the right opportunities in front of the staff member, getting them recognition, advocacy

interpretation of strategic goals; guidance for setting strategic goals/priorities; mentoring/coaching; managing personnel issues that impact entire team +1 supporting direct reports when they want to pursue new professional opportunities — when someone wants to move on from the organization

Honesty, clarity. Showing the respect of giving truthful constructive feedback +1

Recognition. Positive feedback needs to be 5–7 times more than constructive feedback +1

Good stewardship of resources, being honest about decisions, including them in decision making that affects them, doing what they [managers] say they are going to do.

Doing the things you say you're going to do...following through with transparency.

Not dumping your managerial work on your employees; holding yourself responsible for those things while delegating other tasks mindfully

Challenging yourself to grow in your role and making that growth/effort visible (walking the walk)

Being prepared

Clear is kind (callback to earlier sessions)

Accountable for listening to their concerns and ideas — active listening

Removing barriers for direct reports.

Clear expectations +100 to this! Clear is kind! +1 +1

Explaining when they can't follow through on something intended (unexpected HR rule may intervene, for example)

Helping navigate office/organizational politics — having their back

Be clear that you're nervous and are truly seeking to grow. Not just to do this because you have to. Your intentions are genuine and authentic.

Mentorship +1

Advocacy up +1 +1 +1

Information sharing +1 +1

Equity +1

Transparency +1 +1 +100!

And expecting upward transparency as well — it should go both ways

Challenging them — get them past lack of confidence to see what they might be capable of (and letting them learn through situations that may not go perfectly) (perfection is overrated in our profession)

Amplification

Feedback +1

Advocacy, trust, support, honesty, clear expectations, timely constructive feedback, helping them shape work that is tied to mission and strategic plans, fostering and maintaining collegiality and good relations

Their managers. Up the chain.

Removing blockers

Transparency, sharing information from higher up the chain

Clear guidance on what is expected of them and help prioritizing their work. As well as basic human respect and courtesy. +1

Coaching and mentoring

Clear expectations

Maintaining equity — access, practices, etc. for all direct reports which may require engaging conflict directly

Engaging direct reports for input in decision-making, particularly for those decisions that directly impact workers

Creating a trusting relationship in which direct reports can provide feedback

Communicating information from library administrators they may not meet with or talk to regularly communicating clearly and succinctly

Honesty and transparency+1

Listening to understand

Understanding that not all ways of doing a performance evaluation for one person might not work for another

Helping create a personal professional development pathway and how their work informs not only the library's strategic actions but the institutions too

Transparency, professional mentoring and development, honest feedback, communication/conduit, fair and ethical treatment, accessibility (to be available to them), modeling expected behaviors, allowing them to bring themselves to the workplace +1

Clearing barriers, sharing information, providing supports and resources, clarifying goals and priorities, creating space for discussion, ensuring a culture of respect, safety, and growth

Being authentically apologetic when the feedback is to correct behavior that marginalizes staff

Support, advocacy, encouragement — 100%!! Support and advocacy lead to encouragement

Transparency, help, structure, sounding board, direction

Encouragement

Transparency, clarity about what's going on, opportunities for professional development

Trust

Honesty, empathy

Honesty, transparency, being real, questioning policies, creating space for new ideas, removing barriers

Supporting them and removing barriers in accomplishing their goals +1

Creating or facilitating a positive and productive work environment

Cultivating care and humanizing the work that is done

Making their labor more visible

Removing barriers, so they can do their best work +1

Advocacy and credit for their work

Representing both their accomplishments and concerns to those higher up in power ++ yes!

Clear feedback and direction, advocacy, cheerleading their successes, removing barriers

When you are not able to remove barriers to their work, clearly explaining why you are not able and what you will do about that.

Mentorship

ADVOCACY

Providing a respectful work environment where individuals are held accountable

Advocating for appropriate wages, a safe work environment, and opportunities for growth and enrichment

Trust, safety, advocacy

Information sharing — up and down; making decision making transparent; trying to demystify university decision-making

Bringing staff accomplishments to admin notice and providing feedback on their work; acknowledging the role they play on our interdependent team and in the success of students and the university

Supporting growth and development +1

Sharing information

Transparency, communication (both ways), understanding

Honesty, advocacy, mentorship, providing a non-toxic work environment, mutual respect, not hiding vulnerability or other “faults,” being a snowplow for their growth (clearing the way)

Fairness and transparency in evaluations, resource distribution (\$\$, space, personnel), and other administrative functions.

Advocating for them, supporting their goals, providing a space to encourage them to be creative, innovative, and willing to try new things.

Advocating for their direct reports, helping sort out issues, helping direct reports navigate the library/university. Assist with any issues that come up that affect work and the direct reports' ability to work. Support direct reports in any meetings with administration and change in work duties. Assist in writing goals such as giving feedback. Answering questions that direct reports have. Protecting direct reports from toxicity from above.

Providing a safe and positive working environment

Creating a fair workplace

Clarifying institutional priorities, circumstances, complexity

Following through on promises

Providing honest, actionable, feedback

Encouraging their staff to do the best they possibly can, and encouraging them to grow in their position and potentially beyond it as well

Expectations of what the manager will do. What are their responsibilities? It helps to delineate responsibilities so that it is clear when the manager is overstepping/micromanaging direct reports and their work

Championing their work; ensuring they receive proper recognition, remuneration, advancement.

Connectors, facilitators between upper management and direct reports

advocacy

Providing direct reports with clear expectations re: responsibilities at work, but also the information and tools they need to do what is expected of them. Provide direct reports with a work environment that has clear two-way communication channels. +1!

Communication of organizational values, vision, administrative decisions, etc.

Communicating the work of their team upwards and outwards.

Creating a safe and inclusive workspace, and be empathetic of team's personal lives and circumstances

To support their endeavors and to listen to their feedback and get their input. Listening is very important.

Accountability for doing the things I say I will do

not making things run through me unnecessarily (micro-managing)

leave my own poop out of it

support their goals and objectives as much as is possible

Meaningful work [+1 provide them with the reasons why they are doing certain tasks and how it contributes to the mission] [+1 not creating busy work or extra work for direct reports just because it makes my life easier]

Communicating concerns upwards and following up with team. Sharing information in a timely manner. Providing support/tools to assist team.

supportive and safe workplace

mentorship

clarity

communication

equity and advocacy

Information sharing

(1) A productive, safe, and best-self conducive environment, (2) communication that enables work to be done with as few hurdles as is viable, (3) opportunities to grow and learn and to make a meaningful impact

Support — for development, to other management

clear and equitable expectations; transparent communication; admissions of when you don't know but will find out

Follow through, professional and compassionate conduct, support/advocacy, setting policies and strategic objectives (with input from all)

information, creating a respectful work environment, modeling respect and boundaries, engagement and listening

Clear communication

fair and equitable treatment of all

support — on so many levels

safety of employees as much as possible

Support and advocacy

Being someone staff can vent to in a safe space

Fairness, advocacy (for them / on their behalf), leadership, kindness, caring; communicating expectations; fair evaluation of performance

Persistent

Feedback, positive criticism, support in their job/career growth.

Reflection Question 2. What are some necessary conditions for direct reports to feel safe enough to be candid when offering feedback to their managers? How can managers create these conditions?

clarity about next steps following the review — what will the manager do with the information/feedback shared

They have to be comfortable talking to you, and that might take a while. You have to allow yourself to be vulnerable and admit to your faults/mistakes, so they know you are serious about listening to them. Listen to what they're saying & not saying and actually do something about their feedback. +1

Be non-judgmental, a good listener. Managers can be trustworthy by not talking about others.

Provide clarity that the feedback they provide will not ever be used against them, and that it's really being used for self-improvement. Be vulnerable with them when appropriate and share your thinking and decision-making processes.

True anonymity +1

Managers need to model vulnerability (i.e., read some Brene Brown LOL) which creates a safe space for the direct reports to enter into that space with their managers +1 +1 +1 +2

Listen completely, don't interject, don't be reactionary. If you need time to respond, be honest and say you need to process what they've told you and be able to think more on it. Create an environment of trust, constant communication is key for this — and it's a two-way street, be open and honest with them too.

Routinely and regularly requesting feedback, thanking people, and acting on the feedback, then looping back to them to see if the changes you made are making a difference — modeling accountability! +1 +1

Maybe not doing it during a performance review and making it an annual expected thing YES! make communication regular, not once a year at a high stakes event +1

Managers need to be able to admit that they're wrong when taking feedback otherwise staff won't feel comfortable offering feedback — they won't believe it will be taken into account

Trust is essential — takes time to cultivate. Direct reports must know that they can speak freely and critically without the manager getting defensive. +1 +1 +2

Agree, trust is key. I suspect that the first time around, direct reports might NOT be fully forthcoming until they go through the process and see that they will not suffer consequences for being truthful and their feedback will be taken seriously and acted upon. +1 +2

Anonymity +1

+1 to the above about the “first time around,” iteration may be necessary!

Modeled behavior that fosters a sense of security, trust, and safety in vulnerability +1

Ask them what they need to feel safe. It may vary, in ways that are unexpected.

Setting clear expectations. Consistency. Clear communication. Sharing information (information equals power).

Listen. Listen. Listen. Reflect, then respond.

Constantly model how to listen and respond to feedback

Definitely trust — I expect this is a process that will take time depending on the team

Setting clear expectations and purpose...this is something the manager is initiating and truly wants to hear in order to develop and better support their team

Be authentic when asking. If you genuinely want the input, it will show and be felt.

Give them space. Give them time. Give them benefit of the doubt in whatever they will share.

Ask for clarity when something is shared that you don't understand (or unintentionally misinterpret).

Trust (both ways), transparency, clear expectations.

Trust developed over a meaningful amount of time. Doesn't happen quickly. +1

Trust, but I've not seen that done well in many of the contexts I've worked in. I really only feel like I've worked 1 (maybe 2...or 1.5) places that were actually functional in building community, trust, culture, etc.

Trust, ability to construct feedback in a safe space; be clear about what your expectations are for the feedback being sought; allow for anonymity; trust includes taking action on recommendations and making the process of being responsive to feedback transparent.

Trust, authenticity, & transparency. As a manager I would also want to frame the feedback I seek, why I am seeking it, how I will use it and address feedback, etc. I think having an established relationship with direct reports is the most important part, in order to get true feedback your direct reports need to trust that there will not be retaliation.

Trust and a sense that the feedback will be acknowledged and part of ongoing discussion; that it's not a checklist type of thing

So much trust, but not just between the manager and direct report — if done in a group setting, there also has to be trust among direct reports, so that there's no sense of competition/favoritism/backstabbing. +1 +2

Transparency in the process

Walking the walk yourself — discuss your own growth processes, that you're evolving, and be (appropriately) vulnerable.

Don't be defensive

Allow time and space for feedback and discussion

Foster trust and a safer space

A culture of trust is necessary for direct reports to feel safe in offering constructive and meaningful feedback. Also important is the sense that the supervisor will receive and act on the information. Supervisees are taking risk and doing hard work. In an organization or department where information is gathered but never acted upon, why should individuals do this work and take this risk?

Ground yourself during interactions. Model mature responses to feedback, both positive and negative. THANK them for the feedback! I have my direct reports fill out monthly reports and at the end there's space for them to note successes and challenges. The challenges space is where they can tell me where I can provide support/help.

Honoring what experiences and feedback is being shared with you (and reflecting it back), rather than getting defensive or taking it personally

Trust and knowing there won't be any blowback or retaliation. Belief that the manager will reflect and consider the feedback, and work to make those changes. Managers should be building "good faith capital" in all their doings with their staff and others in the library and institution.

You have to be authentic and vulnerable first. You also need to put your trust in people first and say that you trust them and then demonstrate that you trust them. Say what you are going to do and then do what you say you are going to. Showing that your words are also your actions are important for developing trust.

For me, the folks who report to me have experienced that I show my feelings. No poker face at all! I can show my self-awareness of that and respectfully ask folks to give me the feedback and promise to work on not personalizing it. We could bring this into the design of the process so that we could be considering written and verbal...anonymous and identified...etc.

Be clear and continue to explicitly state that you are open to the feedback. Do not try to dissuade the comments when they come; listen first, then reflect. Do not be hurt by what is said but rather see it as an honest opportunity for self-growth.

Confidence that the feedback will be listened to and acted upon

The impression that the supervisor is not just looking for positive feedback

Soliciting feedback directly from reports, and continuing to have that be an evolving conversation

Demonstrating that you're able to accept feedback & criticism in other contexts as well

Be authentic about your intentions, words, and actions

Free from retaliation for truthful feedback that may be negative. You asked for the feedback. Take it. Reflect on and use it to be a better person in working relationships.

Authenticity from the beginning. Anonymity if they prefer.

Respond to feedback in a positive and constructive way; no retaliation for negative comments

A realization that this is probably a new process for everyone involved, so it will take time to develop and will change and improve each year.

Authenticity — not patronizing

Create a framework. Make sure they know what to expect. There should be agreement on the goal of the exercise.

Reflection Question 3. How do we operationalize accountability to direct reports? How do we design trustworthy processes, independent of the individuals occupying management roles?

Trust and being willing to put aside whatever you're doing to listen (one must earn trust and respect)

Be willing to listen to criticism and ask open and honest questions

Be willing to ask for help

not be defensive; show appreciation for feedback whenever you get it; don't challenge or question it

Normalize giving and receiving feedback in a collegial manner

Patience and understanding that it isn't easy for staff to express themselves

Make reviews of managers annual. Create a process for managers to follow up on the results of the review and progress on results of the review at regular points throughout the year. Try to make the review as anonymous as possible by employing the help of HR or other staff to facilitate the process.

Carefully, thoughtfully

Iterative processes that are clear and fair

This is so difficult — operationalizing and designing accountability is what I struggle with the most. It's not just about modeling behavior, but also making things part and parcel of the team's structures, workflows, and set of values/strategic goals. I want to find ways to make this actionable.

Communication: making sure communication with staff is effective and being responsible for making sure communication is consistent

I think also that managers should be accountable for workload to their staff and that when a staff member can't get something done that part of it may be the workload currently happening

advocacy and navigating power dynamics between "higher ups"

Create an environment where it is safe for direct reports to let managers know if their needs aren't being met or if manager "stumbles" in some way

academic freedom, tenure, permanence, job stability

It might need to be done repeatedly to build trust. If people see there's improvement and no repercussions, they will engage more going forward.

consistency in the process LEADING to the feedback process