

# TRANSFORMING FEEDBACK AND ACCOUNTABILITY: A PATH TO TRUST AND GROWTH AT HELMERICH & PAYNE



By **Bobby Sizemore** Safety Leadership Training Manager, Helmerich & Payne



Feedback and accountability are often met with resistance, evoking feelings of discomfort among many individuals. At Helmerich & Payne, these concepts have instead been reframed to Actively C.A.R.E.<sup>®</sup>, creating an environment built around trust, open communication between managers and employees, and peer-to-peer support.

## Building Trust in a New Light

Recognizing the need for a shift in perspective, H&P embarked on a journey in 2015 to reshape its approach to safety and organizational health. This shift highlighted the importance of being proactive and consistent in addressing behaviors, both in the field and office, paving the way for a culture of trust and pursuit of HSE excellence.

## The Driving Forces of Employee Behaviors

Employee behaviors are complex and not always easy to comprehend. Yet, at their core, most employees share a common desire: to excel in their roles and contribute to the success of the organization. In their pursuit of these goals, employees sometimes extend themselves beyond established safety norms and standards at times putting themselves in harm's way. H&P identified three distinct behavior types—enabled, difficult, and non-enabled—to gain a deeper understanding of the conditions and environments that shape employee actions through their own eyes.

### ▶ ENABLED

Well within the control of the person to do the job

**Enabled:** employees feel fully equipped with the necessary resources, support, and equipment to perform their tasks effectively and safely

**Difficult:** employees possess the required resources but find them challenging to access, inconvenient, or less readily available

**Non-enabled:** employees lack the essential tools, resources, or support from supervisors, hindering them from performing their tasks safely and upholding the organization's standards

### ▶ DIFFICULT

Can be done, but takes extra effort

### ▶ NON-ENABLED

Not within the control of the person to do the job

The concept of “enabling” the right (and safe) behaviors has emerged as a pivotal point of focus. This concept is an integral part of ensuring that employees are provided with everything they need to perform their duties safely and effectively. To be effective, there must also be a foundation of trust within the organization. Employees must be confident that management is supportive when situations are identified in which the employee is not truly enabled to complete the job safely. By viewing the workplace from this perspective H&P prioritizes empowering employees to excel while fostering a culture of mutual trust.

## Fostering Proactive Accountability

After awareness and understanding, creating an enabled environment through accountability is needed. Moving from blame to accountability and responsibility is a self-reflection beginning with managers, supervisors, and then to employees themselves. To foster accountability in the workplace, H&P developed the Accountability Elements model, pictured below. The Accountability Elements model offers a structured approach to empower employees for success, with a systematic approach, commencing with creating a trusting environment to delivering effective feedback. Each element not only clarifies performance expectations but also serves as a foundation for building trust and relationships. This approach encourages employees to engage with every element proactively, ultimately preventing problems from escalating.

## CREATING A TRUSTING ENVIRONMENT

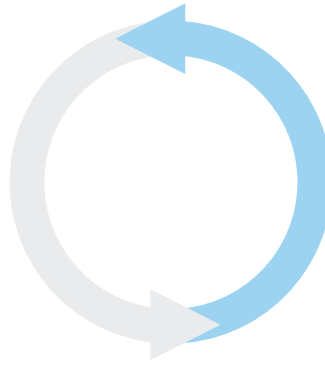
Spend time getting to know your team professionally and personally.  
Teach and coach employees.  
Let each team member know how important they are to the team and how they fit in the picture.

## SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Make sure the employee understands what is expected from them.  
Ask open-ended questions.  
Have the employee repeat back what you are asking them to do.

## PROVIDE RESOURCES/REMOVE BARRIERS

Provide the employee the resources and support they need to complete the job.  
Remove barriers preventing the employee from completing the job.



## APPLY APPROPRIATE RESPONSES

### CAR/Success Feedback

**Context:** Where you are  
**Action:** Specific behavior observed  
**Result:** Impact of behaviors

### CAR-AR/Guidance Feedback

**Context:** Where you are  
**Action:** Specific behavior observed  
**Result:** Impact of behaviors  
Ask open-ended questions  
Alternative **Action**  
Alternative **Result**

## MONITOR/GUIDE PERFORMANCE

Go where the job is being performed to identify opportunities for feedback.  
Be a resource to employees while observing, refraining from only looking for the negative.

### Giving Effective Feedback

H&P's COACH program establishes models for providing feedback that drives positive change. Feedback models — CAR (Content/Action/Result), CAR/AR (Content/Action/Result/Alternative Action/Alternative Result), and COACH (Care/Observe/Approach/Converse/Help) — promote proactive engagement.

By nature, people often tend to focus on negative behaviors and at-risk conditions in the work environment. However, the COACH program encourages the acknowledgment and promotion of safe and desired behaviors through success feedback (CAR), thereby boosting morale. For tackling undesired behaviors, the guidance feedback (CAR/AR) approach invites open conversations between the observer and the individual displaying the behavior. This method empowers employees to construct their own solutions to the issue, significantly increasing the likelihood of behavioral change. For entry level employees, COACH is a simplified model which outlines the necessary steps to deal with various behaviors.



## COACH CYCLE

- C**are: Invest in others by Caring
- O**bserve: Reinforce safe work practices and correct at-risk behaviors
- A**pproach: Approach someone when you see something
- C**onverse: Specific/Behavioral/Timely/Sincere
- H**elp: Employee understand behavior/ provide recourse and remove barriers

### A Paradigm Shift

There is transformative power in embracing feedback and accountability through innovative frameworks and empathy-driven approaches. When feedback and accountability are harnessed thoughtfully, they become catalysts for growth, trust, and a shared commitment to excellence, forging a resilient and thriving work environment.



Scan for more free safety resources