

# POWERHOUSE

## COACHING

### Australian American Chamber of Commerce San Francisco Newsletter February 2015



### *What's the Quality of Your Excuses?*

I was asked last week what the most important qualities were in anyone that wants to be successful. My answer took two seconds: Self-Awareness and Responsibility.

The first part of my work, leadership diagnosis, is like turning on a light bulb. It takes 2-3 hours and once it's done, people see themselves more clearly than ever before and the lion's share of Self-Awareness is addressed (although it requires further vigilance and self-reflection to maintain and grow).

Responsibility though? That's another story. Here are some of the things I listen for in anyone I know or work with: 1) Blame, 2) Justification, 3) Denial, and 4) "Brilliant Logic".

- 1) **Blame:** I was once working with a client that was throwing blame around to the degree, during our first session, where I said to her, "If you point that finger one more time, I'm going to break it off." (As we know, we're less politically correct in Australia, so I wouldn't say that over here in the U.S!) After her initial shock had passed, she got it, and her journey began. She never blamed anyone again, at least not in my presence! and went on to be one of the most satisfying clients I ever worked with in terms of her growth and progression. Her CEO called me a 'miracle worker' and the client told me I changed her life (check my website testimonials). *Who are you currently blaming for your results? Your staff? Your manager? The board? God? Your partner? Think about it. Do you really buy this? Do you really think anyone else does? Maybe it's time to grow up.*
- 2) **Justification:** How do you justify not doing what you know you need to do? In my experience, time gets blamed a lot. I hear it regularly. *"I've been so busy! We're on deadline. I didn't get around to it because..."* I heard it yesterday from someone I'm about to diagnose. I know he'll score about 67% Responsible because that's the second time he's made excuses for himself and we haven't even met. *What are the things you call on to justify yourself? Time? Overwhelm? You can either deliver reasons or results. What do you deliver?*
- 3) **Denial:** Is something really not a problem or are you simply too lazy, scared, or apathetic to address it? What are the things you're pushing to the back of your mind? Your retirement plan? The state of your marriage? The performance of your staff? A wise man does at the beginning what a fool does at the end. *If deep down you know there's a problem and you're not addressing it, pull your socks up and come at it. Respect is earned.*
- 4) **"Brilliant Logic":** This is the educated person's slippery way of not doing what it takes. If you're spouting clever, obscure and complicated reasons why you haven't delivered a result yet, e.g. the economy, sales cycles, pending elections, etcetera, you might think you're fooling everyone but your results are all anyone sees.

Did you do the thing you set out to do? No? That's all I see, and that's all you should see. Very occasionally I diagnose someone that scores 100% Responsible. These people are a joy to work with because they know they are the cause of what is going on around them, either by what they have done, or what they have failed to do. Responsibility is only one of thirty-eight leadership traits I diagnose, but it's one of the most critical.

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And when leading others, who has the problem? The person making excuses, or the person accepting them...?

So, what's the quality of your excuses?

If you're the kind of person I enjoy working with, your answer will be, "I don't make them, and don't accept them either".



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