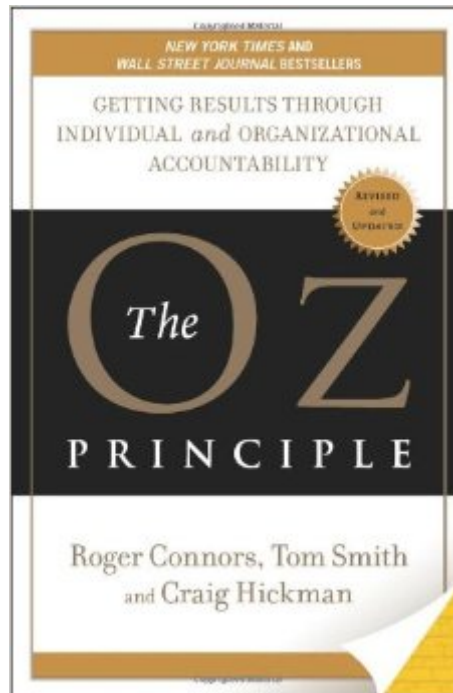


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# The Oz Principle: Getting Results Through Individual And Organizational Accountability



## Synopsis

The definitive book on workplace accountability by the New York Times bestselling authors of *How Did That Happen?* Since it was originally published in 1994, *The Oz Principle* has sold nearly 600,000 copies and become the worldwide bible on accountability. Through its practical and invaluable advice, thousands of companies have learned just how vital personal and organizational accountability is for a company to achieve and maintain its best results. At the core of the authors' message is the idea that when people take personal ownership of their organization's goals and accept responsibility for their own performance, they become more invested and work at a higher level to ensure not only their own success, but everyone's. Now more than ever, *The Oz Principle* is vital to anyone charged with obtaining results. It is a must have, must read, and must apply classic business book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Before adopting this for your business it is worth considering whether it will achieve your goals and if it will have unintended consequences. One of the first things you may notice in this book is that the authors have trademarked the commercial use of the two phrases "above the line" and "below the line". The horizontal "line" separates two types of behavior and attitudes, which represents the OZ principle. This might be some indication of their intentions. Above the line thinking is about being accountable and below the line thinking is about "the blame game". In other words, the authors posit that we live in a culture of entitlement and pseudo-victimization where we are motivated to avoid accountability and blame others for failure. Consequently, this book (and its

associated training courses) is often selected by management to obtain more "accountability" (and less excuses) from their employees. Such a simplistic formula with a few twists and many anecdotal stories provide the necessary fuel for a highly successful book as well as a robust training and consulting practice. But, the expected results for your organization may not live up to the hype. This should be somewhat obvious on critical reflection, if you believe that people are not nearly as one-dimensional as this approach suggests. I am all for accountability but have some concerns with this approach. First, its all-encompassing, individually-focused assessment of attitudinal performance is grossly over-simplistic, but interestingly appealing to organizations that are seeking simple solutions to their performance problems. It also appears to satisfy a number of individuals and managers who find solace in uncomplicated prescriptions to guide their staff behaviors.

Approximately two years ago the company I have worked at for more than a decade (a retail pharmacy chain beginning with a W) decided to buy this program from the author, and I'd like to report the consequences of adopting the policies outlined here. I'm a pharmacist who previously enjoyed my job, but the company has ground job satisfaction into dust with this book. Suddenly, in a cult-like move, we had a set of "cultural beliefs" and EVERY official email or communication had to quote at least one of them. The buzzwords are "accountability" and "engagement." This book might be useful for people in management, as a kind of chicken soup for the soul for the business-minded folk, but when the same ideas are applied to the employees, it only breeds resentment and hatred. Morale has never been lower, company-wide, yet there is an annual survey of employee happiness which managers are very careful to supervise, because their bonuses depend upon everyone rating everything highly; in other words, not a real survey at all, but one that the employees feel compelled to answer falsely for fear of retribution. If any employee dares to say that the cultural beliefs are fake, or that personal engagement is low, then immediately there are repercussions, the immediate managers are punished for not making the employees believe they are happy, and all hell breaks loose, with vague suggestions of firings and so on. This book tries to mesmerize the employees into believing that the company's goals are their own, which in many situations could indeed be the case, but certainly not at the one I work for. The book fails to acknowledge the power disparity between manager and employee.

This was one of those required reading books from work. The book is densely packed -- the hardcover version I have is 222 pages of average-sized type and little margin space. Each section starts with a blurb from the original text of *The Wizard of Oz*. Halfway through, I was skipping these

hokey introductions. I thought that the idea of an analogy was a good one, but it was oddly executed. I don't know what other well-known book I would have used (although in general, I don't know how popular the book is compared to the movie), but perhaps an analogy is not even needed given their See It - Own It - Solve It - Do It mantra is so prevalent in the book (and trademarked). The advice in the book is good for the most part. It revolves around accountability and how you can either be "Above The Line" or "Below The Line" with it, along with the mantra listed above. I especially found the following tips noteworthy:- Accountability is more than a confession.- As accountability deepens and people move Above The Line within the organization, a shift occurs from the "tell me what to do," to "here is what I am going to do, what do you think?" -- a truly profound and empowering approach to getting results.- One company president characterized what joint accountability meant to him this way: "Everyone working together so that we don't drop the ball; but when it does get dropped, everyone dives for the ball to pick it up."- Owning one's circumstances did not mean accepting the perceptions of one's associates as total truth, but rather acknowledging a connection between one's behavior and their perceptions. However, what would have pushed this book to receive a higher rating from me would have been fewer examples.

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