

Alignment or compliyment?

Coaching questions to tell the difference

Here's a concept from our workshop on Positive Accountability, designed for managers to hold their teams more accountable. The focus of the workshop is on helping managers to re-evaluate their approach to accountability and to build skills to manage the whole process (from setting goals to dealing with lapses in accountability). One of those skills is in using a coaching approach to make sure you have genuine alignment before the work starts (and not compliyment - which is where the person appears to be saying yes and you find out later, when the proverbial fan has been hit, that they never really believed in the goal).

In our experience, it's important to check for four large areas

- Motivation
- Ability
- Consequences
- Support

Motivation: this is probing into how the person feels about taking on the task. "Will you do this?" "Are you excited?" aren't great questions but a question like "what value do you see in doing this?" asked by a curious, interested manager can reveal a lot. It allows you to talk about issues instead of blithely ignoring them till too late.

Ability: this is understanding how the person feels about their ability to take on a task. Stretch goals are great but can also be overwhelming if the manager doesn't find that Goldilocks position of flow (a task that asks a little more than the person is capable of right now).

Consequences: this is whether the person knows about the repercussion of the task not happening – on the company, the business or the team. I don't mean to say you should say "do you know what will happen if you fail?" but a question like "what do you think would happen if the expectation is not met?" allows you to understand and clarify the perceived impact of the task.

Support: This bit is self-explanatory – I'll only say that whenever I have felt my manager has my back, I've been extra careful about holding myself accountable.

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Here's a set of questions you could use the next time you're assigning something you want someone to hold themselves accountable for. Let me know what you think.

- **How do you feel about taking on this task?**
- **In what way do you see it adding value to you?**
- **What's your understanding of the importance of this task?**
- **How do you feel about your capability to execute it?**
- **What parts of it are you confident about? What parts are you not so sure about?**
- **What challenges do you anticipate?**
- **Is there anything else that could come in the way of this getting done?**
- **What would happen if this expectation was not met? How would it affect the business, the team and you?**
- **What support do you need from me or anyone else to make it happen?**

To know more about our workshop offerings on Positive Accountability, please write to us at deepa@navgati.in

