

# **The Oz Principle: Unlocking the Path to Accountability and High-Performance Teams - An Interactive Journey**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Calling those who want to improve results through individual and organizational accountability! Get ready for an interactive and transformative journey through The Oz Principle by Roger Connors, Tom Smith, and Craig Hickman. Join me as we break free from conventional presentations and dive into an engaging experience that brings the concepts of accountability and high-performance teams to life. We will explore how the Oz Principle can revolutionize yours and your teams accountability, through the See It, Own It, Solve It and Do It method. This interactive presentation is your opportunity to gain practical insights and leave with actionable strategies to elevate your people management skills. I will also share some real life examples of how this has been used within PPD, to inspire our staff to greater ownership. Get ready to click your heels and unlock the power of The Oz Principle!

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper was based on the book "The Oz Principle", Getting Results Through Individual and Organizational Accountability. The book was written by Roger Connors, Tom Smith and Craig Hickman. It is based on the story of the Wizard of Oz and uses principles to drive an accountable culture within organisations. This method was used within my department at PPD, to encourage accountability and empower our teams in their decision making.

## **THE OZ PRINCIPLE**

To summarise the Oz Principle, the use of the story of The Wizard of Oz demonstrates what happens when we take accountability – the difference between above the line thinking and below the line thinking. Examples of below the line thinking may include making excuses, blaming others or an attitude of helplessness. This can be an easy behaviour to fall into as it requires little effort, absolves the individual of any power they have in the situation and excuses a lack of action. Above the line thinking happens when an individual takes accountability. They will gain a sense of reality, which will include feedback from others to see the true picture. The individual can then look at how they can change the situation or steps to resolve a problem and then take action to put those plans into place.

## **DEFINING ACCOUNTABILITY**

The book defines accountability as "A personal choice to rise above one's circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results – to See It, Own It, Solve It, and Do It." Being open to understand there is a problem and own the part you play in the problem and important steps. This will then allow you to consider options in resolving the problem before implementing your solution. This can be an iterative cycle, refining what you can control or influence and evaluating how successful the solutions are.

## **CLIMBING THE STEPS TO ACCOUNTABILITY**

There are many steps along the journey to accountability, and these may not always lead in a forward direction. Continually assess whether the victim mentality is creeping in a little and take steps to be true with yourself in implementing this. When a situation feels as though there is little control individually, accept the situation and what is possible to be controlled. Success won't be the end goal as there is always something else that could be done, to achieve greater results.

## **PROFESSIONAL APPLICATION**

The concepts of the Oz Principle were shared by a team member within the organization at a meeting of senior staff within the department. Recognising the value of this training, it was rolled out at a department wide Townhall meeting. The Mentimeter approach was used, and engagement was high.

Most people had a good understanding of what accountability was, using words such as responsibility, integrity, commitment, leadership and trust among others. When asked to identify any of the 6 below the line traits, only 9% of 200 attendees said they couldn't identify any behaviours. This showed we already had a good awareness of the behaviours and the ability to recognize them within ourselves. The final question asked what individuals felt they could do to take accountability. The results were encouraging, with 129 responses. Some examples of responses were be proactive, engage, be more self aware, reflect, communication and empower others.

The real magic happened within teams and reported conversations within 1-1 meetings with line managers. Managers felt they had a really useful tool they could use with staff to discuss their behaviours. Feedback that had been difficult to accept, was seen in a new context. Individuals who had felt powerless or unable to influence a situation, now had a new impetus to understand what they could control and to accept the parts they had no control over. Individuals who had complained about situations with a tendency to victim blame, now understood their own part in the situation, and felt empowered to do something about it. Often this could involve them stepping outside their role to support others, sharing their knowledge or skill so others were able to flourish in role.

## **PERSONAL APPLICATION**

This paper and presentation is a result of my own personal journey to accountability. For years, I had been involved in the running of PHUSE conference streams and in 2022 joined the PHUSE board. All this time, I had a nagging thought. How could I support individuals, oversee and judge papers and presentations, when I had not even done this myself. I used a lot of avoidance thoughts: I don't have time, I don't have an idea worthy of presenting, what if my peers didn't find my presentation inspiring or even interesting!

When I was introduced to The Oz Principle, it set in place a series of actions. First I had to See the issues: could I deliver a presentation that my peers would attend. I asked for feedback on my presentation style, from those who attended my meetings. I also examined what my interests were – surely if I found a topic I was passionate about, then perhaps others would be interested. I began to canvas opinion on the topic, leaning in to my network of stream chairs, and received positive feedback.

I also had to Own my time management – I work a full time job, with family commitments and 2 volunteer roles. How would I fit in time? The truth is, I was working up to the deadlines, but a belief in what I wanted to share with others kept me engaged.

When writing this paper, I was concerned how I could do this topic justice without giving you all a book review – how could I Solve this and make it personal and relatable. Hence this section!

Finally, to Do it is still a distant concept as the presentation is still a few weeks away. My belief in delivering is supported by the background work, reading, review and continually assessing the outcome will deliver the results I am looking for.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Oz Principle is a useful tool, and gives a nice framework to think about how we can react to situations, own our own behaviours and be successful. Using this as a personal tool has shown me that accountability is not something that is attained, it requires regular introspection to maintain and regular feedback to ensure your “See It” is current and relevant.

As a management tool, it has been very helpful. Some individuals felt inspired immediately, while others felt challenged by the need to move “Above the Line” to achieve their goals. The framework underpinned both situations and gave a useful measure to understand progress. There are many other tools out there which can aid individuals and managers, but the underlying story and simple steps make this an easy to use and powerful methodology.

On reflection, we have not followed up on this to maintain it in the collective consciousness of our department. Rather, we have relied upon people managers to recall the tool and its applications. Some sharing of successes with the tool were shared, which helped managers to understand how others had utilized it.

## **REFERENCES**

The Oz Principle, Roger Connors, Tom Smith and Craig Hickman, first published 1994  
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Frank L Baum, 1899

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Myself and a colleague, Marius Mostert, undertook a management training on Leading with Agility and The Oz principle was presented as part of it. Marius saw the potential this method of thinking could unleash, and proceeded to develop training within our department, to share its steps and encourage our staff. I want to acknowledge Marius' development of the original training to the department.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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