

# Taking Responsibility for your life

I was driving from Nevada to Utah yesterday, and a bumper sticker caught my eye.

"Don't blame me," it said.

Actually, the bumper sticker -- or rather half a bumper sticker -- had started out life as a full-fledged "Don't blame me, I voted Republican" or "Don't blame me, I voted Democrat" or "Don't blame me, I voted "Libertarian," or "Don't blame me, I came from Mars." At some time, the candidate of choice had won, and the lower half of the sticker was removed, just leaving the upper half -- "Don't blame me."

The sheer idiocy of the whole thing struck me, and left me pondering on a society that would create such a person...who would say "Don't blame me" no matter what happened.

If you're in business, you know that this attitude is a cancer that will eat into your profits. If your employees -- or yourself -- start refusing to take responsibility for their actions, then the business starts on a downhill slide. If the salespeople refuse to take responsibility for selling, the accounting department for accounting, the engineering department for engineering, or the production department for producing, the business is paralyzed, usually with weakly-engineered, badly-produced, badly marketed pieces of junk that will eventually destroy your well-crafted brand, and leave a grease spot where your business once stood.

Pretty soon, Letterman will start joking about your products on television. Lawyers will smile whenever your name is mentioned. Doctors will start warning their patients about using your products. Slowly, but surely, that lack of responsibility will eat your business for lunch, and not even burp when it's done.

How can we keep this from happening?

It's obvious. It's so obvious, that many people will ignore it.

Personal responsibility is the key.

This set of personal commitments will make the difference. Some will seem a little strange.

1. I commit to delivering more than I am paid for.
2. I commit to becoming better each day.
3. I commit to going the extra mile.
4. I commit to changing the toilet paper when it runs out, even though I got by with the last sheet.

5. I commit to refilling what needs to be refilled, whether it be the water cooler, or another person's self-esteem.
6. I commit to giving a damn, even when it might not seem reasonable.
7. I commit to never becoming boring, even though I become responsible.
8. I commit to living a life of learning.
9. I commit to quality.
10. I commit to being a professional.

"Don't blame me" shouldn't be our watchword. Of course, "Blame me," would seem to be suicidal. Nobody wants to go through life with a "Kick Me" sign on their back. We shouldn't allow ourselves to become the patsy, but neither should we allow ourselves to become indifferent to the world around us. We need to act responsibly, and professionally.

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