

J. Michael Locke

Musings

#55: Don't Blame Others and Pushing Encouraged

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In my opinion, you should never blame someone else. As a leader, if something goes wrong, you own it. Importantly, this applies even when the subpar performance is by someone else.

As the leader, you set the strategy, pick the team, organize the players and coach. If a member of the team is not performing, you have to either help develop him or her or make a change. You also develop the playbook and need to factor in the talent you have. So at the end of the day, you own the performance of the team. Let me use an everyday life analogy. If I have a complicated order at a fast food restaurant, I will intentionally present it in a methodical way to increase the likelihood of understanding. I might have them read it back to me to ensure they got it right. I shouldn't have to do that but I want to manage the risk of the skills of the person taking the order and ensure I get the desired outcome.

Leaders can't blame others and nor should team members. If you are working in a group and someone isn't pulling their weight, you have to compensate and adjust. While it may not seem "fair," you need to get the end result desired for the group. As an example, I have heard lots of complaints about the poor performance of faculty in today's online world. Again, my response is not one of empathy but rather asking what the student did to adjust to the reality of what was going on. Schools were not ready to go online and some faculty are not good at it. Still, you have to manage that situation as a student and adjust. If the faculty member isn't answering email, call him or her and figure out the best way to engage.

I fear that our society is moving to a "blame someone else" culture and away from individual accountability. Blaming others is not healthy. Trump should not blame Obama and the House should not blame the Senate. Just get the job done and stop complaining.

Now to pushing.

As a leader, you have to push. Individuals will set their objectives based on their historically-experienced limits. Too often, there is more progress that could be made if an external force pushed. Think of an athletic trainer pushing for one more rep. I would rather see a revenue budget which may be beyond reach and will ensure the maximum outcome versus one that is more easily accomplished. This creates some challenges with bonus structures and you have to be more conservative on expenses with this approach (and you certainly can't be a public company) but you want to stretch the team as far as you can.

In this context, I like Trump's "Operation Warp Speed" plan to develop and manufacture hundreds of millions of Covid-19 vaccine doses by the end of 2020. The experts are saying it can't be done. I don't

know if it can or can't, but I know the possibility of it happening just got much higher by the leader pushing and challenging the team.

As we have seen in the Last Dance, Michael Jordan was a pusher. So was Steve Jobs. According to WSJ: *"My job is not to be easy on people," Apple's co-founder once said. "My job is to make them better." Or as Jordan put it: "Winning has a price. And leadership has a price. So, I pulled people along when they didn't want to be pulled."*

Be safe. Work hard.

jml

Here is a list of what colleges are doing in the fall for those interested:

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Here-s-a-List-of-Colleges-/248626?cid=RCPACKAGE>

One of my first leaders in education investing, Michael Moe, speaks of the arrival of digital learning. His full paper is attached but here is an interesting graphic:

