

Water and Sanitation in the News

Cloak of Accountability

You get a culture of entrepreneurship after you have successfully changed the accountability system so that people can use a better process. Process drives culture, not the other way around, so you can't just change the culture, you have to change the system.

When we look at this quote by Eric Ries it makes one think. It asks the question – who is accountable for sustainable clean healthy drinking water at WTW? Is there a level of true accountability, is there a level of pride in work ethic or care to the end user, the community?

We change the accountability system by empowering people and giving ownership and then rewarding that ownership by recognition through implementing a progressive and appealing process.

In South Africa, we have desperately deteriorating water infrastructure – to a point now that it is failing our citizens. The water crisis in the Free State and Northern Cape has come to a point of dry taps and communities around the country are protesting. This has a wave of negative effects on other areas as well, such as education, health services, and the cost of other destroyed infrastructure due to people's frustration in poor service delivery and so on. But we can turn this around by creating a spirit of pride through accountability and ownership.

WAMTechnology offers this through Municipal Assistant™. We empower through training and support and assist municipalities to attain the Blue and Green Drop status easily and effectively through proper implementation of a user friendly and effective system. A system that is designed for South African municipalities by a South African company with the understanding of the problems and gaps experienced in municipalities daily.

I have met and spoken with municipal managers and staff at WTW and WWTW and was very encouraged by their enthusiasm of wanting to attain high Blue and Green Drop scores. They've said the same thing time and time again. (There is so much to attaining Blue and Green Drop in terms of documentation and standards, that we have to draw reports from different systems of information, and it is time consuming). The current systems at many District and Local municipalities isn't working. When I asked one WTW manager about their maintenance routine, he said maintenance don't communicate with WTW and this goes to show the process currently utilized doesn't work. This is where Municipal Assistant™ makes its name it bridges that gap. It is a system that records daily and effectively in one system and data bank. When time comes for blue and green drop auditing the

information and history is there and aligned with government legislation and regulation. Municipal Assistant wasn't designed to take over another system but rather can be incorporated into systems already in use at Municipalities or function as an independent system. Having interim engineering capacities as part of the solution WAMTech offers in itself a unique solution as it forms a vital part of improving infrastructure effectively and empowering municipal staff in day to day tasks through training and support.

If you are building a culture where honest expectations are communicated and peer accountability is the norm, then the group will address poor performance and attitudes. We've heard this over and over again in the many interviews we hear with politicians and also televised discussions in Parliament. However, are we doing this and empowering through example or are we passing the buck? I encourage the top brass at our municipalities to take a stand and empower through accountability. Ultimately it's the communities that suffer the consequences by becoming vulnerable to poor infrastructure leading to serious health issues, more than the municipalities losing Blue and Green Drop scores.

The systems are there for use and to empower, but need the cloak of accountability to carry the solution to the full. What would our children say one day if infrastructure completely collapsed and clean sustainable water was a thing of the past and the consequences of failure was part of their future? If we want to change the status quo of our ageing water infrastructure, we need to change the culture of our accountability by changing the process in giving municipal staff ownership of systems that take care of the basics as well as function as a vital tool in all the areas of necessity and not look for solutions in complexity. Less is more, more is less. Have you ever heard the saying "Keep it Simple" well if we do just that we empower a process that works and keeps working.

The cloak of responsibility should be worn by the top brass, however should also very much be worn by all at our WTW and water sector as a whole, including cabinet level leaders. A building is only as strong as its foundation and Municipal Assistant™ is designed as a foundation in the holistic approach WAMTech has taken to design modules that are user friendly and have hands on back up support as well as the services it offers to a solution that has been proven and works. The municipalities that are excelling are the municipalities that have the process driving the culture. "What you do is what matters, not what you think or say or plan."

We at WAMTech wear our cloak of accountability with pride.

Letter by Mike Nord – WAMTech Sales Executive

WAMTech are specialists in implementing technology systems for improved governance, focussing on Water and Public Health Information Systems

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