



Q2 INFLUENCE: RESPONSIBILITY

The Responsibility of Leadership and Management in Creating a Culture of Accountability

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Dan Noble

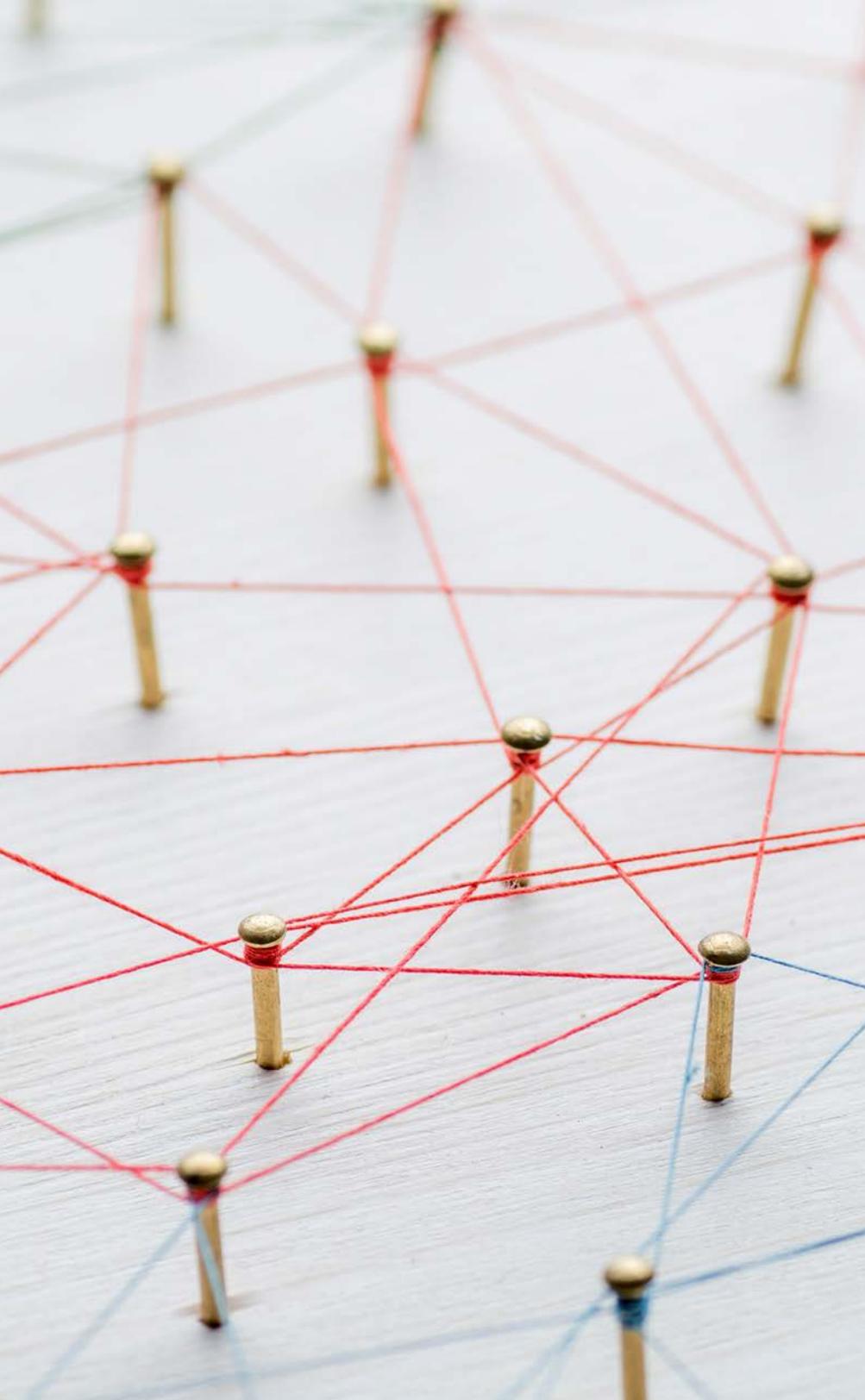
President, Chairman and CEO, HKS Architects

HKS' Dan Noble investigates the continuum of individuality, teams and structure

Since I began my own journey as a CEO in 2014, I have spent a great deal of time thinking about what leadership means. More importantly, what are the characteristics of great leaders? I believe effective leadership begins with knowing yourself and connecting with those values you hold most dear. Most of the great leaders I have known were people who embodied their values, approached life with a boundless optimism and curiosity, and had a dogged determination to do more, learn more, be more.

Great leaders also have the ability to articulate a vision and to motivate people to achieve it. They don't rely on persuasive powers alone. They intrinsically know how to connect with people and how to inspire them to work together collectively to reach a goal that is bigger than themselves.

Leadership and management are often mistaken as being the same thing, but they are really very different. Leaders are focused on the vision of what could be and on rallying the troops to keep raising the bar, while managers are more focused on the day-to-day activities of getting things done. For any company to be successful, it needs both a visionary leader and talented managers, and it also needs a culture of accountability. Sometimes people have to wear both hats throughout the day.



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There's a dichotomy between individual agency and working effectively within an overall firm structure. They're both important, and in a firm like ours where we value an entrepreneurial spirit, we've got to have both to be successful and consistent and have a repeatable process through our 25 offices and 1,400 people worldwide.

Growing up, I loved basketball. I played through my freshman year of college until architecture became too demanding. We had two high schools in my hometown of Aberdeen, South Dakota. My high school had a class of around 110, and the other school had a class of around 400. The two teams were in different conferences. We both won our conferences three out of the four years I was in high school, and we both won a state championship during that time. In the summer, we had basketball camps and played each other often. We had so much structure in these camps and practices that the many repetitive drills and basics we learned in those drills and practices became ingrained in us.

The thing I loved about basketball was that there was this team dynamic ... a structure that allowed for individual improvisational decisions within a collective understanding of where those individual decisions fit in the overall team structure. There was a clarity of roles and a responsibility to the team to perform to the best of your ability while supporting your teammates. There was trust, respect, communication, focus, commitment and a deep sense of accountability to each other.

That is the culture we strive to create in our firm. We want to lean into the skills we have learned and the trust we have built with each other to work seamlessly together across all our offices and practices, while still having the individual agency to do what we love to do. We are running the drills, recognizing we all have a part to play in making our firm the best it can be.

As leaders, creating the opportunities for unique individuals to thrive within structured team environments is not just our role in our firms, it is a responsibility to the development of our colleagues, to the well-being of our organizations, and to the clients, partners and communities we serve. Creating those cultures of accountability are what we're here for.

Dan Noble is president, chairman and CEO of HKS Architects.