

Accountability to the Collective

Generally, people join groups because they share common interests. The coming together is probably the easiest part of an organization. The challenges of working together in an efficient and united manner emerge when it is clear that work styles differ (or are non-existent!) and when any “ism” begins to invade or destroy the democratic process and/or space.

Accountability here simply means responsible and answerable to others for our ideas and actions. It also means respecting group decisions once they are made. Here are a few suggestions to consider for maximizing group accountability while at the same time, increasing productivity for a group while decreasing conflict and confusion.

Communications

1. Acknowledge people’s correspondence in a timely way whether it’s in person, via internet or phone calls. This helps keep the flow of information moving so that tasks are completed or so that internal issues are resolved.
2. While in discussions, be direct but respectful. Be mindful of the length and focus of your comments.
3. If you have an issue with a person, the process, a tactic, etc. raise it immediately to get it resolved in the most principled manner possible. If necessary, don’t hesitate to ask for a third party if it means a timely resolution. Transparency and honesty are good antidotes for liberalism.

Challenging Isms

1. It is not the sole responsibility of an oppressed group to educate the collective on behaviors that are hurtful and politically incorrect. Everyone should strive to recognize the various manifestations of racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, etc. and check/challenge it when it surfaces.
2. Each person is responsible for his/her own behavior. When errors have been made, it is important to have self-criticism or to be open to constructive criticism from others.
3. It is not enough to have self-criticism or graciously accept constructive criticism as sometimes this becomes a perpetual cycle. One needs to radically and seriously *break* with behaviors that undermine the group’s desire for achieving full democratic participation and transformation.

Carrying Out the Work

1. Any task you take on should be done in a timely and effective way as your assignment is connected to others carrying out their respective tasks. Our collective efforts are what move us to reaching our goals.
2. If you cannot make your deadline, let the anchor/lead person know so that adjustments can be made and the process doesn’t get stalled or shut down.
3. Take initiative and be proactive to prevent avoidable contradictions. Being supportive to each other is always a welcome refuge as we wage the fight against capitalism and its manifestations.

What Should Accountability Look Like in Your Organization?

- ▶ Members follow the guiding principles and other agreed upon organizational processes and protocols.
- ▶ Members are checking and responding to emails in a timely way.
- ▶ Members are in regular touch with their committee(s).
- ▶ Members uplift the vision and mission of the organization at all times.
- ▶ Members take on the responsibility to enhance their growth and development.
- ▶ When members take on roles or short-term assignments, they not only complete them in an exemplary and timely way, they explore better ways to carry out those roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ When members must be absent, they should check in with the facilitator and/or their committee chair to share the status of their assignments, i.e. what's been done, what's incomplete, where support is needed, etc.
- ▶ All members take on the responsibility for building and growing the organization through recruitment, paying dues and outreach.