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Military Quotes

PART 2: PASS THE CREDIT AND TAKE THE BLAME

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“Leadership consists of nothing but taking responsibility for everything that goes wrong and giving your subordinates credit for everything that goes well.”

- Dwight Eisenhower, 1890-1969

I learned many key principles during my army days, but this might be one of the most important and difficult ones to execute. Redirecting blame can be instinctual at times and it takes a great deal of effort to avoid doing it. Handing out credit, on the other hand, can be much easier for many of us, so in this article I'm going to focus on taking responsibility when things go wrong.

When mistakes are made it is easy for us to target an individual and ask, “how did YOU let this happen?”. However, if we are being honest with ourselves, we will quickly recognize that we ask this question with the knowledge that it was likely something we should have helped

prevent. The more often we pass down blame, the more frustrated people get, and in turn, the more likely they are to lose motivation and the desire to work for your organization.

I've recently seen numerous articles drafted around the idea that people leave managers, not jobs. When I think back to the jobs/roles I've enjoyed most throughout my career, for the most part it wasn't the work, but the people I worked with and for that made the difference. For the leaders I really enjoyed working for, I would do everything I could to make sure that I didn't disappoint them. For the ones I didn't like or didn't respect, not so much.

If I am honest with myself and look back at the mistakes we've made during my 20+ years at Clientek, I can almost always tie the problem back to something I could have/should have helped avoid. Over the years, I've come to realize that when something goes wrong it is often because of one (or more) of the following things:

1. Lack of experience in knowing how to handle a situation
2. Unclear guidance on success for the situation
3. Conflicting guidance from different stakeholders
4. Missing information for selecting the correct solution

All these “things” are scenarios that a good leader should prepare their employees to handle. At the very least teams should be provided a mechanism to assist with resolving mistakes quickly when they occur. A great habit I’ve developed is to use these hiccups as an opportunity to review what I could have done better as the leader. How could I have better prepared my team? What can I do to help identify these issues sooner?

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