

Future-Fit Leadership

FUTURE-FIT LEADERSHIP

***Boost your happiness in life, authenticity
in leadership, and success in business***

Marco Scheele & Edo Noppert

Warden Press

© 2024, Marco Scheele & Edo Noppert

ISBN:

Paperback: 978-94-93202-40-5

E-book: 978-94-93202-41-2

This book is partly based on *Accountable leiderschap* (Culemborg: Van Duuren Management, 2017). Translated from the Dutch and edited by Erwin Postma, Malaga

Cover design: Bart Termorshuizen, Amsterdam

Interior design and lay-out: Eric Querner, Amsterdam

This edition is published by Warden Press, Leiden.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Table of Contents

Preface	7
Introduction	11
PART 1 – ACCOUNTABILITY, A WAY OF LIVING AND WORKING	12
1.1 What is accountability?	13
1.2 Victim behaviour – We are humans, not robots	20
1.3 Accountability, a way of living	22
1.4 Accountability, a way of working	25
1.5 What is your desired outcome of reading <i>Future-Fit Leadership</i> ?	28
PART 2 – SPIRITUAL MBA	32
2.1 Spiritual lifestyle	33
2.2 Inner accountability	36
2.3 Doing your inner work	39
2.4 Accountable for your human energy	45
2.5 Your spiritual business plan	55
2.6 Spiritual business plan – Your spiritual path	57
2.7 Spiritual business plan – Your talents and ego behaviour	67
2.8 Spiritual business plan – Your win-win relationships and support system	77
2.9 Spiritual business plan – Your must-win battles	84
2.10 Spiritual business plan – Checklist	88

PART 3 – FUTURE-FIT LEADERSHIP	102
3.1 Low level of accountability in our organisations	103
3.2 Future-fit leadership – A core competency of the organisation	110
3.3 Future-fit leaders at all levels of the organisation	116
3.4 Accountability, a leadership methodology for future-fit leaders	123
3.5 The Personal Accountability Model, a great tool for future-fit leaders	132
3.6 Team accountability – The High-Performance Team System	146
3.7 Cross-team accountability – Leading business transformation	166
3.8 The accountable organisation – High-performance culture eats strategy for breakfast	177
3.9 The laws of the tribe	196
3.10 Your organisation as a living being	205
In closing	217
Acknowledgements	219
Works cited	221

Preface

Crisis upon crisis. We are leading our organisations and teams in a time of chaos and creative destruction. Proven MBA models do not work anymore, business plans have been torn up and the rules we have played by scrapped. And everything we thought we knew about effective management has been flipped on its head.

Many leaders are led by fear. Fear of failure, fear of unknowns, fear of change, fear of criticism and fear of status. All these fears combined can make leaders unable to be happy, authentic, successful and unable to fulfil their and their teams' true potential. Fear-based leadership leads to obsessive strategy-making and restructuring, bureaucracy, overcomplexity and destructive micromanagement-style tactics to keep everybody on task in order to meet deadlines. An old-school management style might still work in a stable environment but it makes it far more difficult to pivot when things stop working the way they should, or when major changes took place.

What we need in this chaotic world is future-fit leadership. Physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually energised leaders who enable their organisation, their teams and themselves to better succeed in their constantly changing markets by responding quickly (and gracefully) to change and evolving customer demands, adapting during times of crisis, and enjoying a competitive advantage by better navigating the unpredictable business world.

But what business school or MBA programme teaches you to deal with a reality where perfect plans are an illusion? After all,

Life is non-negotiable.

Beautiful and challenging events come and go, uninvited and unexpected.

We'd better surrender to what is.

Realise that the way we look at the issue, is the issue.

Say 'yes' to life and see how life suddenly starts working for us rather than against us.

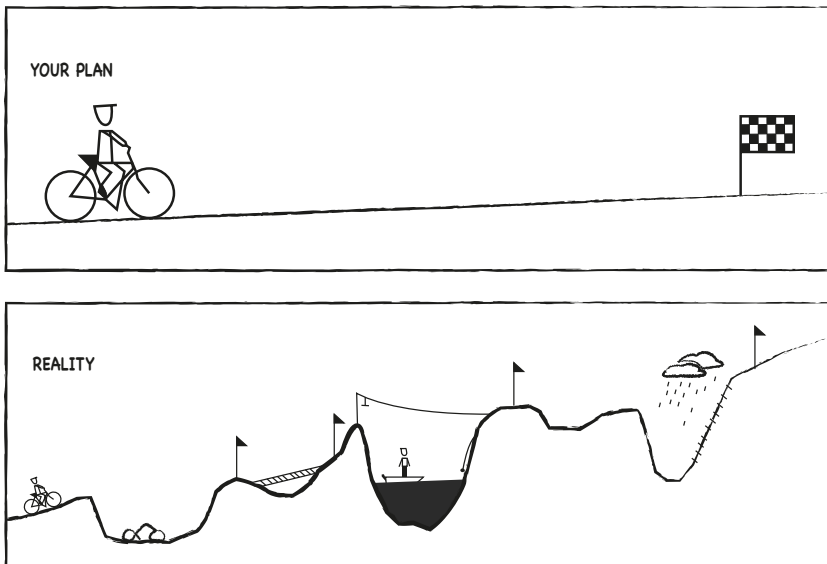


Figure 1 Your plan versus reality

This book is written for entrepreneurs and business leaders who have the courage to confront their inner barriers, to minimise their fear-based egos, to boost their talents and to strive for happiness in life, authenticity in leadership, and success in business. Marianne Williamson puts it this way:

'Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens

us. We ask ourselves, “Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?” Actually, who are you not to be? Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.’

Enjoy reading and play big!

Marco Scheele & Edo Noppert

Introduction

PART 1 – ACCOUNTABILITY, A WAY OF LIVING AND WORKING

In Part 1, you will discover that the true beauty in accountability lies in the fact that it empowers you to be the CEO of your own personal and business life, which is beneficial to you and everyone around you.

PART 2 – SPIRITUAL MBA

Part 2 will encourage you to do your Spiritual MBA and make your own spiritual business plan. By defining and executing a set of agile sprints, you bring spirituality to all aspects of your personal and business life. Through this process, you unlock your true potential and boost happiness in life, authenticity in leadership, and success in business.

PART 3 – FUTURE-FIT LEADERSHIP

In Part 3, you will discover what makes future-fit leaders successful. They live and lead with impact, based on emotional balance, mental clarity, and spiritual energy.

PART 1 ACCOUNTABILITY, A WAY OF LIVING AND WORKING

TAKE ACTION NOW, ALIGNED WITH YOUR
DESIRED OUTCOMES IN LIFE, LEADERSHIP,
AND BUSINESS.

1.1 WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY?

In this section, we will introduce the concept of ‘accountability’, as developed by Mark Samuel (USA) and enriched with our own knowledge, techniques and experience.

Accountability

Accountability is an evolutionary law that is as old as humankind itself:

I can count on you.

You can count on me.

We can count on each other.

As a result of the evolution of the human brain, tribal instincts persist and we are basically hard-wired to be accountable. Despite advances in modern technology that enable a degree of independence, humans remain tribal by nature, ill-equipped to thrive in isolation. As social beings, we long to belong to groups (tribes) and cultivate satisfying relationships with others. This innate need largely determines our interactions in private and business teams, organisations, and society.

In this book, we present accountability as an agile and stimulating way of living and working. Tailor-made for entrepreneurs and business leaders like you, who have the courage and willingness to push themselves and others towards happiness in life, authenticity in leadership, and success in business.

Self-leadership

Do you recognise the struggle to be accountable in all your life roles? Are you familiar with the frustration this brings due to limited time and energy? Figure 2 visually presents the concept of 'self-leadership' when striving to excel in all life roles at the same time.

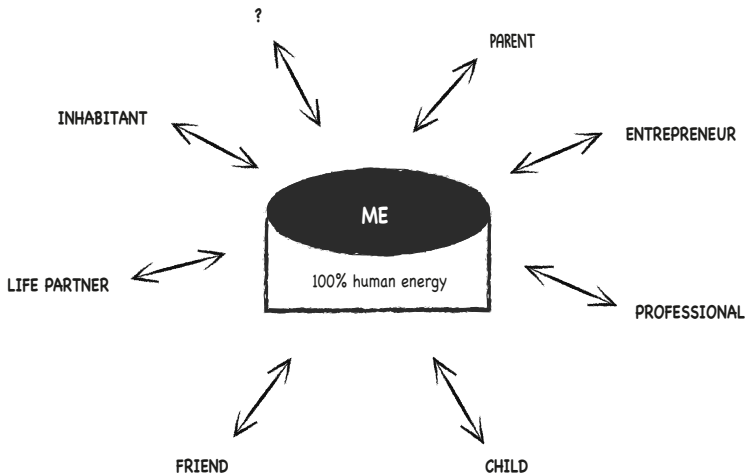


Figure 2 Self-leadership

If you strive to be accountable in all life roles, it is vital that you first overcome any kind of perfectionism. Striving for perfection leads to unhappiness for three reasons:

1. Change is the only constant. Perfection would only be achievable if you could stop the constant change around you. But you can't. Life is like water, always changing, making your perfect action obsolete. An action can still be good, but not perfect.
2. Everything is interconnected. Life is indivisible. You cannot have a perfect career and excel as a parent or life partner at the same time. Focus and action in one area inevitably affect your performance in another.
3. Time and energy are scarce resources. A day has only 24 hours and we are born with a fixed amount of energy. Energy is precious and limited, so use it wisely and distribute it effectively across all life functions.

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

- Imagine the total amount of energy you have available is 100. How do you spend it today in different life roles?
- If you were to need 10 extra units of energy for your role as a parent right now, from which other life role(s) would you deduct 10 units of energy?

Are you a perfectionist?

Perfectionism is a great enemy of accountability. Here are some everyday signs of perfectionism:

- You tend to be dissatisfied with what you have achieved.
- When you make small mistakes, they seem like huge failures to you.
- Constructive criticism feels hurtful to you, not helpful.
- You suffer from the fear of not being good enough.
- You find it hard to be proud of yourself and your achievements because you see the flaws.
- Instead of being motivated and enthusiastic about your goals, you tend to be pushed towards them by a fear of failure.
- You set very high expectations for yourself and feel disappointed when you fall short.
- You find it hard to enjoy the journey because you are mostly focused on the outcome.
- When things do not go according to plan, you rack your brains over what you could have done differently and beat yourself up about it.
- Sometimes you avoid action because you fear failure.

Entrepreneurs and business leaders easily get caught up in perfectionism, simply because they carry so much responsibility. Like life, business is all about learning and adapting along the way. If we want to be perfect all the time, we end up dropping out, because perfection leads to paralysis and overthinking based on theory rather than experience. The important thing is to keep moving, learning, and adapting. Perfectionism is a great enemy of accountability.

tionism not only keeps leaders and their teams stuck, it also creates a punitive culture of mistrust, blame, and hiding that is hard to break. When we can let go of the idea that everything has to be perfect, we are free to take risk, recover from mistakes, learn, and innovate to achieve breakthrough results.

Accountability: A future-fit way of living and working

You really only have two options: growth or death. Businesses, relationships, and human beings never stay the same. They either move forward and grow, or they become irrelevant and fade away.

Accountable living enables you to navigate effortlessly through the constantly changing realities of everyday life. Change is a constant because life does what it wants. It is bigger than you. It is non-negotiable. You have to deal with it and learn from it, whether you want to or not. One of the most effective approaches to dealing with serious life challenges is being proactive. Being proactive means anticipating problems, and actively working to solve them before they get worse.

Accountability is also a way of working: purposeful work, driven by ambition, with determination and a focus on what really matters, within a healthy relationship with yourself and others, and above all, with the desired outcomes in mind. In the market and the organisation in which you operate, change is rapid and inevitable. As an employee, manager, entrepreneur, or organisation, you need to respond to this consistently and resolutely to stay in business.

Accountability takes different forms, as you will read in the following sections. It can relate to yourself, a team member, a team, an entire organisation, collaboration between teams, and even collaboration between organisations. Whatever level you consider, the fundamental definition of accountability remains consistent in all cases:

Take action now, aligned with your desired outcomes in life, leadership, and business.

Don't be a Harry!

Figure 3 shows the metaphor of 'Positive Harry' and 'Negative Harry'. Both of them are in victim mode. 'Harry' can be an individual, a team, or even an entire organisation.

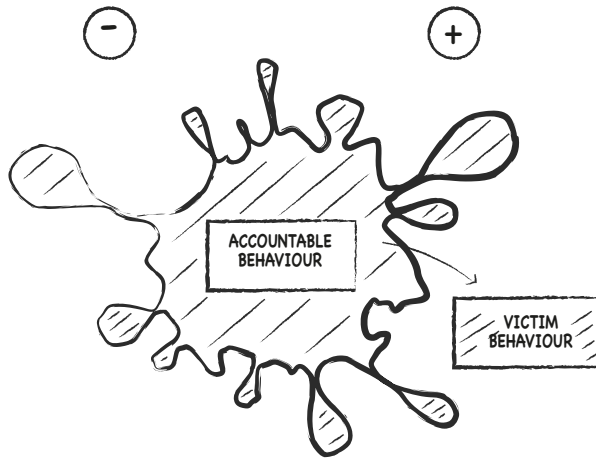


Figure 3 Harry

Negative Harrys do not want to be accountable. They consciously hide behind being busy by engaging in numerous activities, except the one that really counts. By doing that, they hope to cover up that their performance is not aligned with the desired outcomes of the team or organisation. When held accountable, their reply will be, 'I'm too busy with all sorts of other high priorities.' The problem with Negative Harrys is that their behaviour has a negative impact on both their own performance and that of others.

Positive Harrys are dysfunctional rescuers. Doing things for others that they are capable of doing themselves. Making it easier for others to continue their unhealthy behaviours. Helping others avoid the consequences of their actions. Taking responsibility for other people, trying

to solve their problems. This might all look very noble, but deep down, Positive Harrys are unconsciously addicted to gratitude from others and feeling-good-about-themselves emotions. Because of those addictions, Positive Harrys do not invest enough time and energy to be accountable for their own roles and responsibilities in their personal and business life. Our message to Positive Harry is this: take better care of yourself, because you cannot pour from an empty cup!

Negative Harry is 69 years old and owns a small family business. His business has dominated his whole life and therefore he is unmarried and childless. Despite a successful career, it is now really time that Harry retired, because he has become the bottleneck in his own organisation. However, he cannot let go. He continues to micromanage, hindering potential future leaders from developing and sabotaging the long-term viability of his business. No wonder Harry is lonely.

Now – Action – Outcomes

There are three key words in the definition of accountability:

'Taking action now, aligned with your desired outcomes in life, leadership, and business'

Now

The past no longer exists and so there is no need to stay emotional about it. Regret, staying angry, and lingering in sadness or disappointment are understandable but often unhelpful or even sabotaging emotions that do not contribute to what you want to achieve. Pure drama, therefore, that we also call victim behaviour.

Accept your past without regrets, take action in the now and face the future without fear.

What also does not exist is the future. Of course, it is important to develop scenarios of what might happen in the future and how you will then react to that, but there is no point in getting upset about it and overreacting now.

Action

Accountability means continuously anticipating what the turbulently changing outside world demands of you (urgency). Because:

*If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got.
Or less!*

In times of change, it is about doing **DIFFERENT** instead of doing better. For most people, however, doing different is stressful because, by nature, we like to stay in our comfort zone and mask our lack of accountability, and so we consciously or unconsciously get trapped in victim behaviour.

We were once hired by a publishing conglomerate that owned several national daily newspapers. It was a family business that was very loyal to its people and where lifetime employment and traditions were highly valued.

There was a group of real craftsmen from the printing division with an average tenure of over 20 years. They worked hard and played billiards in the canteen every afternoon. Super loyal to their organisation but they refused to take any training in digital printing processes for 10 years.

Three quarters of these 'yesterday heroes' are now unemployed without any career prospects left.

Outcomes

Many people put a lot of effort into things in business and their private life that do not really matter: 'they're busy going nowhere.' Hard work alone is not accountable. What accountability is all about is making progress on agreed upon and desired outcomes.

We were asked for help by a start-up with an unhealthy cash burn rate. With two months of cash left to pay the salaries of 15 employees, the owner proudly showed us the beautiful new corporate identity he had spent lots of money and nights working on. WTF?!

Why this book?

Because we want leaders and their teams to grow and become future-fit. We see too many ugly organisations, low-performance teams, and unhappy people, who consciously and unconsciously slip into resistance mode the moment they need to change. We all want to live and work in our comfort zone. Of course, change can be scary. Resistance to change (victim behaviour) is human and understandable because it gives instant relief, but in the end, it does not make anyone happier, more authentic, or successful. What leaders and organisations can learn from nature is that we either grow or become mediocre and 'die'.

1.2 VICTIM BEHAVIOUR – WE ARE HUMANS, NOT ROBOTS

As you have read in the previous section, the antithesis to accountable behaviour is what we call 'victim behaviour', and that is what this section is about.

In a nutshell, victim behaviour drains your energy and does not contribute towards your desired outcomes in life, leadership, and business. Even so, victim behaviour is human and we exhibit it every day. This

behaviour can last for a few moments, but people can also get stuck in a victim mentality for weeks, months, years, or all their lives. That is because it is contagious and it grows if you give it too much attention.

There are people who, for instance, spend their whole lives complaining that they are unlucky, treated unfairly, have stupid jobs, do not get what they deserve, and always have too little of everything. This is heart-breaking, because victimising yourself will eventually turn against you. It will exhaust you, impair your performance, and it can literally make you ill. This is because the deeper problem you are avoiding comes back in other variations, until you face up to it, reflect on it, learn from it, and solve it.

As an entrepreneur or business leader, you are also only human

Every day, you have your accountable moments of passion, focus, resoluteness, and results. In those moments, everything seems to go effortlessly and successfully. However, at least as often, stressful external stimuli cause you to fall into victim behaviour. In those situations, you plod along, as if you are swimming against the current. Your thinking becomes foggy, negative emotions bubble up, and lack of focus and determination bog you down in aimless behaviour and cramped relationships with yourself and others.

We cannot control the world around us. Unexpected, uninvited, and stressful situations keep challenging your imperfect self. It is an illusion to think you can be permanently accountable. The real question is how to minimise the periods of victimisation that you inevitably keep falling into. Victimisation is only human after all, but it is just not desirable for those who want to live and work meaningfully. Victim behaviour seems like an easy way out of difficult situations and to avoid ownership, but it is ultimately exhausting and a poor basis for a healthy relationship with yourself and others.

Victim behaviour mostly kicks in unconsciously, you have no idea you are doing it. That is why it is so important that you find out what type of people and specific situations upset you and trigger your victim behaviour. Being aware of those triggers will enable you to respond with a clear head, a warm heart, and accountable behaviour that is beneficial for yourself and others.

A successful entrepreneur came to us for personal coaching. She had recently sold her company. 52 years old, ten million in the bank, and very unhappy.

An old childhood pattern started to play up. The fear of losing everything. It was a baseless fear, but feelings are facts and it dominated her life.

Of course, it is important to work hard and do your best to support your family and provide it with luxuries, but living too much in the material world can lead to great poverty of the soul. The next section will go into greater detail on accountability as a lifestyle.

1.3 ACCOUNTABILITY, A WAY OF LIVING

The following quote on happiness by Dutch footballing legend Johan Cruyff sums up this section:

Happiness is DOING the things that make you happy.

The beauty of this statement is that it says that you are completely accountable for 'becoming happy' because it is your own DOING.

Accountability at life level stands for agile living in the NOW. It refers to the ability to adapt and respond quickly and effectively to changing circumstances. It involves being bold, brave, flexible and open to new

ideas, as well as being able to focus on the tasks at hand and the big picture simultaneously. Overall, accountable living means being able to navigate life with agility, adaptability, and gratitude. This all sounds simple, but accountability has a big enemy: victim behaviour!

Victim behaviour drains your energy

The amount of energy we possess is limited. We desperately need this energy to make valuable contributions to others in all life roles. The problem is that we waste a lot of energy every day by fabricating victimhood for ourselves, in response to events that make us angry, scared, or sad. Whenever we fail to resolve these kinds of events, we say something along the lines of, 'I get angry or sad again when I think about it.' Think of these unresolved events as leeches constantly sucking the energy out of you. You will have to pull them loose and throw them over your shoulder before you become exhausted.

Please do not set yourself the goal of becoming permanently accountable. Permanent accountability is impossible to achieve and striving for it is a terrible way of beating yourself up. After all, we are human beings and – as already pointed out several times – far from perfect. The art of valuable living and working is much more about learning to recognise and breaking out of your own victim behaviour. There are no pills for that, but the good news is that you can practise it. What matters is that you show the courage, willingness, and discipline to continuously scrutinise your own victim behaviour and that of others. Encourage yourself and others to adopt new behaviours that do (or better) contribute to your desired outcomes in each and every one of your life roles.

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

Check your energy levels!

- What percentage are you charged at on a scale of 0 to 100?
- What did you waste energy on to today?

Tip: think of yourself as a battery and check your energy levels every day before you go to sleep. If you are regularly 'drained' and 'in the red', then you are spending more energy than is healthy for you and it is important that you learn to find out why.

Figure 4 helps you identify what upsets you, what kind of events you waste energy on, and why.

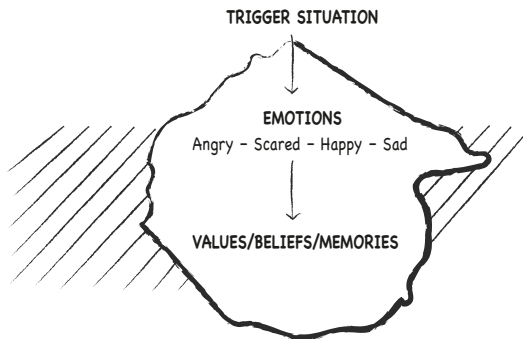


Figure 4 What upsets me

Based on Figure 4, take the following steps:

Step #1 Emotions

Be aware of specific moments where an intense emotion sets in.

'I was very angry when I left the Management Team meeting.'

Step #2 Trigger situation

Identify what event triggered this intense emotion.

'One of the shareholders rudely overruled me twice during the meeting.'

Step #3 Values and beliefs

Examine which of your personal values or beliefs were offended.

'As a human being I want to be respected and heard.

Also, overruling me as the CEO, in front of my management team, undermines my authority.'

Step #4 Take action and determine how to change the situation.

'Tomorrow I will ask this shareholder to, in future, discuss strategic topics we disagree on in person.

I will also ask him to support me and show trust in me whenever he is invited to our management team meeting.'

1.4 ACCOUNTABILITY, A WAY OF WORKING

Accountability is not only a beautiful way of living; it is also a proven leadership methodology for entrepreneurs and business leaders that creates and grows adaptable and sustainable organisations in a turbulent environment.

The Accountability Continuum

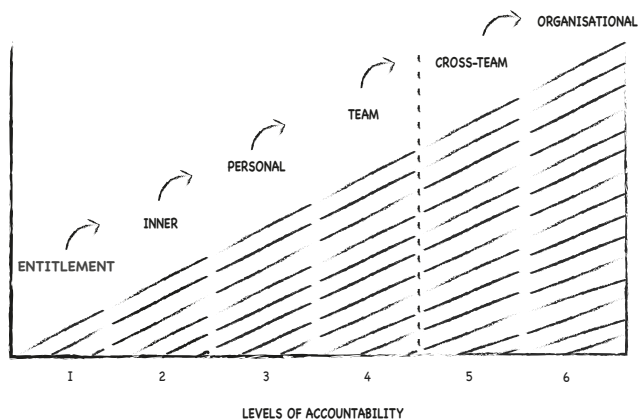


Figure 5 The Accountability Continuum

The Accountability Continuum (figure 5) consists of six successive levels of accountability that must be reached step by step. You move up to