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Some people in leadership positions shouldn't be there. Some how, some way, someone put them in charge or gave them immense responsibility and it makes you scratch your head in disbelief. These so-called leaders have never proven themselves, can't make a timely decision (or a good decision) and avoid responsibility whenever they can. It's really frustrating to have such leaders calling the shots. And it's happening more and more with the newest generation of leaders getting their wings.

Rarely in American culture today do you see people wanting to be responsible for many things. A lot of people are focused on their rights rather than on their responsibilities. It's easy to see that if you want to get rich, invest in victimization. It is America's fastest growing industry. Millions of people are becoming rich by identifying, representing, interviewing, treating, insuring, and counseling victims.

If you want to be a good leader, don't embrace a victim mentality. Recognize that who and where you are remains your responsibility--not that of your parents, your spouse, your children, the government, your boss, or your coworkers. In most organizations, if you face challenges head on, embrace responsibility, and "carry the ball," you should get an opportunity to lead and/or advance yourself.

Here are four characteristics of people who embrace responsibility:

1) *They get the job done.* In a study of self-made millionaires, Dr. Thomas Stanley of the University of Georgia found that they all have one thing in common: they work hard. Sometimes it

meant staying longer at work to get the job done right or putting in more intense effort during work hours. No one can do the minimum and reach his or her maximum potential.

How do people maintain a get-it-done attitude? They think of themselves as self-employed. If you want to achieve more and build your credibility with followers, adopt that mind-set. It can take you far.

2) *They are willing to go the extra mile.* Responsible people never protest, "That's not my job." They're willing to do whatever it takes to complete the work needed by the organization. If you want to succeed, be willing to put the organization ahead of your agenda.

3) *They are driven by excellence.* Excellence is a great motivator. People who desire excellence and work hard to achieve it are almost always responsible. And when they give their all, they live at peace. Success expert Jim Rohn says, "Stress comes from doing less than you can." Make high quality your goal, and responsibility will naturally follow.

4) *They produce regardless of the situation.* The ultimate quality of a responsible person is the ability to finish. In *An Open Road*, Richard L. Evans writes, "It is priceless to find a person who will take responsibility, who will finish and follow through to the final detail--to know when someone has accepted an assignment that it will be effectively and conscientiously completed." If you want to lead, you've got to produce.

Gilbert Arland offers this advice: "When an archer misses the mark he turns and looks for the fault within himself. Failure to hit the bull's-eye is never the fault of the target. To improve your aim, improve yourself."

Are you on target when it comes to responsibility? Do others see you as a finisher? Do people look to you to carry the ball in pressure situations? Are you known for excellence? If you haven't been performing at the highest level, you may need to cultivate a stronger sense of responsibility.

To improve your ability to be a responsible person and leader, do the following:

1) *Keep hanging in there.* Sometimes an inability to deliver despite difficult circumstances can be due to a persistence problem. The next time you find yourself in a situation where you're going to miss a deadline, lose a deal, or fail to get a program off the ground, seek more possible ways to get it done. Think outside the lines. Can you work through the night? Can you call a colleague to help you? Can you hire a staff member to find a volunteer to help? Creativity is key when things don't go as planned.

2) *Admit what's not good enough.* If you have trouble achieving excellence, maybe you've lowered your standards. Look at your personal life for places where you've let things slip. Then make changes to set higher standards. It will help you to reset the bar of excellence for yourself.

3) *Find better tools.* If you find that your standards are high, your attitude is good, and you consistently work hard--and you still don't achieve the way you'd like--get better equipped. Improve your skills by taking classes, reading books, or listening to experts. Find a mentor. Do whatever it takes to become better at what you do.

Great leaders face the world head on, embrace responsibility, avoid the blame game, and are proven ball carriers.

~ The End ~