

The Working Journey

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A Short Article

“Earning One's Keep” - Authority, Accountability, Work and Responsibility

Elliott Jaques's writing is difficult to understand, he uses a precise, scientific language which is extraordinarily detailed and his ideas evolved. In essence he offers a comprehensive model which is clear, precise and unambiguous for managerial leaders on theory and practices to know, be and do it effectively. It is relevant for any manager from supervisor to global CEO. It is future focused and predictive, unlike best practices, which is based on precedent and therefore backwards looking.

One of the issues I want to touch on briefly is the quagmire around authority, accountability, work and responsibility.

From a Requisite perspective **Authority** is “the power vested in a person by virtue of their role to expend resources; financial, technical and human” This vested power is variable depending on the role type and its accountability.

Accountability means “a situation where an individual can be called to account for his or her actions by another individual or body authorised both to do so and to give recognition or censure to the individual for those actions.” In a role there are routine required tasks and special projects or assignments. A managerial leader cannot hold a person accountable for performance without being clear on their authority to do the work and the nature of that work.

Work is defined as “the “The individual exercise of judgement in making decisions and acting on them within prescribed limits in order to achieve an agreed purpose within a given time frame” The Managerial Leader is responsible for setting the what, by when and with what resources.

Responsibility is often a term used in organisation which is difficult to define clearly and seems to cover both authority and accountability, without being precise about what is explicit and what is implicit. From a Requisite perspective, responsibility “is internal to one self, while a managerial Leader holds his or her team accountable for effectiveness and performance”.

What does accountability mean for effectiveness and performance?

First and foremost it requires role clarity and authority to act effectively. It means “Earning ones keep” which means working at the level of effectiveness required of the role. For those of you who are familiar with Career Path Appreciation or Modified Career Path Appreciation or The Working Journey or any form of potential assessment, this means applied capability, NOT theoretical capability. This means being able to deliver on the tasks in a role for which the incumbent is held accountable with the requisite knowledge, skills and experience.

But it is more than that - in terms of “earning one's keep “...this means “making ambitious commitments and continually expanding them, whenever possible and by striving to accurately support the overall team objective”.

What are the likely consequences for an employee who does “earn his or her keep”?

- personal gratification - “flow”
- recognition and increased pay



- developmental opportunities
- enhanced promotability

As a Managerial Leader you are accountable for setting clear;

Authorities – this is dependent on the role type and the degree of authority required to get the job done - Managers rarely receive training in this important area and as a result can rise to senior levels with out having any clear mental model on how to do it.

Accountabilities for what is required – in other words what work is needed - and building **Trust**; - The foundation of all meaningful relationships is TRUST and trust must be earned – keep your word – be constant and ensure you have *responsible* employees who earn their keep

RO offers a powerful model that has testable and defined definitions and processes for managerial leaders to not only do this aspect of managerial leadership but also far more...

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