1-Page Summary

When things feel out of your control, when you're dissatisfied with your life but don't know how to fix it, when it seems like you're caught in an endless torrent of bad luck, it's easy to shut down and feel sorry for yourself. What's the point in trying if you can't change anything?

But chances are, you have more power to create change than you think. In The Oz Principle, the authors use the classic novel, The Wizard of Oz, as a framework to teach people—from individuals seeking to improve their personal lives to company leadership trying to push their teams to new heights—how to get what they want. The lesson of Dorothy's quest is:

- No one is going to hand you the things you want or need...
- but you have the power to reach out and take them for yourself...
- as long as you don't get stuck in a victim mindset.

In The Wizard of Oz, the protagonist, Dorothy, and her motley companions travel down the Yellow Brick Road to meet the titular Wizard. Each is seeking something they believe the Wizard can provide: a way back home, courage, a heart, a brain. To their dismay, they eventually learn that the Wizard is a fraud; there's not a simple, magical solution to their problems. But it turns out they never even needed the Wizard—they already had what they'd wished for.

The Oz Principle is: **You can overcome obstacles and achieve your goals if you take the initiative.** In this guide to the book, we'll discuss how to embark on a journey from a mindset of victimization to one of **accountability.**

Two of the authors, Roger Connors and Tom Smith, are the founders of Partners in Leadership, a consulting company focused on leadership and management training. They've worked with numerous businesses to implement positive cultures and practices around accountability, and The Oz Principle has seen such success that they released an updated, revised version of the book in 2004, 10 years after its initial publication. Many of the most common problems that plague companies—low productivity, slow innovation, and poor morale—can be solved. But there aren't any tricks or shortcuts. Working through those problems requires people to take responsibility and hold themselves accountable, first on the individual level and then companywide.

The authors visualize the difference between failure and success as a line. **Accountability gets you “above the line” (into success), while victimization keeps you “below the line” (in the realm of failure).** After introducing the problems posed by the victim mentality and explaining the difference between above- and below-the-line behaviors, The Oz Principle outlines a series of steps to embrace accountability and create a culture of accountability in your organization.

**Understand the Victim Cycle**

People and companies operating “below the line” are caught in a victim cycle—the opposite of accountability. The victim cycle encompasses a variety of behaviors and thought patterns that keep you trapped, disempowered, and unable to realize your potential. They prevent you from taking advantage of opportunities for learning and growth. Often, these behaviors are signs that someone is making excuses for a half-hearted performance or trying to shield themselves from blame or extra work.

We can separate victim behaviors into two broad categories: **passiveness and selfishness.**

Passiveness can manifest in such behaviors as ignoring problems, denying that a problem exists, or refusing to respond to a problem unless it's on someone's direct orders. **Passiveness might seem harmless or even reasonable in some situations, but harmless isn't the same thing as helpful.**

Selfishness includes shifting responsibility or blame onto others, creating a narrative that absolves you of all wrongdoing, or just refusing to get involved in order to protect yourself from risk. These selfish behaviors can lead to situations where people play hot potato with a problem, more focused on passing it to someone else than making sure it gets solved. The problem then compounds as time passes.

You may be acting from a victim mentality without being aware of it. So how can you tell if you're “below the line,” or succumbing to victim behaviors?

**Signs You're Trapped in the Victim Cycle**

Here are the common behaviors and thought patterns indicating you're stuck in a victim mentality:

- Deflecting responsibility
- Making excuses, such as claiming you were confused and didn't know what to do
- Blaming other people and not blaming yourself at all
- Waiting for someone else to take charge
- Rejecting opportunities to improve
  - Refusing to reflect on your own actions and level of responsibility
  - Ignoring feedback from others
  - Being defensive
- Pessimism
  - Unproductive negativity (complaining; calling out problems but not offering solutions)
  - Focusing on what you can't control rather than the things you can
- Laziness
  - Prioritizing easy or short-term solutions over long-term ones
  - Needing to be seen as successful or in control (even if it means glossing over problems)

The word “victim” has a negative connotation, but it's not anything to be ashamed of. There's a sense of safety in the victim cycle—some of those behaviors can feel like a security blanket. But they prevent you from creating the best possible version of your life. By recognizing these behaviors in yourself, you can begin to let them go and focus on more productive actions. Solving problems, improving a situation for yourself and others, and getting closer to your goals will ultimately feel better for you in the long run.

Redefine Accountability

Accountability is the solution to the problems created by the victim cycle. In short, accountability means taking ownership of your circumstances by identifying how your actions contributed to them and how your...

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READ FULL SUMMARY OF THE OZ PRINCIPLE  READ COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE OZ PRINCIPLE

Here's a preview of the rest of Shortform's The Oz Principle summary:guide:

The Oz Principle Summary The Oz Principle Guide Part 1 | Chapters 1-3: Accountability Is the Key to Achieving Your Goals

Many people fail to take ownership of their actions and results, especially at work, where it's easy to succumb to a victim mentality. But in The Oz Principle, authors Roger Connors, Tom Smith, and Craig Hickman use the literary classic The Wizard of Oz to show how taking accountability for your personal successes and challenges is the key to improving results on both an individual and organizational level.

Connors and Smith are the founders of Partners in Leadership, a consulting company focused on leadership and management training. They've worked with numerous companies over the years to implement positive cultures and practices around accountability, and The Oz Principle has seen such success that they released an updated, revised version of the book in 2004, 10 years after its initial publication.

The Oz Principle is split into three parts—the first introduces the problem (your victim mentality), the second offers guidelines for addressing it, and the third provides suggestions for applying those solutions on an organizational scale.

In the opening chapters of The Oz Principle, we'll get a big-picture view of...
Before you can learn to hold yourself accountable, take a moment to identify areas of your life that could use improvement. Chances are, there are problems you've yet to acknowledge or opportunities to be more proactive than you've been in the past.

What is your least favorite part of your job, and why?

What Our Readers Say

This is the best summary of *How to Win Friends and Influence People* I've ever read. I learned all the main points in just 20 minutes. This is the best guide to *How to Win Friends and Influence People* I've ever read. I learned the ideas better and got new insights than when I first read the book.

The Oz Principle Summary

Now that we understand how the authors define accountability, we need to learn how to *practice* accountability in our daily lives. Part 2 of *The Oz Principle* is structured as a series of steps, a metaphorical journey just like Dorothy's travels down the Yellow Brick Road.

The first of the four steps toward being accountable involves evaluating problems and your role in them, without flinching from difficult realities. That means acknowledging the problem exists and figuring out the root causes, so that when it's time to find solutions, you're not just treating a symptom.

After that, be honest about the ways that your actions (or inaction) contributed to the problem—because even if the situation was caused by forces out of your control, you'll likely be able to identify a few things you could've done differently with regard to the things you could control.

**Step 1: Start by Facing the Facts**

You can't have accountability if you don't face the facts of a situation—if you don't confront reality. “Reality” is a broad word, so let’s break it down. To be accountable, you have to learn to deal with:

1. **Changes in Your Surroundings**

   For example, the arrival of a new...

**Shortform Exercise: Practice Owning Your Problems**

To hold yourself accountable, you have to get comfortable examining the part you play (through action or inaction) in either getting into or remaining in negative situations.

Think about someone you don't get along with. This could be a person who's in your life right now (a co-worker, a relative, a roommate) or someone you used to know but no longer have a relationship with. Why don't you get along with them?

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The Oz Principle Summary The Oz Principle Guide Chapters 6-7: Come Up With Solutions and Follow Through

Now that you understand the problem and your role in it, you're probably wondering how to fix it. After those first two steps—identifying the problem and reflecting on your actions—the next parts of The Oz Principle's metaphorical journey are about "solving it" and "doing it." Come up with solutions that get at the heart of an issue and then follow through on those solutions until the problem is truly resolved.

We'll cover how to come up with effective solutions, how to avoid roadblocks and lazy thinking, and how to be persistent when it comes to implementing those solutions.

Step 3: The Basics of Effective Problem-Solving

Even when we recognize problems, many of us are all too willing to step aside and let someone else take care of it. But you should want to be the problem-solver.

Being a problem-solver comes with benefits that make it worth the effort:

- Solving a problem means averting catastrophes and implementing new and improved ways of doing things. It leaves you better off in the long run.
- Problem-solvers are needed. People rely on them, think well of them, and entrust them with more responsibility.
- By becoming a problem-solver, you work out...

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Shortform Exercise: Anticipate Obstacles

Remember the exercise in which you reflected on your least favorite part of your job? Let's return to that. You'll use the ideas you came up with already and prepare yourself to follow through on those plans.

You listed three actions that you could take to either improve that negative aspect of your job, or lessen the amount of time you'd need to spend on it. For each of those actions, list one obstacle that might prevent you from seeing it through.

What Our Readers Say

This is the best summary of How to Win Friends and Influence People I've ever read. I learned all the main points in just 20 minutes. This is the best guide to How to Win Friends and Influence People I've ever read. I learned the ideas better and got new insights than when I first read the book.

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The Oz Principle Summary The Oz Principle Guide Part 3 | Chapters 8-9: Accountability in Organizations

So far, we've focused mostly on individual accountability. Next, we'll shift into a big-picture view of accountability as a group endeavor. Leaders have the power to implement a mindset of accountability throughout their organization.

The Oz Principle offers guidelines for how leaders can model positive behaviors, teach others how to hold themselves accountable, monitor their progress, and ultimately reinforce cultural changes so that they last.
Being Accountable as a Team

Once you've seen the benefits of approaching your life from a mindset of accountability, you might wonder how to move your organization “above the line” as well. **Creating a culture of accountability within your organization has a number of benefits:**

- You'll encourage proactiveness, creativity, and camaraderie among your team.
- You'll anticipate problems before they arise; when they do arise, they'll get solved faster.
- You'll avoid costly disasters, saving time and money.
- People will feel more invested in their work because they're taking greater ownership of it—they're not just following orders.

The authors emphasize the importance of not only individual accountability, but...

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**The Oz Principle Summary**

*Chapter 10: The Most Common Business Problems*

Although these strategies seem like common sense, they're challenging to implement. Instead of making the effort, many organizations waste time on trendy management and leadership programs that don't effect lasting change.

In the final chapter of *The Oz Principle*, the authors highlight the most common and most harmful issues they've observed in organizations. Resolving them means accepting some risk, because it requires time, resources, and drastic change within the organization; but to leave them unresolved is to ensure that your company never achieves its full potential.

We'll group these issues into three categories: employee development, teamwork, and individual motivation.

**1. Employee Development**

For the organization to grow, your people have to grow. Sometimes that growth can happen organically—often, though, it comes only as the result of deliberate effort.

**Problem:** Many companies don't invest the time and resources into developing their employees' skills. In turn, employees do the bare minimum because they're not motivated to improve and their progress is not being monitored. How can the organization progress if you're not taking the time to give your...

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