

Taking Responsibility – A Step Toward Progressive Leadership

By Carole Nicolaides

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Recently, I was asked to facilitate a meeting and offer coaching to 20 executive members at a company's strategic conference. As I sat quietly and observed everyone in the room, I began to notice that all conversations seemed to revolve around placing blame.

Can you picture the setting? A long oval office with 20 people, separated in 3 departments, and each of them pointing fingers when asked why things weren't progressing as planned. I must admit that sitting at this gathering revived my memories of being a corporate refugee. Now, as if this experience was not enough, the very next day I heard the same scenario from an entrepreneur I was coaching.

To make matters worse, at the end of that same day, I caught myself playing my own blame game! It was a revelation for me and even though my intellectual mind knew that blaming others for my circumstances was not a healthy habit, I ended up doing it anyway. Why do we do this? What positive result does it bring? Why is it so hard to stop? Wouldn't we be better off if we ceased and desisted? I reflected a bit on my own blaming pattern and was able to find some interesting correlation to the results that I want to have and the results I was receiving.

Blaming others is one of the worst things you can do in relation to emotional integrity. It is distantly related to an addiction. Pretty soon almost everything that does not happen according to your liking becomes someone else's fault.

If you want to become a progressive leader - if excellence and success is your motto in life - then blaming others cannot be tolerated. Once I reached this firm realization, I implemented several steps to help me overcome the blaming addiction and take responsibility for myself.

1. Be aware. Too often we fail to notice that we are playing the blame game. It's a natural defense mechanism. Paying attention to how we respond when questioned about our actions or performance is the first step in taking responsibility.

2. Respond responsibly. Just as blaming is a defensive move, so is reacting. Rather than react – we should respond. While we might want to react immediately with a burst of anger, stop and consider the choices. We have a choice of reacting impulsively or responding cautiously to the situation. What will your choice be?

3. Be honest. Let's face it - some people simply like to place blame in order to be relieved of responsibility. That shows a huge lack of self-honesty. Case in point: one client, who made a six-figure income, was stuck in debt. He lived far beyond his means and was very casual with his finances, causing himself and his family to suffer. When I asked the question "Who else is paying the price for your financial irresponsibility ", his answer was SILENCE. My question caused him to be honest with himself, and triggered him to take drastic actions in order to improve his financial life. Lying to yourself only causes the problem to get worse... not better.

4. Don't burn bridges. What happens to relationships when you place blame? You are unlikely to earn forgiveness. You are more likely to alienate yourself from your coworkers, peers, vendors and others by pointing fingers. Not only will you ruin relationships, but you will also lose the trust of people who you work with.

5. Be a good role model. When others see you accepting responsibility for your actions – and when they see the extraordinary results you are getting – you make the statement that blame placing is not acceptable behavior. By doing so, you help promote an atmosphere of harmony and integrity.

6. Have a positive and grateful attitude. Being a progressive leader means being a highly effective leader, and accepting nothing less than excellence from yourself and others. If you are grateful for all the things that happen in your life (good and bad) you simply cannot hold angry feelings toward others, or place blame where it does not belong. It takes practice to reach that level but progressive leaders understand that the payoff is high!

Accepting responsibility for your actions, and those of your team, sends a loud message to others. "I am a strong leader, capable of handling my own actions and those of my team. I do not play games. I am fully prepared for the challenges of my job, and additional responsibilities that come with all future promotions." Now isn't that better than, "But James said he was going to...?"

Carole is President and Executive Coach of Progressive Leadership, offering executive coaching, organizational development consulting and leadership development training. Improve your business relationships, communication, team performance and bottom line starting now. Visit <http://www.progressiveleadership.com> for more info & subscribe to Carole's FREE Ezine.

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