

## Blame: the buck stops here - Pt.2

In Part 1 of this article we saw that 'Blame' was a deep, almost instinctual, behaviour to avoid or inflict punishment and that many of us confuse *blame* with 'bringing others to account' (in hope that they will be more accountable in future). Clearly, blame (and its companion, fear) are poor motivators for human growth, development and productivity. In Part 2, we build a case for the notion that 'blame' and 'being accountable' are worlds apart.

We can build truly accountable teams and individuals without fear. As leaders, we can infuse individuals and teams with a sense of confidence in their own capacity to learn and contribute. Sadly, not every leader takes up the invitation to do so.

Infused leadership engenders the capacity and potential to contribute to the common good, 'the cause'. Engender itself is derived from the Latin generāre, in which the prefix 'en' (the act of forming) and 'gender' (to produce) combine to create or form 'the cause'.

As a leader, do you create 'the cause', and clearly articulate its purpose? Are you providing clear and meaningful objectives along with the resources for their completion?

Without this, your people are confused - and confused people fail to produce desired outcomes.

Say you are coaching a sports team. It is not enough to provide the equipment, demonstrate its use and then expect them to win the game. As coach (leader), not only are you required to provide skills training and practice sessions, you must develop their appreciation of the team dynamic: they need to know how their individual efforts relate to the efforts of the team as a whole in order to produce the results you seek (accountability to the team).

**"As a leader, do you create 'the cause', and clearly articulate its purpose? Are you providing clear and meaningful objectives along with the resources for their completion?"**

Leaders engender, and are accountable for:

- Reinforcing 'what we are on about'.
- Ensuring buy-in.
- Communicating a realistic understanding of each situation.
- Developing and executing feasible plans of action.
- Wisely allocating tasks and resources so that people can confidently execute those plans or tasks.
- Having an eye to stretch individual and team capacities.

When things don't work out the way I would like them to, my own leadership is often challenged. But there are also wonderful opportunities to reflect on all the above. We all 'feel the heat' at times, the pressures that are part and parcel of the business landscape. In the heat of the moment we can all overlook or fail to engender an environment where people perform at their best. If hindsight were foresight, we would see that blaming is a backward thinking response - a symptom of the state of mind we are in. The act of blaming is nothing more than the unconscious desire to deflect responsibility. It, like hindsight, has no future.

In my opening remarks I noted that sadly, not everyone will take up the invitation inherent in leadership. The offer to step up, be stretched and find new capacities is sometimes resisted. Sometimes, it is simply not recognised. This will be the focus of our next Message Board.

Until then ... see what you make of your own responses in a less than perfect world - I'd love to hear from you. ■ ■