

EVERYONE'S ACCOUNTABLE, ALL OF THE TIME

*Excerpt from LEADERSHIP (Chapter 4) by Rudolph Giuliani
Recommended book for all Managers/Leaders*

The principles of leadership and accountability are just as applicable in running a government organization as they are in the sales profession. This excerpt from chapter four portrays the essence and elements of an effective activity management system, which Rudy Giuliani developed while mayor of NYC to help him realize dramatic decreases in vital trends, especially in overall crime (down 70%) and murder rate (down 65%), as well as overtime expenditures and sick leave. *SAM, Inc.*

“A lot of leaders have catchy slogans on their desk; many believe in them. The two-word sign on my desk genuinely summarizes my whole philosophy: I’m Responsible.”

More than anyone, leaders should welcome being held accountable. Nothing builds confidence in a leader more than a willingness to take responsibility for what happens during his watch. One might add that nothing builds a stronger case for holding employees to a high standard than a boss who holds himself to even higher ones. This is true in any organization, but it’s particularly important in government.

In the private sector, there’s a bottom line. The mission is clear: profits. In government, however, the temptation to cover shortfalls by increasing taxes can make political leaders lazy.

My aim as mayor was to solve problems directly and to send the message that government could accomplish things. But there was a more profound message as well. I didn’t want my administration to get lazy about the “small stuff,” thinking that items like park cleanliness or garbage pickup didn’t matter.

From 1989 and 1993, NYC was looking at 9,000 to 10,000 felonies a week, and anywhere from 1,800 to 2,200 murders a year. We needed to do something about it. One thing we needed was to install fairer, performance-based systems for evaluating job performance.

The center of our efforts was a process called Compstat. This combined two techniques, neither of which had previously been implemented. First, crime statistics were collected and analyzed every single day, to recognize patterns and potential trouble before it spread. At the Compstat meetings, we used that data to hold each borough command’s feet to the fire—a hundred police at a time.

Next, we set about determining who bought into the idea of accountability and who didn’t. Any manager who didn’t have their heart in the new system was made to understand that it was time to retire or face a demotion.

At the same time, we set our sights on clarifying the purpose of the Police Department and crafting indicators to tell us whether our goals were being met: accountability again.

For years, the statistics in the Police Department that drew the most attention were the number of arrests and the reaction times to emergency calls. In fact, neither is the ultimate goal of a police force: public safety and reducing crime. Usually, a crime has already occurred by the time a 911 call is made. If one is lucky enough to make an arrest that only puts a dent in future crimes the perpetrator might have committed rather than protecting the immediate victim. Furthermore, we needed reliable data. Arrest numbers, for example, are susceptible to manipulation.

A main frustration with the state of policing was that each set of statistics was already obsolete by the time it was available. Examining the numbers annually or even quarterly wasn’t accomplishing

anything in real time. By the time a pattern of crime was noticed, it would have changed; and when the statistics finally did come in, even for huge numbers of crimes, they didn't reflect the actual volume. Statistics cover only the crimes that police know have occurred. As crime escalates, a small percentage of it is reported, because any victim must have confidence that the authorities can and will respond in an effective way.

I thought it would take 2-3 years to implement a system to access statistics on a daily basis. Thanks to Jack Maple, three weeks later the first numbers rolled out of the station houses. It works this way: the police officer in the street makes a report and enters it into his precinct's On-Line Complaint System (OLCS). The report is transmitted to the Compstat mainframe and entered in two places: 1) on a map that shows geographical concentrations of criminal activity and sorts them by hour of day, type of crime, and day of week; and 2) on a weekly summary of crime complaints that displays trends over a variety of periods, such as week-to-date, month-to-date, and year-to-date, and compares the current year's total with the prior year's and shows percentage change. The data can only result in meaningful response if it's accurate.

Precinct commanders rely on these reports to identify patterns and allocate resources. Before Compstat, it was anyone's guess whether, say, a pattern of three A.M. gas-station robberies was emerging. A sharp-eyed policeman might notice his own activity concentrating in certain areas at certain times, but he would have no way of knowing whether his colleagues were fielding the same type of incident at the same time and place. Even if an astute commander recognized a pattern, he couldn't know whether it was occurring in a neighboring precinct, and thus wouldn't think to seek intelligence from that commander. Using Compstat, the goal of preventing crime rather than reacting to it was fulfilled. With patterns identified early, the commander deploys officers to probable targets and arrests the criminals before they have robbed their garage, instead of hoping the 911 call arrives in time to catch the fleeing villains.

The Compstat reports are distributed department wide. Everyone from the major and the police commissioner to the commander one precinct over can see whose numbers are improving and whose aren't. Successful precincts can be asked for advice; those in need can be offered remedies. Then comes the heart of the Compstat process: the weekly meeting.

From the very start of these meetings, the NYPD realized that something special was taking shape. We made it difficult to pass the buck by requiring that the precinct commander's entire staff be present for the meeting.

Jack Maple and Louis Anemone, Chief of Patrol, were masters of both carrot and stick. Sure, there were times when someone needed to be called on the carpet. This was not to humiliate the person concerned, but to ensure that he would know people were paying attention and expected him to improve.

Pointing out underperformance might clear the way for that commander to ask for help; maybe he wasn't bringing it up so no one would notice he needed it. Judging how deeply a commander accepted responsibility told his bosses a lot about how committed he was to the principle of accountability. There were also plenty of opportunities to throw compliments around, and to recognize superior bravery or insight. *One of the benefits of Compstat was that commanders had objective proof of their good performance.*

These meetings were as much about planning as accountability. Sure, someone whose numbers were ominous was expected to provide an explanation and a plan for improvement; but then someone who knew he was going to have to stand in front of his peers and defend his performance would usually do whatever he could to improve that performance before it embarrassed him. The mere fact that one knew that one was going to be called to account provided the motivation to try new strategies. So in a sense Compstat had already performed one of its main functions before the borough commanders even got to their feet. The meeting's other main function was to serve as a brainstorming session.

The impact of Compstat was immediate and revolutionary. Major felonies fell 12.3 percent from 1993 to 1994. In two of the most serious categories-murder and robbery-the city's reductions were the largest one-year drops ever-17.9 percent and 15.5 percent, respectively. While it was true that crime was falling nationwide, New York's rate of reduction was three to six times the national average. (In 2001, the Windy City, with 2.9 million people, had 20 more murders than New York City, which has a population of 8 million.)

For any system to remain effective, it must continually challenge itself. Compstat's success was so conspicuous it would have been easy to sit around congratulating ourselves. But a leader's role is to raise the bar.

Every time we'd add a performance indicator, we'd see a similar pattern of improvement. For example, when we first started tracking graffiti arrests in 1995, the NYPD made a total of 475 collars. By 2001, that number was 1,485. In 1997, we incorporated statistics about police behavior. That year 419 uniformed officers fired shots. Every year since, the number has shrunk, down to 175 in 2001, the lowest since records started being kept in 1973 (there were 761 that year). If we could count it, we could Compstat it.

Even after eight years, I remain electrified by how effective those Compstat meetings could be. It became the crown jewel of my administration's push for accountability-yet it had been resisted by many who did not want their performance to be measured. Eight years later, when murders were cut by almost 70 percent and overall crime was down by about 65 percent, the doubters had all but disappeared.

When serious crimes started to rise in one precinct, Chief Esposito made it clear that he wanted to see a lot more quality-of-life C summonses issued. They could have been written for dice and drinking. Looking at his own Compstat sheet Espo continued, "Forty-eight C's is a good number, but more should be given." It was a clear application of the Broken Windows theory.

They continued to compare notes, brainstorm and suggest solutions. The Compstat meeting is the ultimate expression of how much success relies on acting as a team sharing ideas, holding each other accountable, relying on one another for support.

ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS THE BOARD

The overwhelming success of Compstat in the police department convinced me that true accountability could improve the performance and morale of any organization. The New York City Department of Correction had a 100-year history of chaos. The system was averaging 120 to 150 slashings and stabbings a month. That was to be the next target.

Kerik acted swiftly to create the Total Efficiency Accountability Management System-TEAMS (acronyms are what people in government get in lieu of stock options)-in 1995. He assigned a lot of the organization and implementation to Debbie Kurtz, who later worked with Geoff Hess to bring accountability programs system wide TEAMS was based on the same principles as Compstat-data collection, performance indicators, and regular meetings at which the results were probed. By 2000, inmate-on-inmate violence had been reduced by a miraculous 93 percent over the previous five years. Overtime expenditures fell by 44 percent and sick leave by 31 percent.

An inmate who believes nothing can happen to him feels free to behave like a lunatic. Someone serving twenty years doesn't want another five added on. When I said that even with all the problems New York City faced in those days I was going to make sure violent inmates were arrested and prosecuted, people looked at me as if I had two heads...until they saw the results-139 slashings and stabbings in July

1995; 1 in September 2001. Who benefits when inmate-on-inmate violence falls from 1,093 incidents in 1995 to 70 in 2000? Everyone!

By the time Bernie left Correction, they were using TEAMS as a full management tool, making it the focal point around which they managed the agency. Everything from use-of-force incidents to average daily inmate population to inmate grievances to sick time and absenteeism-a total of 592 indicators-was tracked and analyzed and defended at the accountability sessions. There's a case to be made that a system can have too many indicators. Making it so complicated that only a few people understand it defeats the purpose of getting everyone on the same page. But that's the beauty of decentralizing control-each department was allowed to create its own system, and so could decide how best to solve its problems. As mayor, I didn't say, "Each agency must have 350 indicators." If 592 worked for the Correction Department-and obviously it did-I wasn't going to interfere.

The best indicators don't simply measure performance, they improve it. One of the strongest proofs that the model works is that it continues to do so, even after whoever implements it moves on.

Four Parameters to be Submitted:

- Data had to be collected regularly and reliably-preferably on a daily basis, but at least once a week-at a set time.
- Twenty to forty performance indicators that got at the core mission of the Agency had to be established.
- A regular meeting must be convened – with a minimum frequency of once a Week-including a floor plan that demonstrated exactly which agency leaders were required to be at the meeting.
- Ten or more representative performance indicators that the agency wanted on its page of the city's web site must be submitted.

Putting the information online held the department's feet even closer to the fire. The citizens and the media could hold the agency accountable at the same time as the agency did. There was another motive behind my drive to put the numbers on the Internet. As someone who cares deeply about New York City, I knew that I, for one, would want to know how well it was doing, and that it would be hard for whoever replaced me to remove the indicators once they were up, lest he appeared to be covering up. It was about answering to the public.

Creating indicators that have real bite is one of the toughest challenges of implementing a Compstat-style accountability system. CapStat's emphasis on numbers gives some critics the impression that it is a coldly analytical way to go about achieving a goal. In fact, the opposite is true. By emphasizing results rather than methods, commissioners hold their managers responsible for improvements on their performance indicators but also give them considerable latitude to experiment with achieving those improvements. What works in one area may not be the best method elsewhere.

Accountability works to improve all systems. Creating a culture where employees feel responsible is momentous. As each agency became more efficient and more effective, people felt more positive. Everybody likes to play for a winning team.

Suggested Reading: *Reinventing Government*, by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler



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