



Leading Yourself With the Boomerang

By Jim Vasconcellos

Boomerangs have been in existence for centuries. They originated from *throwing sticks* which were longer, slightly curved, heavy wooden sticks. Unlike the sport boomerangs of today, these sticks were not designed to return. They were designed as a survival tool for hunting and protection.

Today, we still protect ourselves from harm. Only we don't use a throwing stick. We use a ***stick of blame***. We use it to protect our reputation or pride or ego. For instance, if we don't meet an intended objective in the workplace, we may fear that we'll look incompetent. So we defend ourselves from the shortcoming by throwing out the *Stick of Blame*. By redirecting the fault onto some unsuspecting soul or circumstance, we feel protected from any further harm.

The problem is that no matter how hard we try, actions, decisions and choices don't work like throwing sticks. They work like boomerangs. They are designed for round trips. They go out and, without fail, come back bearing the outcomes – both good and bad. And, in the case of using a *stick of blame*, the decision to shift responsibility returns a bad result because it shows our incompetence by misdirecting efforts, wasting time, eroding standards and diminishing trust. Now the *stick of blame* becomes our ***stick of shame***.

Leading ourselves by the boomerang means a) being responsible for what we are putting out and b) being accountable for what comes back.

When things go wrong do a little course correction with the boomerang not the stick. Here are three critical steps for developing this leadership quality:

1. **Be Honest with Yourself.** Admit to yourself when you screw up! Get past the notion that you somehow have to show your perfectionism. Mistakes, errors, slip-ups, gaffes, oversights and inaccuracies happen. It's how you handle them that will bring you to the next level in your performance.
2. **Accept ownership immediately.** All of your results are rooted somewhere in the actions, decisions, and choices you have made. Accepting ownership for the role you played in the problem is what allows you to become more effective.



3. **Readjust your sight.** Focus on the outcome you prefer versus the outcome you already have. This will ensure your efforts are directed toward a more desired and beneficial path. The objective is to minimize the damage that has been done. That's how you cultivate the trust and competence we all seek from our leadership and peers.



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