

SUCCESS STARTS WITH ME

GREG BUSTIN

Praise for Greg Bustin's leadership books

"If you're looking for new ways to drive accountability and improve individual and organizational performance, read this book."

Dan Pink, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Drive* and *When*

"Exceptional leaders are lifelong learners, and Greg has collected, organized, and presented these leadership lessons to stimulate learning, inform decision-making, and inspire action."

Elizabeth Bryant, Chief Learning Officer, Southwest Airlines

"Greg's practical style brings to life situations leaders face daily, and his book provides the thought-provoking techniques to help leaders make the big calls."

Steve Dalton, OBE, Managing Director, SONY UK Technology Centre

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"Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming."

Greg Bustin delivers exceptional business results.

He's worked with the leadership teams at Bank of America, Burger King, Fujitsu, PepsiCo, Nucor, Quaker, 7Up, Sony and Verizon as well as with teams at mid-sized companies looking for a spark to reignite their business and with start-ups looking to manage profitable growth.

He's a sought-after speaker on the topic of Accountability, having delivered more than 500 talks on five continents.

He's led more than 200 strategic planning sessions and has conducted more than 4,000 one-on-one coaching sessions with CEOs, presidents and partners as well as with rising stars who are making their mark on their companies and those they lead.

He's dedicated a career to working with leaders all over the world, and he's developed a collection of resources that will guide and inspire any leader, including:



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Success Starts with Me

Any success you achieve starts with you.

How you define success is your choice. Goal-setting—to be healthier, to mend or tend to relationships, to take a spectacular trip, to build a career you find fulfilling, to accumulate wealth—is envisioning an ideal future and then committing yourself to the steps and sacrifices that are necessary to attain your objective.

You are responsible for *things*; you are accountable to *people*. And so when it comes to goal-setting—and goal-getting—accountability comes down to whether or not you are willing to be accountable to yourself for the commitments you make to yourself.

Start your journey by answering three questions that are so basic, so obvious, they're often overlooked or underestimated. "Oh, yeah," people will say when I ask these three questions during an executive coaching session, "these questions are simple."

Yes, simple in their short and straightforward construct. Yes, simple in terms of addressing fundamental topics. But difficult for most people to answer honestly and succinctly. And so I wait for their answers. People who have attained enviable records of success stammer and stutter and hem and haw until an uncomfortable silence settles around us.

We know these are good questions to ask. The problem is that most of us have not bothered to ask them nor taken the time to slow down...to reflect...to be brutally honest with ourselves...to decide...and then declare what truly matters.

The most important thing I've learned about accountability—whether it's personal accountability, team accountability or organizational accountability—is that clarity creates confidence. When you are clear about the things that matter most, you can be confident in the decisions you make. The opposite is also true: Confusion causes chaos.

Without clarity, the likelihood of achieving your personal goals is slim.

I AM THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL

In England in 1875, William Ernest Henley published a four-stanza untitled poem he wrote in response to the amputation of his leg just below his knee.

The title “Invictus,” which is Latin for “unconquered,” was added by editor Arthur Quiller-Couch when the poem was included in *The Oxford Book of English Verses*.

Nelson Mandela found this poem to be such a powerful motivator as well as a reminder to persevere that he memorized and recited “Invictus” to himself and other prisoners during his 27 years of incarceration in South Africa. The poem’s final two lines are “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.”

In my work with executives, it’s not unusual for leaders to find themselves in a position where their business life and personal life are not aligned. Some of these successful executives begin to wonder if the sacrifices being made at work are worth it.

Yet if you believe you’re the captain of your soul, it follows that only you can command it.

So to be successful, you must start by answering these three questions.

Who am I?

What do I want?

What are my strengths?

Let’s take each of these questions in order.

WHO AM I?

Coming to grips with the first question—that is, understanding and believing to your very core what you stand for—is the natural first step in the accountability process.

You must know who you are in order to codify and live out the core values you will use as guidelines for inspiring accountability—first in yourself and, ultimately, among those you lead or aspire to lead.

You must know very clearly where you draw the line on the things you will not tolerate. Those things you consider to be your non-negotiables.

For years, I’ve used an exercise called “Heaven + Hell” to help leaders gain insight into one of the thorniest problems they will ever untangle: figuring out who they are by figuring out what matters most to them.

Here’s the exercise, which is based on a timeline of your life’s most significant events:

Heaven

Year 

Hell

On the horizontal line, create a timeline by listing years in five-year increments from past to present. Make the first year on the timeline the earliest pivotal milestone in your life, and make the last year the current year.

Now think about times in your life (including your career) that were joyful, fulfilling and overwhelmingly positive. Mark those events above the line on the "Heaven" side. Now think about times in your life (including your career) that were painful, disastrous, and overwhelmingly negative. Mark those events below the line on the "Hell" side.

Each entry above the line and below the line is a character-building event.

These powerful experiences reveal your personal core values.

For me, these events have included my marriage, my promotion as the youngest vice president of a national advertising agency, the birth of our daughter, starting my own business, my first international speaking engagement, our daughter's wedding. These top-of-the-mountain experiences remind me of the sacrifices and joys of attaining a significant accomplishment. For the events noted in "Heaven," ask, "What values were present that caused me to be fulfilled?" Write down the word or words that summarize these feelings.

Next turn to the events below the line on the "Hell" side that represent despair and disaster. For me, these events included receiving a phone call from my supervisor at 9 p.m. when I was still at the office informing me our office's biggest client had called our chairman at home to demand that I be removed from their account. Another low point was presenting my firm's work to the CEO of a major corporation and his team only to have the CEO stop the meeting midstream because our data revealed flawed thinking.

Most recently, it was deciding to confront a CEO in one of my leadership peer groups about his toxic behavior. I delayed this conversation for months, anticipating his departure would spark a tumultuous chain reaction within the group. These full-day monthly group meetings with the toxic CEO had become so painful for me that just preparing for the meeting caused me anxiety. I dreaded meeting days and conducted them with a stone inside my stomach. I came home exhausted from presiding over what had become two groups in one: the faction that sided with the toxic CEO and the faction that shared my vision for the group.

My core values pushed me to make the decision I knew I must make but didn't want to make: I must confront the toxic CEO with the choice of either changing his behavior or leaving the group. I'd already calculated the odds he would leave the group. I wasn't afraid to have the

conversation; I was afraid I would not have the energy to create meaningful value for the remaining members of the group while simultaneously beginning the process of recruiting another half-dozen CEOs to the group who shared my values. After all, selecting CEOs usually takes months and so I wondered if the other CEOs would stick around as I rebuilt the group.

The toxic CEO and I spoke, I laid out my expectations and gave him the choice of changing his behavior or leaving the group. He chose to leave the group. Five other CEOs—his buddies—then quit. I told the remaining six CEOs what I'd done, and, while they were supportive, they told me flat-out they wondered what had taken me so long to reach a decision that was obvious to them. They also told me that had I not made the decision to remove the toxic CEO it was just a matter of time before they would've been the ones leaving.

As you review the events you've noted in "Hell," ask, "What values were absent that caused me to be unfulfilled or derailed from my path toward success?"

This quick exercise will tell you more about who you are and what matters to you than any contrived exercise that arrives at a conventional and, frankly, lame set of predictable and otherwise meaningless words. That you can recall so vividly long-ago events provides huge insight into who you are. These are events loaded with powerful emotions that matter deeply to you.

Once you've determined these major events, assign a single word to each of these phrases you've used to describe the events and the feelings they conjure up. Review your list of words. You'll see patterns emerging. Reduce the total number of words to as few as three and no more than five. You want to be able to remember each word because they will become the lenses you look through to attain clarity for your future significant decisions. They will serve as compass points on your journey toward new levels of success. As I noted in my book [*Accountability: The Key to Driving a High-Performance Culture*](#) (McGraw-Hill), you must define very clearly who you want to *be* that causes you to *do* what you do.

These three, four or five words are your personal core values: what you stand for—the principles and beliefs you will not compromise. Ever.

My experience with adversity offered two useful reminders:

- I would be judged on my actions, not my words. Because when the words and actions differ, people will trust the actions.
- Bad news does not improve with age. I avoided discussing this CEO's behavior for too long because I assumed he would take my hints and his behavior would change. Now I know that as soon as you see a problem, it's best to address it immediately. Failure to speak frankly with the person about his or her behavior means nothing will change.

I'm happy to say the six CEOs who stuck by me are still members of the group and another eight CEOs have joined who share my values and those of the group's members. Now, rather than dreading the monthly meetings with this group, I look forward to them.

I used to think that core values were akin to roasting marshmallows around a fire singing "Kumbaya." Now I know better.

Your core values will illuminate very clearly what you believe to be right and wrong.

You must be ruthlessly honest with yourself about what truly matters to you and what you are willing to sacrifice to stay true to your values. Your values help you make the decisions you don't want to make.

Your core values help you to be accountable to yourself.

WHAT DO I WANT?

One of our most difficult tasks is figuring out a plan to help us get what we want.

The most difficult task—by far—is figuring out what we want. What—precisely—does "success" mean to me?

About the time Henley wrote "Invictus" in England, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "He who has a 'why' can endure any 'how'."

Nearly 100 years later, holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl wrote in his 1959 groundbreaking book *Man's Search For Meaning* that, "It is a peculiarity of man that he can only live by looking to the future...and this is his salvation in the most difficult moments of his existence."

Frankl described his own methodology for surviving the daily inhuman suffering of Auschwitz: "I forced my thoughts to turn to another subject," Frankl wrote. "Suddenly, I saw myself standing on the platform of a well-lit, warm and pleasant lecture room. I was giving a lecture on the psychology of the concentration camp!"

The point is clear: getting through the grind of today requires a very clear picture in our minds of our ideal future state.

For most of us, the greater challenge is not achieving our vision, it's developing a vision that is worthy of our best efforts.

Vistage Chair John Younker once invited me to speak on the topic of accountability to his two peer advisory boards.

John trained pilots in Viet Nam and then flew 89 combat missions with the crews to observe first-hand the effects of his training. Channeling his inner Clint Eastwood, John told me over dinner, "A man's got to know his limitations, and I learned mine the hard way."

After flying 88 successful missions, the 89th mission was, as John says, "a bad hair day." His plane was shot down, two aboard died, and John and others parachuted to safety.

After John's honorable discharge, he obtained his Master's degree and then his doctorate. He co-founded an organizational development firm and worked with some of the biggest companies in the world. John and I had known one another for years, but it was not until I saw John in action that I began to fully appreciate John's impact on business leaders. John is more than a business coach. He's a life coach.

John shared his insights as well as several documents he developed over nearly four decades of working with individuals and teams.

Two documents provide the basis for developing your personal vision statement.

The first document—[*Effective Personal Vision: Some Criteria*](#)—engages your brain around the most vital and powerful elements of any personal vision statement.

The second document—[*Creating and Living In Your Ideal Future State*](#)—provides guidelines to help you unleash your imagination so you can become the best possible version of yourself.

Both documents are available for free on my website, along with another document—[*Reflections and Outlook*](#)—that poses a set of questions designed to document your insights around learning and goal-setting.

I encourage you to check them out along with the other [free resources on my website](#).

In the interest of time and space, here's an abbreviated personal goal-setting template I developed called "The 7 Fs" that reminds busy leaders that a business goal is simply one of several goals comprising a fulfilling life.

The 7 Fs

Goal-Setting to Enhance Your Life

What's a hugely ambitious future that you passionately want to achieve for yourself or your organization that is new, different and perhaps so bold it will stretch yourself beyond your wildest imaginings and require you to develop new habits in order to make this future a reality?

What will these seven significant life categories look like to you one year from today:

Family _____

Friends _____

Faith _____

Fitness _____

Financial _____

Function (career) _____

Fun _____

Now select the single most important goal from one of the seven categories of goals.

Write down the category and goal: _____

Write down how you will characterize your progress toward achieving your goal at each of these points in the coming year (What will have happened? What will you have accomplished? What will remain to be accomplished?):

March 31, (year): _____

June 30, (year): _____

September 30, (year): _____

December 31, (year): _____

Write down the impact of **NOT** achieving your goal: _____

Write down the impact of achieving your goal: _____

Write down how you will feel when you achieve your goal: _____

The 7 Fs exercise prompts you to consider what these seven significant life categories will look like in a given time period. It's your response to answering "What do I want?" and is another essential step in being accountable.

Consider investing a block of uninterrupted of time and perhaps even a little bit of money to change your surroundings, isolate yourself, and reflect on what really matters to you. Find solitude to relax and then jot down your initial thoughts about your ideal future state.

Turning your dreams into reality takes more than filling out a form. Any kind of success requires an attitude of commitment, plenty of hard work, and rigorous discipline.

But if you don't have a dream, discipline soon turns to drudgery.

Successful people tell me that thinking through significant aspirations, articulating those thoughts as a set of measurable goals, and then writing them down is a powerful process.

It is a process that drives personal accountability.

I've heard story after story from executives who wrote down goals, tucked them away and didn't look at them for several months only to pull out their list and see that they had accomplished many of their stated objectives. Written goals are embedded into our subconscious mind. Those goals are even more powerful when you look at them every day.

Once you complete your list, compare your personal goals with the goals you established for your career. This comparison likely will prompt more questions:

- How do my two sets of goals complement each other? Where are they competing?
- Will my career—on its current trajectory—help me achieve my personal goals or interfere with them?
- If my principles are being compromised or I'm not enjoying life, what changes must occur to help me achieve my goals?

If you like the direction you're on and you're enjoying what you're doing, congratulations. Stay the course.

If not, think about the part of your soul that is not satisfied and then consider new options for moving forward. What are you waiting for?

WHAT ARE MY STRENGTHS?

"Amazingly few people know how they get things done," said Peter Drucker.

Knowing—and playing to—your strengths is the next step in your journey of success. There are dozens of diagnostic tools that can help you zero in on your strengths, and I

recommend Gallup's Strength Finders, Predictive Index and Discovery Insights. While these diagnostic tools overlap one another to a certain degree, each of these different tools will reveal slightly different insights that can be helpful to you.

A quick, no-cost way of illuminating your strengths is by answering these questions:

- What do I do especially well?
- What seems easy to learn and easy to do?
- In what ways does the way I like to learn reflect what I'm doing best?
- In what projects do I find myself energized and where time passes quickly?
- What skills, abilities and qualities account for my most significant successes?
- What part of my job do I perform better than other people?
- What would others [name a trusted colleague] say are my greatest strengths?

Once you respond to the questions shown above, you'll notice patterns that—when acted upon—will help you reach new levels of effectiveness.

Understanding how you like to learn is part of knowing your strengths. Do you learn by reading? By listening to others? By doing?

Understanding when you're most productive is another part of knowing your strengths. Are you most productive in the morning or afternoon? Do you prefer to break projects into small pieces or block out big chunks of time so that you can get into a zone and build momentum?

Knowing what you're best at is important for three more reasons:

First, trying to remediate a skill or trait that's a weakness is the equivalent of writing quickly with your non-dominant hand. You can learn to do this, but why bother when your effectiveness is already concentrated in your other hand? It's the same with your strengths and weaknesses: Play to your strengths.

Second, once you've confirmed those skills that are your strengths and those areas where you're not as strong, you'll know the types of systems and people you'll need around you to offset your weaknesses and to protect you from yourself.

Third, the tasks you perform best and enjoy the most are generally the ones that play to your strengths.

It's your choice: Do you want to invest your time being good at something you're average at, or invest your time being great at something you're good at?

FINDING YOUR SWEET SPOT

Shortly after resigning as the leader of the Dallas office of an international firm to start my own business, my father and I were chatting over a beer when our conversation turned to my business.

I probably was just blowing off steam and not expecting any real help from my father as I shared the worries of a new owner already wrestling with internal conflict. It was then that my father gave me the best advice I've ever gotten.

My father told me that his outlook about business was pretty simple: "Do what you love," he said, "with people you care about in a place you care about."

"What about the money?" I asked.

"If you take care of the first three things," my father said, "the money will come."

Without realizing it (or perhaps he did), my father was articulating a "sweet spot" for living life on my terms.

Your sweet spot is where your personal core values (what you're willing to do) intersect with your strengths (what you can do) and your interests (what you want to do).



Finding your sweet spot is one of the most gratifying accomplishments you can experience.

It's also one of the keys to unlocking your potential.

As it turns out, my father was right about finding my sweet spot. And he also was right about the money.

YOUR PERSONAL SUCCESS ROADMAP

You've affirmed your values, declared your goals and gotten clarity about your strengths—a process that has helped you identify your Sweet Spot.

Now you're ready to map your personal journey of success.

The 7 Fs template is designed to help you think about and set overarching goals in seven areas of your life. The goal-setting form provided below—the Personal Success Roadmap—requires more specificity.

By envisioning your path to success as a journey, you can determine:




- Your destination
- The amount of time and energy you want to invest reaching your destination
- The adventures you want to plan as part of your journey
- The side trips you'll skip
- The route you will take and the steps required to reach your destination
- Any help you may need along the way

For personal goal-setting and team goal-setting, 90-day increments have been found to be the most helpful. The 90-day periods provide deadlines to keep you focused on completing key activities at a reasonable pace while avoiding procrastination, distraction and the disappointment of not achieving your short-term goals.

The template below that you complete provides a quick summary of your past 90 days, your current position, and the adventures that await you in the next 90 days.

I've used a version of this form for years. In one instance several years ago, I set a goal to deliver my accountability workshop in the U.K. within the next 24 months. I hadn't yet figured out how to achieve it...only that this goal mattered to me. I declared my goal to others and set a deadline. Next, I wrote down a number of action items or steps that I would need to take in order to achieve this goal. One completed action was followed by another. Two years later I traveled to the U.K. and delivered a keynote speech on accountability and then delivered my workshop to groups of Managing Directors in London, Cardiff, York, Coventry and Bracknell in the Midlands. It was quite a learning experience, lots of fun...and would not have happened if I had not first declared my goal, developed a plan, and then worked my plan.

PERSONAL SUCCESS ROADMAP

 MOST SIGNIFICANT ROADTRIP HIGHLIGHTS	 YOU ARE HERE APPRECIATION, ENERGY, R&R	 NEXT 90 DAYS ADVENTURES AROUND THE BEND

MILEAGE (rate your trip):

TRIP METRICS + MILE MARKERS TOWARD YEARLY GOALS

COMPLETE BY:

KEY ISSUES/DECISIONS TO DISCUSS WITH MY ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER

In addition to your own personal commitment to developing your vision and working your plan for success, I recommend two more steps.

First, share your discoveries about your Sweet Spot and your Personal Success Roadmap with someone you trust. Briefly walk them through what you've learned about yourself and your renewed focus on achieving your personal vision of success. Invite them to test your assumptions and probe for inconsistencies and weaknesses. Fine-tune your thinking.

Second, decide whether joining a peer group or engaging an executive coach can be helpful. I've benefitted from being in a peer group—either as a member or as a facilitator—for more than 25 years. For big decisions, continued learning and development, and—sometimes—just for emotional support, I lean on my peers. When I present a topic for discussion and then tell my peers the action I'm committed to taking, my peers will usually say something like, "Okay, let's meet again in 30 days and see what's happened." This is what accountability looks like.

**Accountability is not punishment. Just the opposite:
Accountability is a support system for winners.**

When your purpose, goals, plans and rewards are crystal clear, accountability can be embraced as a way to achieve more of what you want.

Without clarity, it's nearly impossible to support a person—including yourself—who hasn't figured out what they want and whose attitude toward commitment wavers.

We all have dreams. Some of us dream bigger and are more focused about turning those dreams into reality.

When you were a little kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

There's still time.

Final Words about Accountability

Accountability is one of the most important factors in determining the success of an individual, a team and an entire organization. It's also one of the most universally misunderstood and misapplied concepts in business, making it one of the biggest challenges leaders face.

My decade of research surveying more 8,000 CEOs and key executives worldwide confirms that "lack of accountability" is the single greatest barrier to achieving consistently high levels of organizational performance.

Now you have the insight to think about and practice accountability like most successful leaders. And there's lots more guidance and best practices in my book [*Accountability: The Key to Driving a High-Performance Culture*](#).

By reading this book, you've learned that savvy leaders approach accountability with the mindset that it's not punishment—it's a choice. It's a choice for you and those around you.

You've also equipped yourself with:

- The idea that Clarity Creates Confidence: When you're clear about what matters most, you can make decisions with confidence. The opposite is also true: Confusion causes chaos.
- 3 exercises to help you discover your Sweet Spot
- Your Personal Success Roadmap to plan your short and long-term goals

Accountability is a mindset. It's not a technique—it's a way of being all the time.

Use these concepts and tools to help you drive accountability—in yourself, your team and your organization—to achieve more of the high performance you want.

Thank you for reading this eBook. I wish you great success on your accountability journey.

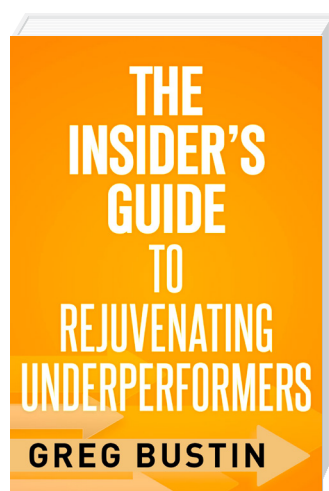
Greg Bustin

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Books by Greg Bustin

Learn the secrets of using accountability as a tool to drive high performance from the world's most admired companies. This collection of resources provides to leaders the essential leadership skills and practices for improving individual and organizational results.

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Get Expert Help for Accountability

**As leaders, we get the behavior we tolerate—
even our own.**

If you're ready to eliminate the excuses, get clarity on your most important priorities, and ignite the spark that will propel your career to new heights, then schedule a personal 90-minute coaching session with Greg.

Individual coaching sessions include direct access to Greg to ask questions and learn how to improve the skills essential to becoming an effective leader. Using live video screenshare technology, he will walk you step-by-step through everything you need to know. Get immediate answers to reduce stress, manage time effectively, coach underperformers, make better decisions and achieve better results.

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