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As a leader, you are typically held responsible when things go wrong for you or your team, even when others made mistakes or misbehaved. It can be frustrating at times but it's part of the role. But more frustrating than being held accountable is being "thrown under the bus" by fellow associates or subordinates.

There are times when people should stand up for and support their leaders, but unfortunately many people won't do that, especially after things go badly or fall apart. Sometimes during my career my mistakes were the reason my boss got in trouble. In those instances I stepped forward when I could and made that known. I could never tell how the top leaders perceived this, but one day one of them shared a "secret" with me. He said my forthright honesty saved my boss's job once during intense discussions to relieve him of his duties. He was still held accountable and responsible but all understood that a leader can't always control everything.

Sadly though, not everyone will step up to the plate for their leader. Some won't hesitate for a second to throw their leader under a bus. A leader is wise not to expect or rely on others to defend his or her decisions and actions. If you're "called to the carpet," it's best to face the music with integrity and welcome the opportunity to learn from the ordeal.

Who can remember Army officer Oliver North on the stand during the

Iran-Contra hearing back in 1987? How on God's green earth was a lieutenant colonel the "fall guy" for a national (and secret) arming operation when this officer answered to a colonel who answered to a general who answered to another general who answered to the Secretary of Defense who answered to the President of the United States? I wonder what Lieutenant Colonel North expected from his chain of command during that ordeal. This is a perfect example of people not speaking up during moments of scrutiny--they'd rather stay silent (for various reasons but mainly to avoid reprisal).

The television show *The Apprentice* was another example where this type of behavior was common. The show created teams of individuals to work together for certain business objectives. Generally, as the team took shape, a clear leader emerged, along with legitimate team players. And at the bottom of the group there was usually a slacker. If the team lost a challenge, they had to go before Donald Trump and explain what happened. Quite often, the team leader blamed the incompetence or inefficiency on the slacker and the slacker refused to take the blame. And the only way to get to the truth was for Donald Trump to listen to the story from the other team members' perspectives. Yet, almost every time, those team members chose not to get involved. They wouldn't defend the leader or the slacker. There are a few possible reasons for this:

1) They knew staying neutral

was their best strategy to look out for themselves. (After all their objective to win the show was to not have Donald Trump say to them: "You're fired!")

2) They didn't like the leader or the slacker (for whatever reasons).

3) Maybe they didn't know or understand enough of the situation and wisely chose to say nothing about it.

Anthony Parinello, author of *10 Secrets I Learned From The Apprentice*, learned that it's important in many work-related scenarios to realize that, in the end, you have to rely on yourself. He acknowledged how common it was that leaders are often left standing alone when things heat up. He also recommends leaders keep a paper trail of clear documentation about their actions so they can readily defend or justify themselves if necessary.

Lastly, if/when you end up standing on that stage alone defending yourself, do everything you can to not push the blame onto others, even when it's warranted. Keep your mindset solution-oriented and take the action that is most beneficial in solving the issue or dilemma at hand. Learn from any mistakes (made by you or others) and proceed forward with the drive and determination to prevent them from reoccurring in the future.

Loyalty is a great thing but always know that when things go badly, there will be others who will scatter like a soldier avoiding a hand grenade.

~ The End ~