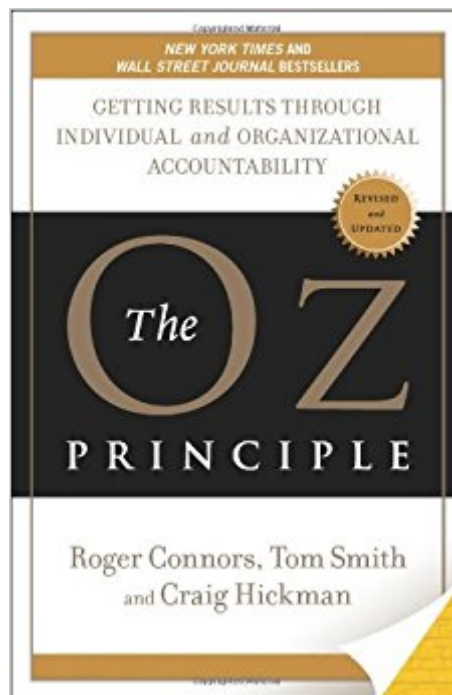




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# The Oz Principle: Getting Results Through Individual And Organizational Accountability



## Synopsis

The definitive book on workplace accountability by the New York Times bestselling authors of *How Did That Happen?* Since it was originally published in 1994, *The Oz Principle* has sold nearly 600,000 copies and become the worldwide bible on accountability. Through its practical and invaluable advice, thousands of companies have learned just how vital personal and organizational accountability is for a company to achieve and maintain its best results. At the core of the authors' message is the idea that when people take personal ownership of their organization's goals and accept responsibility for their own performance, they become more invested and work at a higher level to ensure not only their own success, but everyone's. Now more than ever, *The Oz Principle* is vital to anyone charged with obtaining results. It is a must have, must read, and must apply classic business book.

## Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Portfolio; Rev Upd edition (May 4, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1591843480

ISBN-13: 978-1591843481

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 228 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #14,395 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in [Books > Business & Money > Management & Leadership > Production & Operations](#) #40 in [Books > Business & Money > Processes & Infrastructure > Organizational Learning](#) #314 in [Books > Business & Money > Management & Leadership > Leadership](#)

## Customer Reviews

“The Oz Principle describes what we’ve all suspected - that it isn’t just America in crisis, but the American character. The good news is that Connors, Smith, and Hickman also describe the yellow brick road we must follow to rebuild the dominant qualities to achieve success.”  
—Stephen R. Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Tom Smith and Roger Connors are cofounders of Partners in Leadership, an international

management consulting firm with hundreds of clients in almost all major industries. They are also the coauthors of *Journey to the Emerald City*, a sequel to *The Oz Principle*. Roger Connors and Tom Smith are cofounders of Partners in Leadership, an international management consulting firm with hundreds of clients in almost all major industries. They are also the coauthors of *Journey to the Emerald City*, a sequel to *The Oz Principle*.

Before adopting this for your business it is worth considering whether it will achieve your goals and if it will have unintended consequences. One of the first things you may notice in this book is that the authors have trademarked the commercial use of the two phrases "above the line" and "below the line". The horizontal "line" separates two types of behavior and attitudes, which represents the OZ principle. This might be some indication of their intentions. Above the line thinking is about being accountable and below the line thinking is about "the blame game". In other words, the authors posit that we live in a culture of entitlement and pseudo-victimization where we are motivated to avoid accountability and blame others for failure. Consequently, this book (and its associated training courses) is often selected by management to obtain more "accountability" (and less excuses) from their employees. Such a simplistic formula with a few twists and many anecdotal stories provide the necessary fuel for a highly successful book as well as a robust training and consulting practice. But, the expected results for your organization may not live up to the hype. This should be somewhat obvious on critical reflection, if you believe that people are not nearly as one-dimensional as this approach suggests. I am all for accountability but have some concerns with this approach. First, its all-encompassing, individually-focused assessment of attitudinal performance is grossly over-simplistic, but interestingly appealing to organizations that are seeking simple solutions to their performance problems. It also appears to satisfy a number of individuals and managers who find solace in uncomplicated prescriptions to guide their staff behaviors. But, if you adopt this approach, be sure your managers don't use it to silence your employees and essentially reduce all problems to a single cause by attributing the accountability to one person. According to the authors, when individuals are "confused", adopt a "wait and see" position, or try to "cover their tail", they are acting below the line, which comes across as a pejorative if not an accusatory label. This attribution is based on the notion that members do have the power to perform above the line should they so choose. So it is always deemed to be the employee's fault. What is missing here is the possibility that problems might lay elsewhere (such as in processes, coordination, resources, etc.) or result from multiple causes. Above the line behavior is described as steps to accountability, which include "see it", "own it", "solve it", and "do it". While this is rather

basic, it could be valuable training for some, to focus on basic execution rather than being paralyzed by inaction. More important though is the primary flaw in this theory, which is its failure to deal with the realities of power and control in organizational settings. While there is a brief mention of empowerment (p. 203) the authors imply that this is the fault of employees. "...employees allow themselves to feel like victims of managers, management behaves accordingly, and results get held hostage by indecision and inaction" (p. 204). In reality, information, connections, and resources are also important keys to empowerment, but somehow employees are accountable for gaining access to these without upsetting existing organizational structures or fearing any potential punishment for coloring outside the lines. Some readers may be confused about the authors' concept of "accountability" which is the core theme of the book. Managers typically hold employees accountable which is clearly an expression of power. Yet, it is unlikely that employees could be seen as holding their boss accountable, at least with any punitive force. Consequently, the authors sidestep this issue by redefining the word "accountability" to be "a personal choice to rise above one's circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results" (p. 47). However, simply redefining the word for their own use and pretending that it will somehow allow individuals to acquire resources and become accountable seems highly dubious. It is more likely that those with powerful positions will retain its pejorative use. In other words accountability is still a one way street in the land of OZ. At the same time, the authors have a plan to "hold" employees accountable (now reverting to the traditional meaning of the word) by using a three step process (p. 192) that offers praise to employees who achieve specific measurable goals. While the employees may be invited to share in the goal setting, the asymmetrical availability of power and the ability to mete out rewards and punishments still reside with only one party. Another underlying premise of this book is that individuals (whatever their position) are in complete control of the outcomes of their work. This is a long-held traditional view of organizations based on reductionist logic which has been significantly challenged in the Complexity literature (see my other reviews). In reality, very few substantive problems are the result of single causality. To the extent that long-term outcomes are reliant on some forces beyond individual control, it is not just unfair to implement the version of accountability described in this book, but also possibly counterproductive. A better approach might be to drop the accountability rhetoric altogether and focus more on encouraging personal mastery, adaptation, and cooperative knowledge sharing. In other words, it is doubtful if the Oz principle is particularly good for accountability, motivation, or outcomes. If you found this review useful, please click "Yes".

I read this book at a time in my life when it felt like the whole world was against me. I was going through a divorce, there were multiple layoffs at my job(including a close friend that I convinced to come work with me) and I had just had a huge amount of workload dumped on me with no extra pay. I very quickly fell into a victim cycle. This book helped me to See how I controlled my own destiny. By taking accountability into my own hands I was motivated to not let anyone or any event deny me from being successful. After reading this book and making a commitment to always strive to be above the line I was able to get a promotion, move on from my failed marriage, improve my health and complete my first Marathon and help others be successful in their own way. Many reviewers have degrade this book as corporate nonsense to make the employees take the blame. I won't deny that probably is the case in several companies, however, there are great lessons in this book that helped me realize that blaming corporate gets me nowhere. My actions have the ability to improve my situation, but rarely does playing the blame game ever produce desired results.

This book helped me reflect on my life. It helped me to think about certain life changing situations where I choose accountability over victimization and vice versa. The book helped me to understand there is a fine line between the two and its a normal struggle to hold yourself accountable. This book has really gave me some insight that I will use at this junction in my life (and in the future) to make new strategic personal goals.

Excellent quality. Super easy install in few minutes.

This is an excellent book that is very applicable in both personal and professional settings. I highly recommend it to everyone, especially business professionals. My company has applied many principles from this book, and we've seen a great development in our culture.

Love the principle, but the book could be cut in half and have the exact same impact. If you are a speed reader, cut through the babble and focus on the principles.

great book

I enjoyed the book. A lot of useful insights. It was intersting to consider the lessons given in the Wizard of OZ, and how they provide very useful points in business.

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