
Inductees into the Hall of Blame

Listen. Can you hear it? There is someone around you not taking the blame for something in their life. In fact, you hear it everywhere you go. The sales department blames the operations department for under-delivering. The operations department blames the sales department for over-promising. The employees blame the boss for not providing enough direction. The boss blames the employees for not listening. The blame never ends. It seems as though everyone is striving to be inducted into the Hall of Blame.

In fact, those people responsible for marketing products to us know we don't like to take responsibility for our actions. Not long ago I was watching television and heard the most wonderful news. The person on the screen said, "If you're overweight, it's not your fault."

Wonderful news! All this time I thought it might have something to do with all the food I cram in my mouth, or maybe a lack of regular exercise. You can just imagine how thrilled I was with this news. In fact, I was so thrilled I jumped up out of my chair and headed to the computer to do a little research.

With my king-sized bucket of chicken and 64 ounce soda in hand, I made a few clicks and got even more encouraging news. According to the website of the company I just saw on television, I didn't need to be personally accountable for being overweight at all. In fact, the company indicated, "a bulging midsection is not your fault ... it's the harmful combination of everyday stress, overeating, and excess cortisol, all conspiring to keep you overweight, tired, and thick around the middle. But now you can beat stress-reduced belly fat with ..."

Enough! I couldn't stand it anymore. If I'm breathing, I probably have everyday stress. If I'm overeating, it's my fault! No one has ever held me down and shoved food in my mouth! It's my fault! Stop giving me an out!

You see, marketers have seen how much we hate to take responsibility for our own actions, and they're successfully using it to sell their products and services. This unwillingness to take responsibility in our personal lives gets drug to work with us everyday. Without a culture of personal accountability, we will be looking for a place to blame others for our mistakes.

As employers and parents, we have a responsibility to build a culture of personal accountability. While taking responsibility for our *own* actions is a personal decision, there are several things to keep in mind to build personal accountability into the organization, including:

The example must come from the top.

Employees look to the leadership of the organization for the level of personal accountability they will follow. If the leaders of the organization aren't willing to take responsibility for their actions, then employees likely will follow that example. The same holds true for parents

and children. Children look to their parents to set the standard. If you regularly place the blame on others and your children witness it, they're likely to do the same.

Make it safe to admit mistakes.

Beyond the personal shame in admitting we've done something wrong, many people seek to place the blame on someone else because they believe an admission of error could result in a loss of their job. As long as employees don't trust the leadership of the organization when they're told it's alright to make mistakes as long as we learn from them, a culture of blame will continue.

Be on the lookout for victim thinking.

Many people are running from responsibility at work while simultaneously running from responsibility at home. Life is throwing us curve balls every day, and taking personal responsibility is simply about making a choice. We either choose to be responsible, or we choose to be a victim. We're a victim of a boss who didn't bring in enough staff. We're a victim of another employee who couldn't get the dry cleaning order right. We're a victim of excess cortisol conspiring with an overeating habit to make us fat. Victim thinking is easy to spot. The best way to promote personal accountability is to make people aware when they're wallowing around in victim thinking.

In their book *The Power of Personal Accountability: Achieve What Matters To You*, Mark Samuel and Sophie Chiche point out that accountability is an option when life presents us with challenges. In the book they write, "When you respond with accountability, you go on anyway, move forward, and achieve your goals in spite of your circumstances. When you respond as a victim, you begin a downward spiral that moves you further and further away from your goals." Well said.

It doesn't matter how large or small your organization is. If you work in a large organization, you are required to work with other employees. If you work on your own, you are required to work with vendors and clients. This sort of teamwork requires accountability. Based on the blame-oriented society in which we live, a culture of personal accountability must be built within our organizations, at work and at home. I, for one, have no desire to see my picture on the wall as an inductee into the Hall of Blame.

God bless!

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