

ULTIMATELY, YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE

By: Robert Sher

Nothing infuriates me more than excuses. Yet nothing pleases me more than working with people who accept responsibility for things that happen inside the workplace – good or bad.

Don't blame an attorney who files a lawsuit you authorized against a vendor when you do not understand the risks. Don't blame your accountant for an omission on your tax form when you file your tax returns without reviewing them. Don't complain about the banker who arranged your line of credit when you didn't read the covenants. And please don't grumble about your employees not treating customers well.

As managers and owners, you are responsible for what goes on inside your company. This means you do not have the right to point fingers at those who have let you down or expect others to come forward and fix your problems.

Look at it this way: A fish rots from the head down. You are the leader who must be responsible for making things better at your company for you, your employees and your customers. In your role, you have a unique opportunity to make a difference and you must take that opportunity seriously if you want to have a successful business and feel good about yourselves and your employees.

Early in my public accounting career, I learned a lesson that has helped me be more responsible in my own business life. A client asked me to explain his monthly financial statements I had sent to him. No one had ever made such a request before and I remember being surprised when he took out a ruler, went line by line, and asked questions about each line on the statement.

I must confess that I didn't have all the answers at that meeting, but, be assured, I was more than prepared for the same request the next month and was able to answer almost every one of his questions about the statement during our meeting.

If you had two clients – one who never opened a statement and left it on the window ledge and another who pulled out the ruler and asked questions line by line – which one would get better service from you?

Knowing I had to answer for my work and be more prepared each month for a meeting motivated me to do a better job for that particular client. The bottom line: He took responsibility for getting the best accounting advice he could and I provided this type of service to him time and again.

My client felt good about his accounting practices, I was pleased about the state of my own business affairs, and so I felt compelled to go that extra mile for him. Be

responsible in your own companies and your employees will be more likely to stay with you, continue learning, grow with your company and perhaps even retire at your company.

As responsible leaders, you must:

- Be dependable
- Be accountable for your own behavior
- Follow through on promises
- Admit mistakes
- Be trustworthy
- Follow the rules
- Not blame others

It takes great character to accept blame, but you are the one who must be willing to do it, at all costs. So please act responsibly. The house of excuses is now closed.

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