Leadership And Blame

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In the world of leadership where the traits of accountability and personal responsibility are so highly regarded, I have one question? What’s with all the finger pointing? One of my pet peeves is coming across leaders who think they’re always right, and that any problem or challenge that arises must clearly be the fault of someone else. Here’s the thing – as a leader, anything that happens on your watch is your responsibility whether you like it or not. This level of responsibility just goes with the territory, and leaders who cannot accept this do not deserve to lead. Last I checked we all make mistakes – I know I do. Most of us don’t look for perfection in leaders, we look for leaders who see mistakes as a chance for opportunity, growth and improvement, not an opportunity to blame shift.

Leadership isn’t about blaming others, but realizing any blame levied should rest solely upon the leader. The best leaders will only point the finger at one person – themselves. The truth of the matter is no victories are won by participating in the blame game. It’s been said, “the only thing that happens when you throw dirt is that you lose ground.” Blame doesn’t inspire, it breeds malcontent and discord. If trust is the cornerstone of leadership, then blame can only be viewed as the corrosive behavior that eats away at the foundation. Don’t be the “Teflon” leader who worries about what might stick – be the mature leader who takes the hit, deals with the issue, and moves forward with character. Lead – don’t blame...
Real leaders won’t accept credit for success, but always claim responsibility for failure. In analyzing why some leaders struggle with blame shifting I’ve concluded it usually comes down to an overabundance of pride or a lack of courage. Excuses, rationalizations, and justifications will never serve as an adequate substitute for courage and humility. Those in leadership positions who talk rather than listen, and point fingers rather than take decisive action have simply failed to lead.

We’ve all witnessed leaders who are masters of the quick draw when it comes to pointing the finger. These are also the leaders who most quickly lose the respect of those they lead. Almost nothing impugns the character of leader faster than attempting to dodge an issue rather than deal with it. The interesting thing is that distortions and deflections might seem to work in the short-term, but reality always seems to find its way home. The fastest way to make an issue fade into the background is to own it, and then do everything in your power to resolve it. Attempts to do anything else only end up amplifying the issue.

As always, I’m interested in your thoughts on this topic. Should leaders point fingers and blame others, or own all the issues that occur on their watch? What say you?

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