

## Responsibility: a declining value, a commitment to revitalize



"You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed." – The Little Prince

"Everything that increases freedom increases responsibility." – Victor Hugo

You have surely noticed in a meeting, when reaching the end and tasks and responsibilities need to be assigned or taken, that a silence often settles in—an "interminable" wait for someone to step up and commit. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has intensified in recent years, both in the professional and associative worlds. Indeed, with increasing demands, multiple projects running simultaneously, and ever-growing expectations, pressure mounts, conflicts multiply, and imbalance sets in, pushing individuals to their limits. Work, tasks, and colleagues (especially certain superiors) are no longer resources but burdens. Consequently, people focus less and less on the common good and more on their own interests, increasing feelings of loneliness, isolation, and powerlessness. A vicious cycle emerges.

To break this negative spiral, it is essential to establish a virtuous cycle. Let's take responsibility, let's be the first to help, think of others before ourselves, take initiative, and not wait for someone else to do it. And if you think, "But I already do so much, and others do nothing!", take responsibility and say "no!" On this note, I invite you to read my article on courage: *Management: How to Strengthen the Notion of Courage!*

### Responsibility

Derived from "responsible," with the suffix -ity. From the Latin verb *respondere* ("to stand as guarantor, to answer for"), related to *sponsio* ("promise"). This gives the word "responsibility" the idea of a duty to "fulfill one's promises."

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It is the obligation to answer for one's actions, decisions, and their consequences. This notion, affecting both individual and collective spheres, is of paramount importance in the social, professional, and environmental fabric. However, today, we observe a worrying tendency to evade this responsibility or at least minimize it, a phenomenon with profound repercussions.

### **The etymology and the notion of accountability**

In English, the term "accountability" goes beyond mere responsibility. It encompasses the idea of being answerable, of reporting one's actions to others. This nuance is crucial: it implies transparency and exposure of one's actions, often in response to a collective or hierarchical structure. Being "accountable" means not only acting consciously but also fully assuming the results of one's choices, whether good or bad.

### **A society avoiding responsibility**

Today, many avoid taking responsibility. This phenomenon is evident in various contexts: at work, in social relationships, and even in our relationship with the environment. Several factors contribute to this increasing irresponsibility:

1. **The complexity of modern systems** – Social and professional structures have become so complex that individuals may feel lost in a system where responsibilities are diluted. This dilution allows some to hide behind the organization, avoiding the burden of their decisions.
2. **Fear of failure** – In a world that glorifies success and stigmatizes failure, many prefer not to take on responsibilities out of fear of not measuring up. This fear of making mistakes leads to decision-making paralysis.
3. **Anonymity and social disconnection** – Increasing anonymity in our societies, reinforced by digital interactions, allows individuals to evade their responsibilities. The social distance created by technology dehumanizes relationships and reduces the sense of personal commitment.

### **The consequences of widespread irresponsibility**

Refusing to take responsibility has serious consequences. On an individual level, it leads to a loss of self-confidence and a feeling of passivity. Collectively, it can result in the deterioration of social cohesion, where everyone waits for someone else to take the initiative. In organizations, it translates into increasing inefficiency, internal conflicts, and an inability to address environmental and social challenges.

### **Revitalizing responsibility: a necessary commitment**

It is crucial to restore responsibility as a fundamental value in our personal lives, social interactions, and professional commitments. To achieve this, several approaches can be explored:

1. **Education in responsibility** – From an early age, education should include a dimension of "responsibilization." Teaching children to take ownership of their actions, recognize their mistakes, and understand the consequences of their choices is essential in shaping responsible citizens.
2. **Valuing constructive failure** – We need to change our perception of failure. Instead of stigmatizing it, we should see it as a learning opportunity. This approach removes the fear of decision-making and encourages initiative.

3. **Encouraging transparency and accountability** – In organizations and businesses, it is vital to foster a culture where everyone accounts for their actions. This involves clear accountability structures, where both successes and failures are shared transparently.
4. **Community and environmental engagement** – Reconnecting individuals with their community and local environment can also strengthen the sense of responsibility. Actively participating in associative or environmental projects creates a direct link between personal actions and collective impact.

## Conclusion

Taking responsibility means accepting to be an active participant in one's life and society. In a constantly changing world with numerous challenges, rehabilitating this value is more necessary than ever. Whether in private life, social commitments, or organizations, responsibility is the glue that allows us to build a sustainable and harmonious future. By encouraging everyone to fully assume their actions, we can collectively rise to tomorrow's challenges.

Being responsible today means fully assuming the consequences of one's actions, decisions, and choices, both in personal, professional, and social life. It involves awareness of the impact of one's actions on oneself, others, and the environment, as well as a willingness to be held accountable. In a contemporary context, this translates into several key aspects:

1. Making conscious decisions: being responsible means making choices while being fully aware of the possible repercussions, both positive and negative. This requires ethical reflection and the ability to anticipate both short- and long-term consequences.
2. Assuming the consequences of one's actions: responsibility means not running away from one's obligations, even in the face of failure or difficulties. It involves acknowledging mistakes, learning from them, and taking corrective measures if necessary.
3. Being accountable: in the Anglo-Saxon sense, accountability goes beyond mere responsibility. It means answering to others, whether to a hierarchy, a team, a community, or society. It implies transparency and honesty in one's actions.
4. Contributing to the common good: responsibility today is not limited to an individual dimension. It also involves understanding one's role in society and acting in ways that positively contribute to it, whether through environmental, social, or civic engagement.
5. Demonstrating Reliability: responsible individuals are considered trustworthy. They honor their commitments, keep their promises, and act consistently with their values.
6. Actively engaging: being responsible today also means actively participating in the issues of our time, whether it be environmental protection, social justice, or sustainable development.

In short, being responsible today means being a conscious and engaged actor in one's own life and in the world around us, recognizing that our actions have an impact and that we must be accountable for them, for the benefit of all.

**"Responsibility is the price of freedom."** – Cyrille Guimard

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