



Trait of the Month: Self-Reliance

Context

Great managers and leaders have the capacity and self-motivation to assume responsibility for their work, relationships, and results, make independent decisions, and accept ownership over the consequences of their actions. This level of accountability often separates average managers and leaders from the great ones.

But can assuming too much accountability actually have a negative impact? Our experience and data says yes. Managers and leaders who score excessively high on self-reliance often have a difficult time delegating tasks and giving opportunities for growth and challenges to their direct reports. Their natural tendency is to take care of the problem themselves rather than evaluating whether that issue could be handled by someone else. This can have the dual effect of 1) creating an unmanageable workload for the manager or leader and 2) robbing direct reports and other stakeholders of developmental opportunities.

Understanding the Trait

This trait measures the degree to which a person is willing to assume ownership and make decisions on his or her own. It generally measures a person's independence of thought and actions. People with a "high" rating are very willing to assume ownership for accomplishing tasks. They do not rely heavily upon other people, but rather take independent initiative. People who are low often have to be told what to do and when to do it. As mentioned above, excessive scorers have trouble letting go.

Tips for Personal Development—low Self-Reliance

- Before going to your boss for advice, decide what you would do and be ready to present your recommendations, not just questions.
- Set goals and work on them on a regular basis. Consider the following when doing so:
 - Have discussions with your boss on what your goals and priorities are.
 - Break large goals into manageable chunks with deadlines for each step.
 - Record when you intend to accomplish the steps and action plans on a calendar and follow through.

- Keep your most important long-term goals in front of you at all times—for example, on a mirror at home, in your desk drawer, or on the wall in your office.
- Review each goal as you complete it to see what you did well and what improvements are needed.
- If goals or deadlines are missed, determine why, and incorporate your learning into the next project plan. See misses as opportunities to learn.
- Reward yourself for accomplishing small steps and goals, as well as the larger ones.
- Hire a coach or solicit the services of a mentor to hold you accountable for your goals.

Tips for Personal Development—excessive Self-Reliance

- Review your To Do list and give away 10% of the things on it. Next time, hand off 15%. Continue until you are consistently delegating 40-50%.
- Ask your team members what they see you doing that they would like to know more about, then give them opportunities to learn alongside you.
 - Providing opportunities for growth and learning increases engagement among your team.
 - Remember that you are investing in them, and in yourself!
 - Focus your extra time on projects and tasks which you find interesting and challenging.
- Compare tasks with your peers to see who is doing a great job at delegating. Have them help you decide what you should give away and what you should keep.
- Challenge your team to make decisions on their own. You can start by having them come to you with suggestions and plans rather than questions, and as they build credibility and gain experience, you can free them to make more and more decisions on their own.