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Set Tone with Integrity
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When it's time to set or change the tone of an organization, start with accountability and integrity to get the maximum effect. Here's how to build those traits into your outfit:

- **Set an example.** Leaders must show people in the firm that they keep their commitments, says John Britt, an executive coach who co-authored "Who Killed Change?"

"You have to set the tone that you're personally accountable," said Britt, who's also a partner at Mountjoy & Bressler, an accounting firm in Louisville, Ky. "People can talk all they want, but if your actions are different from what you say, there's a huge disconnect."

- **Develop clear goals.** Make sure your people know what's expected. Then you can hold them accountable. "In so many organizations, people get punished for not doing what they didn't know they were supposed to do in the first place," said Ken Blanchard, author of "The One Minute Manager," who runs a leadership firm in Escondido, Calif.

- **Be specific.** Otherwise, people will look at each other and say they're not responsible.

"You're managing the journey, not just announcing the destination," Blanchard said.

- **Explain your plans.** Tell people what's going to change and why. If you're going to start holding people accountable at an organization that hasn't operated that way, be clear what that means to you. "It doesn't change just because the CEO says something different," Britt said.

- **Get input.** Employees know what can be improved and how. Once you've said what's going to change, let them get involved in how to do it. And don't be just punitive. Accountability can be rewarded when someone does something positive, too, Britt says.

- **Treat others right.** Ray Kroc, the longtime chairman at McDonald's ([MCD](#)), gained his edge by dealing fairly with his franchisees, says Todd Buchholz, author of "Lasting Lessons from the Corner Office." Rivals made products more expensive before selling them to franchisees, burying them in debt. Kroc got them the best deals he could. It paid off in building a successful chain.

"He told them, 'You're going to get rich before I get rich,'" said Buchholz, San Diego-based managing director of real estate firm Two Oceans Fund.



- **Stick with your principles.** Kroc also refused to take bribes or kickbacks. He told suppliers to save that money and turn it into lower prices.

"You could trust him, and he trusted you," Buchholz said.

- **Prioritize tasks.** Managers will tell employees to be accountable for one thing. Then some will give the staffers four other tasks.

"That changes the game," said Blanchard. "Part of accountability is setting priorities."

- **Communicate.** If staffers understand reasons behind duties, they'll do them. Southwest Airlines ([LUV](#)) shows employees why it's vital they get planes back in the air quickly. That makes everyone, even pilots, accountable for preparing the cabin for a new flight, Blanchard says.

- **Create a tone.** Julian Robertson at Tiger Fund, a hedge fund that grew dramatically in the 1990s, was always careful to shy away from anything that smelled of insider information, Buchholz says. "Even if it doesn't make you money, you operate that way because that's how you do business," he said.