Title:
Beating the Blame Game: Real Leaders Take the Blame and Give the Credit

Word Count:
611

Summary:
Good leaders take more than their share of the blame and less than their share
of the credit. Learn how to major in support and help teams bounce back from
setbacks.

Keywords:
leadership, responsibility, taking blame, blaming, giving credit, Bear Bryant,
finding fault, difficult boss, problem solving, admitting mistakes, good boss,
yelling leaders, personal responsibility

Article Body:
Good leaders take more than their share of the blame and less than their share
of the credit. Unfortunately, most leaders take more than their share of the
credit and less than their share of the blame. They are not respected. When
errors do occur, are you ready to support heroic efforts even in the face of
failure?

After only two weeks on the job, Jim had made a critical error that took the
company computer system down. He went to his boss immediately and said, "I think
I just made a big mistake." She replied, "I'm sure it is not as big as you think
it is." He confided, "I think it could be bigger."

Her eyes got large as Jim described the system crash and his lack of a data
backup. In the midst of problem solving, her boss entered in low-brain function,
that sub-cortical reptilian area that runs on more emotion than intellect. For
fifteen minutes she was yelled at for Jim's mistake.

Jim was sure he was history. All Jim could think of was at least his resume was
current; he wouldn't even have to admit that he had ever worked at this company!

She took the heat for Jim's mistake. Not once had she even mentioned his name.
It would have been tempting. All she would have had to do was to point her
finger at Jim and say, "There HE is. He's new, and he's defective!"

After the division manager ran out of steam, he said, "This shouldn't have even

happened!" Jim's boss replied, "It did, and I take full responsibility. This is my department. But every minute we are spending here means we are that much later in getting the system back up." The division manager left the room, leaving Jim alone with his boss. She did not look at him. Instead, she stared at the door, closed her eyes and took a couple of deep breaths. She opened her eyes, a smile formed on her lips, she looked at him and said, "Don't do that again."

He all but fell over his own words of apology. She stopped him, "I think you are going to remember the importance of backup. And if this continues to be a problem, we will have a different kind of conversation. But you took responsibility for your mistake. Most of the time I have to search to find them. I respect what you did. You're the kind of person I want working on my team. Now, I'm going to need your help to get this system back online."

Jim asked me to look at his business card and said, "You can't see it, but every day I write in invisible ink — 'SLAVE.' I would do anything for that woman!"

Leadership may not be as complicated as we make it. The late Bear Bryant, the great football coach, shared the same truth Jim's boss lived when he said: "I'm just a plowhand from Arkansas, but I have learned how to hold a team together. How to lift some men up, how to calm down the others, until finally they've got one heartbeat together, a team. There's just three things I'd ever say: If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, then we did it. If anything goes real good, then you did it. That's all it takes to get people to win football games for you." Those are wise words on leadership no matter what kind of team you lead.