

Ep #86: The Unexpected Truth about
Creating a Culture of Accountability
Episode Transcript



LEAD
YOUR
TEAM
*for Female
Entrepreneurs*

with
KRIS PLACHY

The image is a podcast cover with a teal background. On the right side, there is a portrait of a woman with blonde hair, smiling, wearing a white halter-neck top with a geometric pattern. On the left side, there is a white rectangular box containing the text 'LEAD YOUR TEAM' in large, bold, black serif font, followed by 'for Female Entrepreneurs' in a smaller, italicized serif font. Below the portrait, there is a white rectangular box containing the text 'with KRIS PLACHY' in a serif font, with 'with' in italics.

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Hey, I'm Kris Plachy, host of the Lead Your Team podcast. Running a million dollar business is not easy. And whether you're just getting started with building your team, or you've been at this for a while, I'm going to bring you honest, specific, and clear practices you can use right now, today to improve how well you lead your team. Let's go ahead and get started.

Hello everyone. How are you? Welcome. Welcome. I'm so happy that you're here today. How are you? It's October. Uh, it's October. Three more months y'all and 2020s in the rear view mirror and I got big ideas for 2021. But maybe I shouldn't, only because I had really big ideas for 2020. But I'm going to hold out that I'm going to get to go to Hawaii for sure. That's for sure going to happen. Right? Fingers crossed. Oh dear. I hope this finds you well and happy. Did you hire someone since last week? I hope you applied some of what we had talked about in hiring PTSD, and you got back on that horse and started looking for someone amazing to work with.

Today I want to talk to you about accountability. Everybody's favorite topic. Everyone's favorite thing on the planet to talk about and avoid direly. In all seriousness, I want to talk to you about what happens when you do foster and create a culture of accountability in your business. I do know that there are some potential outcomes from you implementing, executing on, and really delivering on the promise of a culture of accountability. And I believe that I am remiss if I do not invest in talking to you about what those are. So you're prepared.

So first of all, what am I talking about? Culture of accountability is really building a team of people who accept ownership for their results. No matter what. So if you own it, you own it all the way till it's done. Now, could there be external factors that affect your ability to deliver? Sure, but you still keep the ball. It's a culture of ownership versus a culture of blame, justification and excuses.

A culture of accountability also then requires a leader who is equally communicative about amazing results and terrible results. So a leader who will say, "What you did here was exceptional. Thank you. I'm so impressed. This is more than I expected. You have completely over-delivered." As well as, "Oh dear. What happened here? This isn't we talked about. This isn't what I expected. Where's the miss? Let's talk it through. I think we just need to start again."

You've got to be willing to do both as a leader in order to really build that ownership, and here's why. If I'm going to ask you to deliver on results and hold you accountable to those results, and then the only thing I do is tell you when you failed, I develop a culture of fear. People will start to dread conversations with me because then they know, the only time they hear from me is when they did it wrong. And that my friends is not healthy.

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The flip side is you only tell people when they're amazing, when they're rock stars. Everybody's happy. Everybody thinks they're awesome. You, on the other hand, are seething because you're not getting what you want from the team, but you don't ever tell them. Because you don't want to make them feel bad. Because you don't want to hurt their feelings. Because you know they'll get upset. So then we have a team who can't take feedback. Who doesn't know how to read redirect, because we have a leader who doesn't do that.

So when you do both, accountability is ability to account for someone's ability. Can you account for someone else's ability? That's all it means. Accountability is not, you suck, and that's the only accountability. Accountability is the whole kit and caboodle. It's, you're amazing and you sucked, and I love you either way. When I am equal in that process, or even slightly higher with the you're amazing side, but consistent with the yeah, I know, that wasn't what I wanted side, I build trust and safety for failure.

You have to have people on your team in a small business who can fail, because they will. And if people get afraid to fail when they work for you, it becomes a deceitful environment to work in. You're not getting the truth. So it's a balance. And I find that we tend to lean on one side or another. We tend to only notice things when they don't go well. Or we tend to overemphasize things that are going well and sweep the stuff that's not going well under the carpet. So you just have to first know that about yourself. Which one are you?

If you tend to just notice things that aren't going well, then you have to really make a concerted effort to remind yourself to acknowledge people for doing a good job. I know that sounds basic, but it is true. I remember a woman actually, we did this whole 360. This was several years ago. And she got some feedback that said she didn't recognize her team enough. And they felt it. They felt unseen and underappreciated.

And so we were talking about, "Well why don't you, once a week, just walk around and thank people. Just say thank you for your work, and connect with them, and just acknowledge them." And she said, "Can we start with once a month, because that's really uncomfortable for me?" And of course, I'm like, "Well, you can do whatever you want, to the extent that you want to change the results you're getting. You might change your behavior more dramatically, but that's up to you." Some people are just really uncomfortable with giving other people positive feedback and praise. It doesn't come naturally.

The opposite is also true. Some people really, really love to give lots of praise, lots of accolades, but they really are uncomfortable with substantive feedback, because to them it's personal. But what I want to continue to remind you as you listen to my podcast, is that feedback is not personal and it really can be delivered in a way that it doesn't feel personal. It can be delivered in a way that it is constructive and useful. But if you're really upset, if you're really annoyed, if

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you're really put out because they made a mistake, it will feel personal to them and to you. And then nobody wins.

So once you get that cleaned up and then you have this system of accountability, and this is again part of what we build this whole process in the How to CEO program. But you have to have all of your team operating system constructed. Everybody needs role clarity. Everybody needs goals. Everybody needs consistent feedback methodologies. And this does not have to be complicated, but we need to have it all in place. Here's what you will find once you're on the other side of this, and you're, "Alright, I got my accountability system in place. We're moving forward." And here is, I think, the snag that women hit, that they don't see coming. And here it is. Are you ready? How much more buildup can I give it? And this is honestly, before I say what it is, this is honestly something that has been a thorn in my side forever, ever since I started being a manager 25 years ago.

Okay, here's the issue. Other leaders do not curate, cultivate cultures of accountability, and they tolerate poor performance, inadequacy, average, substandard, because it's hard to learn how to hold people accountable when things don't go well and to give feedback and, or, even fire people, and so they skip that part. And so the majority of people that you will hire in your lifetime as a leader have been socialized to believe that average results are exceptional.

Now that's a bold statement I just made. And you may or may not agree, but I've got evidence. And so, they show up in your company and you actually mean what you say, and you actually inspect what you expect, and you actually don't indulge and tolerate unmet expectations. And you really do recognize and acknowledge amazing contribution and performance.

They don't know what to do with you. They think you're hard to work for. They think you're demanding. They think you have unrealistic expectations. And if you're not careful, my friend, you will believe that. Because most people's frame of reference, and I've said this before in a podcast, and I mean no disrespect, but most people's frame of reference is olive garden.

It's average, it's frozen. Pre-prepared. Easy to digest and make. Easy to serve fast. Huge, crammed, lots of bodies. Serves its purpose. Did its job. Got it done. It is not exclusive. It is not preeminent. It isn't magic. But you expect that, and you should. There isn't anything wrong with having high expectations and holding people to them as long as you are clear. Where we break down is we don't know how to be clear. We think other people just think like we do. We think other people just know how to be like that. They don't.

And you know what? It's not even their fault. Because again, school sports, look at what we're taught. Average is fine. And look, not everybody needs to be a rock star. I get that. But they come into your space, you have finite resources. Most of my clients have less than 20

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employees. We're not talking about conglomerates. We're not talking about huge corporations that absorb one person's average performance without even noticing it, because for sure, that happens. And I know most of you know that if you've ever dealt with any company that's larger than 150 plus people.

People hide, and people are used to it. So when they come to your business and you're like, "No, no, no, no, no. We're here. We show up, we do this work. We don't hide. We perform. We deliver. And if we don't, we talk about it." They don't know what to do with that. So I do hold this frustration. And that's part of what drives me, because I don't want you or anyone else to contribute to this. Let's all just agree, poor performance, average performance ends with your company.

You're going to bring people in and you're going to show them what it means to be accountable and to take responsibility for their work. And if that's not what they want to do, they don't have to work for you. That's okay. But don't change your expectations to satisfy their low expectations of themselves and of others. I'll take being told my expectations are too high any day, because I am confident, I'm clear in my expectations.

So when you sign up, you know what's happening. I didn't make it up. I didn't change the tune. You just thought you could deliver and then you didn't really like what that meant. That's okay. Glad we cleared it up. So the thing you will find, that I believe is that moment that you didn't expect when you really get that culture of accountability established is, there will be people who will think you are the unreasonable one.

Now the flip of that coin. The people who love to do their work and love to take pride in their work, and do accept accountability and ownership for their work, they will love to work for you. They will never want to leave you, because they will feel seen and appreciated. And they won't have some coworker that doesn't pull their weight, that they have to compensate for. You create that. You create a kingdom that is a privileged to work in. You foster that. And the people who appreciate being in that kind of space will thrive for you. And you will attract more of them.

So over time, this culture of accountability thing handles itself, because then it gets really clear like, "Oh, well, if you work for so-and-so, here's what you should expect." And the people who want that will flock to you. I think there's a lot of people who say they want that, but they do not really want to do the work of it. I do believe that. I think they're, well-intended. They've just never really been held accountable before.

So I'd love to know what you guys... This is when I wish you were all in a room with me and we can just have this conversation, because I'd love to know what your thoughts are. You could

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always share this on your Instagram story or something and tell me what you think. Post about it. Share it on LinkedIn. Email us, hello@krisplachy.com. Post it on Facebook. I would love to know. Just make sure you tag me so I can see it. I think this is a thing. I don't even think, I know it's a thing. I just want to give you the voice around it so that you can understand.

So, are there sometimes female founder clients that I work with who do have high expectations that are unreasonable? Yes. But here's why. They haven't communicated them. They haven't been clear. You can expect whatever you want as long as you're clear about it. If someone says yes to that, they say yes to it. If someone says, "Yes. I will, absolutely." I had a client. She's amazing. She wanted her coffee, every day on her desk before she got to work, in a certain cup. People say yes to that. She was very clear about it. So you don't have to change that. You just be clear.

Allow for a couple of mistakes as they're learning. They'll figure it out. But don't change your high expectations. Don't settle because the majority of the world does. You can build it, but it takes patience and it takes consistency, and it takes a willingness to invest in you. All right. Thanks for tuning in. Talk to you next time. Bye.

One more thing before you go. In a world of digital courses and online content, I like to work with my clients live. Because I know that when you have someone you can work with, ask questions of and meet with, you're so much more likely to get the success that you want. So head on over to howtoCEOlive.com to learn more about our very exciting, very exclusive program just for female entrepreneurs. We'll see you there.