

Blame: the Buck Stops Here [Part 3]

In Part One of *Blame: the Buck Stops Here*, we highlighted the often mistaken idea that 'blame' has value in holding ourselves and others accountable, a way of keeping people accountable and thus, steering them in the right direction. However, 'blame' is really a form of punishment and/or retribution, rather than an opportunity to understand true accountability. It is a missed opportunity to develop and demonstrate an accountable culture - one where the common good is served. Part Two illustrated the importance of accountability in leadership. Critical questions were posed: are there clear communicated goals, strategic plans and suitable resources provided to the teams or individuals to enable them to execute of the goals?

In this final article I would like to explore some of the critical aspects of *personal* accountability. Have I the capacity to perform the task? Have I the potential to learn, expand my capacity to deal with new situations and be able to respond insightfully to them? Am I open to the advice of others when I fail, and in light of that, have I the goodwill to face my limitations? Am I willing to do what I said I'd do, for that reason alone? Though 'Blame' is a natural reaction - one fearful response to perceived threat - personal accountability invites us to experience 'personal authenticity' and access our inner resources or capacities.

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Take the first question above: *Have I the capacity to perform the task?* A simple enough question, yet our minds are bombarded with uncertainty, possible implications and 'fear of what others might think' if we respond 'No'. In the workplace particularly (though not necessarily), we understand all too well that an admission of that sort would be seen as 'weak', and would usually invite harsh consequence (*a sure sign that the Leadership is failing to empower and enable the capacities of their people*).

Have I the potential to learn, expand my capacity to deal with new situations and be able to respond insightfully to them? Our initial response is often 'I wish I could', while our minds rattle with secretly voiced fear - 'what if I fail?' or 'what will others think if I don't quite make it?'. We are out of touch with our own potential. Our conditioned thinking prevents us from accessing new ideas. Being accountable to the fragile voice of our own potential in such circumstances invites us to 'listen' to a new thought, set aside our mental chatter, and be willing to change our mind about this moment. New action is the consequence of a new thought.

Erica Jong alludes to the loss of personal capacities, the fear to extend ourselves and realise our potential when she writes "*...and the trouble is, if you don't risk anything, you risk even more*". Being accountable to our greater potential is a daily invitation. The question is, can we experience fear without being deaf to new potential? Every day, we are invited to extend ourselves beyond what we do now. We have the opportunity to learn more about ourselves, our hidden capacities and possible limitations. But we must be willing to be stretched and taken out of our comfort zone. Take the Australian idiom 'having a go'. Is that not about demonstrating an accountability to our own potential? Is it not about taking the initiative to seize new opportunities, test new skills, knowledge and potential for the common good and ourselves as individuals?

Business Leaders have an important role to play in developing a culture that engenders a respect for being accountable. Likewise, individuals have an equally important role to play and that is to extend their own growth in their capacities and potential. In this way, they are accountable to their own gifts and talents.

Finally, when businesses and individuals work together to co-create accountability in their relationships, they are a force to be reckoned with - but 'accountable' (non-blaming) organisations and individuals don't happen by accident. Critical to that culture is the self-awareness of each individual within the organisation. It requires an inbuilt (matter-of-fact) understanding of the power and role of Thought. Thought is the birthplace of behavioural change. Hence, unless we **see that we think** and that **a thought** is the birthplace of both our self-realised accountability **and** our blaming ways, our unconscious conditioning will win the day. ■ ■