

Food for Thought

February 2008

Accountability & Co-Accountability

Food for Thought is our way of sharing interesting concepts on corporate leadership and management with others who might find it useful. The thoughts offered are intended to be controversial and thought provoking. They always follow our motto of helping develop logical leadership.

Your colleague commits to send you an email with some important information you needed by end of day, Tuesday. It's end of day, Tuesday, and you haven't received it. What do you do? Do you give him or her benefit of the doubt and wait till Wednesday morning? Or do you give your colleague a few extra days grace period? Or, do you contact the tardy colleague at 5 pm on Tuesday? What is your obligation?

The inspiration for this Food for Thought came when a conscientious bystander in Germany took it upon herself to reprimand a jaywalker. It occurred to us that when the environment takes responsibility to enforce the rules people accept more accountability to follow the rules.

Motivated by this observation, we experimented with a concept at one of our clients. The client had a corporate practice whereby latecomers to meetings dropped a dollar in a jar, earmarked for a charitable foundation. But when questioned as to how often the tardy actually followed through with payment, the client sheepishly admitted that people seldom paid. So, we implemented a revised rule obligating the meeting participants to hold the tardy accountable. To underscore this obligation of "co-accountability" the guilty latecomer could call on all other meeting attendees to drop a dollar each in the jar if they had failed to hold the latecomer accountable within a minute of entry. Lo and behold, latecomers quickly dropped a dollar in the jar before anybody could ask them to pony up.

The moral of these stories is that people will demonstrate a higher level of accountability in organizations where everybody – even a bystander - undertakes an obligation to hold individuals accountable. We call this responsibility co-accountability. To enhance

accountability within organizations, people in the organization must accept the obligation of co-accountability.

We have received many responses to our Food for Thought mailings, asking if you can freely share and forward these thoughts. Indeed you can. All we ask is that a clear attribution to LogiStyle and our contact information are included. For the interested reader, we have archived some of our recent Food for Thought mailings at our website, and can be viewed at [LogiStyle: Food for Thought Archive](#). As always, we welcome your comments. We hope your business is doing well. If we can be of any assistance please feel free to call – even, if just to chat.

Best Regards,

Balaji

Balaji Krishnamurthy

LogiStyle, LLC

P.O. Box 91182

Portland, OR 97291

(503)789-1338

balaji@logistyle.com

www.logistyle.com