Why Traditonal Management Doesn't Work

Traditionally, the management of a company and all the responsibility has always fallen on the shoulders of the owner. This model of management carries over from the Dark Ages of kings and serfs, in the same way we still build roads based on the width of two horses side by side. We really are ready for a new way of thinking. Today's employees are just not responding to command-and-control paradigm the same way they used too. (Hard to keep up with isn't it?) In national surveys taken by the Franklin Covey organization, money is no longer the most important motivator either. Now what people want is recognition and acknowledgement for their work. They want to have the opportunity to contribute, have a voice in the matter, and feel like they are making a difference in contributing to something meaningful.

And what do owners want? They want to have employees work with greater intelligence, think for themselves, solve problems, be more productive… in short, owners want employees to behave more like an owner.

So why don't employees just step up and go for it? Could it be a few centuries of institutionalized behaviour deeply embedded into our business culture that says, "Don't take a risk, don't speak up, and certainly don't be responsible for anything you really don't have to." The old way— command and control— tell them what to do and have them do exactly as they are told. The new way— communication, collaboration, teamwork. For most of us, where we are stuck in our thinking is not immediately apparent. That's certainly true for myself. Obviously if it were, we would correct it. But in the same way that we have employees operating in ways we would really prefer to be different, so too is our view of our own inefficiencies seemingly justified, and often with something as innocent as, "that's the way we have always done it." Hence the saying, "Organizations rise to their own level of incompetence." I frequently run across the the regular practice of calling a sub-contractor four to six times to show up for a work assignment. Now multiply that with how many leads you have, managing how many subs, then add in PM's coordinating with the leads, architects, and owners… get the picture? Does this sound familiar? Do you stop and wonder if there might be a better way? Well, there is hope.

To have people in your organization be more accountable, you just need to ask them. You need to change the way you have been managing them, and most importantly, you need to change the things in your business that are driving those behaviors.
The culture of your business (which is what drives behavior) is made from the systems, structures, and practices going on in your business. To have a culture of accountability, you need to change the business structures, from job descriptions through to systems and practices for project management.

Having the right practices, systems, and structures produces a completely different set of behaviors. It's important that you do this with your team, or it will always be something you created, rather than something the team owns. And in my years of offering this work to companies, I have yet to meet one superintendent, forman, lead, or PM, who when asked what he saw himself being accountable for, didn't say exactly what the owner of that business would want him to be accountable for. In all the years I've been doing this, I've never seen a person not take a chance to give it their all when the opportunity was offered. Give people a chance to show you their best effort.