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This will sound like a ridiculous question, but here it is: If someone says they will do something, should they do it?

I'm sure you're saying "Of course they should. If for no other reason, their integrity is at stake." This seems so obvious why bring it up? Well, how many times have you asked someone to do something, they agreed to do it, and yet they didn't do it? Or someone offered to do something without being asked and then didn't do it? Your children didn't clean up their mess after agreeing to clean it up. Your spouse didn't get home on time as promised. Your colleague didn't get their part of the project done as committed. Your

employee didn't provide their update on time. The customer service rep didn't call you back. Your order didn't arrive. The subcontractor didn't finish the job as contracted.

As obvious as it is that people should do what they agree to, they don't. Whether family members, colleagues at work, or others whom you depend on, people often don't do what they say they will do. You depend on people every day and many days you probably find yourself disappointed. You are regularly impacted. So, you have to follow up. You have to reschedule. You do it yourself. You are inconvenienced and don't get to do things you want to do because someone you depend on doesn't do what they commit to do.

We waste countless hours and effort waiting on and cajoling people to do what they already said they would do. Perhaps there is nothing more frustrating and disappointing than to depend on someone who doesn't do what they said they would do.

Of course, delays and missed commitments are due in part to unexpected events out of people's control. There is illness and the weather. There are accidents and children. Assumptions and priorities change. It might be that intentions and desires were honorable, but there just wasn't enough time in the day. People want to do what is asked of them, but overcommit.

Then there are causes that are not so defensible. Some people ignore their commitments. They don't take them seriously. They see commitments as optional reminders rather than necessary obligations. Some put themselves above others and don't care about inconveniencing others. Some lack self-control or simply don't care about their reputation.

So, what can you do? What should you do? Do you merely accept whatever people do whenever they want to do it?

If you can find an alternative resource, supplier, or provider, you might pursue that option. But what if you need someone whom you can't merely replace or outsource? What can you do to get them to do what they agree to, especially when they have a habit of not being dependable?

Here are a few principles and questions to consider in getting people to do that which they agree:

1. Have an accountability mindset:
 - a. Do you believe you have a role in holding people accountable?
 - b. Are you willing and able to be constructively assertive to get people's attention?

Accountability Practices that Get Results

2. Assess what's preventing people from doing that which has been agreed:
 - a. Is the issue primarily within their control?
 - b. Is the issue primarily their responsibility or someone else's?
 - c. Do you have a role in the issue such as not being clear about what is to be done, when is it due, or who owns it?

3. Do what is in your control to ensure they deliver on what was agreed to:
 - a. Maintain good one-on-one relationships with whom you are working. Be trustworthy. Be personable. Don't over-rely on technology such as email, texting, phone calls, or video calls to maintain relationships.
 - b. Involve those you are asking. Ask for and use their ideas to the extent possible. Get their *handprints* on the "what" and "how" that is to be done, especially on whatever will be expected of them to do and own.
 - c. Agree on the "why". Ensure they understand, appreciate, and buy into the problem or need to be addressed.
 - d. Agree on the "what". Ensure they understand and agree with the solution that has been crafted that solves the problem or addresses the need.
 - e. Agree on the "how". Ensure the implementation details are discussed and understood. Don't leave expectations to chance. Define roles, responsibilities, budgets, priorities, timelines, and the definition of done. Be as specific as necessary.
 - f. Assess the difficulty, level of change required, and any additional actions or resources you might provide to help ensure success.
 - g. Confirm what was agreed upon. If appropriate, clearly document the why, what, and how. Distribute it to those doing the work as well as those impacted by it.
 - h. Put in place whatever additional resources and actions might be needed to help ensure success. Try to minimize any inconveniences and help overcome any obstacles within your influence.
 - i. If the work is a project or ongoing responsibility, agree on how progress will be tracked.
 - j. Track progress. Increase the frequency and depth of follow-ups when risks are high or there is a likelihood of underperformance. Provide ongoing support and coaching.
 - k. Enforce the appropriate consequences – both reinforcing and correcting. Recognize and compliment good progress and desirable behaviors. Alternatively, address any lack of progress or undesirable behaviors. Discuss and agree on remedies that get progress back on track.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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