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Total Transparency Breeds Accountability Which Breeds  
Responsibility

*By William Gindlesperger, CEO  
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"Accountability breeds responsibility." That is a quote from Stephen Covey, author of the best-selling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. It has sold more than 15 million copies in 38 languages since first being published in 1989.

His premise is the first three habits -- "*Be Proactive*," "*Begin with the End in Mind*" and "*Put First Things First*" -- establish self-mastery, and they set the stage for the next three that call for interdependence or working together -- "*Think Win/Win*," "*Seek First to Understand, then to be Understood*," and "*Synergize*." The seventh habit is one focused on self-rejuvenation.

Even though Covey wrote his best seller two decades ago, the practical applications remain timeless. His belief that when a business believes that there are enough resources and allows for its own projected success to be shared with others, then real business success is likely. Optimism, after all, is contagious.

This is contrary to what we too often read and hear when there is very little or no optimism and when there is no clear accountability, as we are witnessing with the oil mess in the Gulf of Mexico. Seeing corporate and government executives pointing fingers to somehow escape blame is disheartening.

To avoid such a scenario in everyday business life, management must establish full accountability and that only comes with 100% transparency. Advancements in technology and methodology make total transparency and full accountability possible today with full disclosure of individual input and the documentation of who does what, when and why.

Take, for instance, what transpires when a totally transparent procurement approach is applied to print buying. Stakeholders to the buying process can have the details of every transaction available at their fingertips -- from concept and creative through completed specifications, vendor attributes and history, production milestones, quality and service requirements and commitments, estimated and final pricing, delivery timeliness and quality checks, change orders and approved invoicing. The information is entered into a computerized communications and workflow system as part of an on-going regimen designed for transparency and information sharing. Each stakeholder is given access for input along the way. Marketing people direct creative and program

design, procurement people the details of obtaining the printing, shipping people the delivery, and finance people the invoice handling and so on. Everything is recorded, documented and archived into a shared system.

Should the project hit a snag, it is easy to look at the communications flow and determine not just who made a decision but why it was made. If the production process was delayed and that caused a late shipment, the system produces in detail work flow documentation.

Total transparency breeds accountability which, in turn breeds, responsibility. Should something go wrong, communications data provides an understanding of what event or series of events caused the problem and how it can be fixed and even avoided next time around. This is a far better way of resolving an issue than trying to lay blame based on a "he said, she said" strategy. That is counterproductive and too often causes ill will. An approach that reinforces openness and full transparency provides a valuable history that can be reviewed when similar projects are being contemplated for the future.

Project analysis is augmented significantly, risk management is strengthened and quality control is improved. Pricing also is archived, which can be a real eye opener, especially for the executive team that is trying to improve the organization's bottom line.

Given the sophistication of an open approach for buying goods and services, cost reductions of 25% to 50% are not unrealistic on the purchase of direct mail, marketing materials, commercial print, labels, customized packaging materials, CD ROM and all other items where information is placed on a substrate (paper, plastic, metal, textiles or electronic media). Purchases in these categories typically account for 3% to 20% of an organization's operating budget. Yet, these purchases can be decentralized and spread throughout every nook and cranny of an organization.

Cost reductions at 25% to 50% level are only possible when the organization promotes an optimally competitive procurement process, rather than acquiescing to suppliers who prefer higher fees brought through negotiation, rate cards and other non-transparent procurement methodologies.

Full transparency breeds accountability, and accountability enables responsibility. And that says it all when it comes to decreasing costs and increasing profitability.

## About the Author

**William Gindlesperger***Author*

**William Gindlesperger** is a nationally recognized entrepreneur, inventor, author and consultant in print and procurement. He founded ABC Advisors and its successor, e-LYNXX Corporation, in 1975. Under Mr. Gindlesperger's leadership the firm has grown to become North America's procurement authority. Print buyers and suppliers alike have benefited from his insight and innovation. Mr. Gindlesperger has directed major in-plant studies in both the private and public sectors and is highly regarded for his knowledge, advice and work on behalf of firms in matters pertaining to the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). He has testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration regarding government print and procurement policy. He also has worked directly with numerous Congressional and Senatorial members and staff and has advised Congress on the development, operations and future of GPO print procurement and the federal print program in general. He was a founder and chairman of Printing Industries of America's (PIA) PrintPAC (political action committee) and has been recognized for his contributions to PIA and services to the printing industry. He was inducted into PIA's Ben Franklin Honor Society of print industry leaders in 2009 for his lifetime contributions to the print industry. *Supply & Demand Chain Executive* honored Mr. Gindlesperger by including him in its 2010 listing of the most influential leaders in the supply and procurement profession.

Mr. Gindlesperger invented the methodology that optimizes cost reduction in the procurement of specification-defined goods and services. He has been granted two separate business method patents by the U.S. Patent Office, first for the competitive procurement of print and then for the competitive procurement of all customized and specification-defined goods and services. Under Mr. Gindlesperger's leadership, e-LYNXX has grown into the leading print management and procurement licensing firm in North America. e-LYNXX has been exclusively endorsed by Printing Industries of America (PIA) and has been named one of the top 100 procurement firms in North America by *Supply & Demand Chain Executive* magazine. His firm handles more than 200 on-going consulting assignments at any given time. Among its contracts is one with Educational & Institutional Cooperative Purchasing to assist colleges, universities and

other institutions nationwide with procurement and print-spend management. A native of Chambersburg, Pa., Mr. Gindlesperger is a graduate of Dickinson College.

**e-LYNXX Corporation**, a North American procurement authority, is endorsed by *Printing Industries of America (PIA)* and *Educational and Institutional Cooperative Purchasing (E&I)*. Founded in 1975, e-LYNXX has three divisions. • American Print Management provides enterprise print procurement solutions and patented competitive methods to reduce costs for direct mail, marketing materials, packaging and other procured print. • Patented Procurement Method grants patent licenses for supply chain optimization. • Government Print Management offers U.S. GPO bid services, access and assistance. [www.e-LYNXX.com](http://www.e-LYNXX.com)