THE COMPLETE LEADER

COACHING GUIDE

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The willingness and ability to take personal responsibility for processes, decisions, actions, and results created by you.



LEADERS LEAD THEMSELVES

One of the 25 leadership competencies

SECTION 01

WHY PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS

Personal Accountability is one of the 25 core competencies that define a complete leader. As you grow this capability, you'll notice real shifts in how you lead yourself and influence others.

This guide is built for a 90-day journey. You'll explore the foundations, assess where you stand today, practice new behaviors, sidestep common traps, and track your progress, at your own pace or alongside a coach.

WHAT STRONG PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY LOOKS LIKE

- You perform well even when expectations aren’t clear and resources are scarce
- People trust you because you own outcomes instead of managing your image
- You convert past failures into future successes rather than repeating them

> **REFLECT**
>
> *Why does Personal Accountability matter to you personally? How might developing it change your effectiveness as a leader?*

SECTION 02

FOUNDATIONS OF PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

THE DEFINITION

The willingness and ability to take personal responsibility for processes, decisions, actions, and results created by you.

Like any skill worth mastering, Personal Accountability rests on a few core building blocks. Understanding them gives you a vocabulary for your own growth.

THE CORE ELEMENTS

1 **Internal responsibility**

An internal willingness to own up, visible in your actions. Rather than making excuses for a bad decision, you work to identify its causes, focused on correcting the problem, not protecting yourself.

2 **Courage and integrity**

Sometimes you must take unpopular action to serve the organization, or admit a serious mistake on an important project. Handling the resulting feedback with grace takes real courage.

3 **Commitment to excellence**

Being true to your word and honoring commitments even when you don’t want to. Successful people consciously do the things others don’t like doing, and practice until they’re good at them.

REFLECT

Which element feels most familiar? Which one feels like a stretch right now?

SECTION 03

YOUR STARTING POINT

Before you move forward, take an honest look at where you are today. Read each statement and mark how often it's true of your leadership.

I do not make excuses or blame others when I fail to deliver on a commitment.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I take responsibility to know and negotiate the expectations others have towards me, and ask for specific feedback.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I accept responsibility for my emotions, behaviors, and results.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I learn from my mistakes and failures to help me improve performance with future assignments.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I say no to work I cannot deliver, rather than accepting it and missing the commitment.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I raise problems I am responsible for before someone else discovers them.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

REFLECT

Looking at your answers, where is your greatest opportunity for growth? What patterns do you notice?

SECTION 04

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN PRACTICE

Competencies grow through deliberate practice. Work through the activities below in order, or choose the ones most relevant to your context.

ACTIVITY 01 45 min

Goal Setting

Accountability starts with goals specific enough that you can tell whether you hit them.

TRY IT

1. List your top professional and personal goals.
2. For each, define exactly what success looks like: what event or result proves it.
3. Give each a reasonable deadline, from days out to a year away.

ACTIVITY 02 20 min

Practice Makes Perfect

Honoring your word is a trackable habit, not a personality trait. Track your commitments across two weeks.

TRY IT

1. Keep a notepad with you for two weeks.
2. Write down every promise you make and when you promised it.
3. Review the list regularly to make sure you're addressing what you promised.

ACTIVITY 03 30 min

Support Someone Else

Standing up for others is part of accountability, and people you support are more likely to support you.

TRY IT

1. Think of someone at work who needs your support right now.
2. Write down the issue they're struggling with.
3. Define several specific actions you can take to support their efforts, and take one.

ACTIVITY 04 40 min

Self-Reporting

Looking honestly at both your best and worst moments builds real self-knowledge.

TRY IT

1. List three times you displayed personal accountability: the situation, repercussions, and how you felt.
2. List three times you didn't, and why you should have.
3. Rate each on difficulty of accepting responsibility (1–10), and note what made the difference.

ACTIVITY 05 30 min

Learn From the Mistake

When you make a mistake, admit it, then make sure it teaches you something.

TRY IT

1. Name a recent mistake and what you did to remedy it.
2. Analyze what you could have handled better.

3. Write one specific change you'll implement in your daily work as a result.

ACTIVITY 06 20 min

Practice Saying No

Over-committing is an accountability failure in advance.

TRY IT

1. Review your current commitments and identify where you're genuinely over capacity.
2. When you truly can't take another task, say no.
3. If a new goal is required anyway, make sure your manager understands how it affects earlier directives.

SECTION 05

COMMON PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY TRAPS

As you practice, watch for these common pitfalls. Naming them now makes them easier to catch in the moment.

01 **Protecting the self-image**

Placing blame anywhere but on yourself protects a fragile self-image at the cost of the result. Focus on correcting the problem instead.

02 **Apologizing without analyzing**

Admitting the mistake is step one. Without analyzing what you'd do differently, you've bought the cost and skipped the lesson.

03 **Saying yes to everything**

Accepting work you can't deliver isn't accountability. It guarantees a broken commitment later.

04 **Looking the other way**

Declining to stand up for a colleague, or staying quiet about something unethical, is a failure of accountability even when nothing is your fault.

REFLECT

Which trap feels most familiar? How will you stay aware of it as you practice?

SECTION 06

YOUR 90-DAY PRACTICE

Lasting change comes from a few focused habits, practiced consistently and tracked honestly. Build your plan below, on your own or with your coach.

CHOOSE YOUR THREE HABITS

Based on everything above, which three habits will make the biggest difference in growing your Personal Accountability over the next 90 days?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

BUILD IN WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

Write questions you can answer each week to measure progress and surface obstacles. The best ones are answered with “yes,” “no,” or a number.

Q1 _____

Q2 _____

Q3 _____

Accountability partner: who will you share these with?

_____

Completion date: when will you evaluate & celebrate?

_____

Measurements of success

How will you celebrate?

SECTION 07

GO DEEPER

Keep building your Personal Accountability with these resources. Explore them, then capture what stands out to you.

BOOK	**The Complete Leader, Ch. 2.2: Personal Accountability**	The full framework and examples behind personal accountability.
PODCAST	**The Complete Leader Podcast**	Episodes 62, 109, 127, 138, 145 & 146 explore accountability.
ONLINE	**Personal Accountability competency library**	Videos, articles, and podcasts at TheCompleteLeader.org.

> **CAPTURE YOUR INSIGHTS**
>
> *As you work through these resources, which ideas most apply to your own growth in Personal Accountability?*

KEEP GOING

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Developing Personal Accountability is an investment in yourself and everyone you lead. Return to this guide often: revisit the activities, reread the traps, and celebrate small wins along the way.

Every complete leader started exactly where you are now.