

Take Responsibility for Your Success!

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Consultant – Trainer - Speaker

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Dan Menden is an international business consultant, trainer and speaker with over 20 years of success in helping others improve their lives through learning. He has worked on five different continents and in more than a dozen countries.

Before working for Harley-Davidson Motor Company, Dan was a high school and university level teacher. He held a variety of positions at Harley-Davidson after starting out as a shop floor supervisor in the Powertrain Operations facility. Splitting his time between manufacturing and positions at corporate headquarters, Dan also worked as a Production Manager, HR Manager and Director of Dealer Training for five years where he was responsible for delivering a wide variety of training to over 1400 Harley-Davidson dealerships worldwide. Dan retired from Harley-Davidson Motor Company in 2016 after 26 years and began his own business, Mensch Learning Solutions, LLC.

With clients in several different industries, Dan specializes in leadership development, success principles, team-based work systems, coaching and talent development. Dan is also a certified Jack Canfield Success Principles Trainer.

Part 1

Taking 100% Responsibility

All success in life begins with 'Taking 100% Responsibility for Your Results'. It's the critical foundation that supports all the other principles and habits that lead to success.

You'll learn the importance of Taking 100% Responsibility for your results and how it gives you control over making the choices that support your goals in life.

By taking 100% Responsibility for your results, you will gain the control you need to make positive choices that support and align to your goals.

Chapter 1

“Jorge Wanted to Fire You”

That’s what Harold, Vice President Human Resources, told me one day as I passed him the hallway. “Jorge wanted to fire you.” Obviously, I was taken aback a little bit by this statement and asked Harold to provide a little more detail. He told me Jorge had talked to him on a couple of occasions and wanted to have me fired because I wasn’t doing what he wanted me to do. Harold said he asked Jorge what I was doing that made him feel I should be fired. After hearing Jorge’s response, Harold said he told him I was ‘just doing my job’ and I wasn’t going anywhere.

I wasn’t aware of this conversation until several years after Jorge left Powertrain Operations and was no longer the General Manager of the facility. While Jorge was still there, and I was the Human Resources Manager, I was sent to Florida to be ‘fixed’. I had to complete a three-day intensive self-reflection and action planning session with a performance coach to address Jorge’s concerns with how I was doing my job.

Jorge was a West Point graduate with an MBA from MIT and had a very clear picture of the things he wanted to accomplish while General Manager of the facility. He was a smart, hard-working person and a very devoted family man. Many of the things he wanted to accomplish required my help and that’s where the rub came from. Jorge was used to people providing what he wanted when he asked for it, but it

was my responsibility to protect confidential individual information and to also protect Jorge from potential discrimination charges.

We had very different social styles for communicating and getting things done which caused tension between us and resulted in me being sent to Florida to be 'fixed'. Taking responsibility for the tension between us saved my career at Harley-Davidson.

I took 100% responsibility for the situation and adjusted the way I communicated with Jorge and I began using an 'Action Register' to track and report on the status of key projects.

Several years after returning from Florida with a solid action plan for addressing the tension between Jorge and me, I ran into the performance coach I had worked with in Florida while planning for an off-site leadership development session.

She told me that of all the individuals she had worked with over the years, no one had taken complete responsibility for the circumstances they were in as I had when she worked with me. She stated how impressed she was that I didn't blame Jorge and I just worked to understand what was causing the tension in the relationship and figure out how to improve it.

I hadn't heard of the concept of 'taking 100% responsibility for your life' at that time but I knew that I wasn't sent to Florida just to have fun and that my career at Harley was on the line. I was a father of four young children and was about ten years into my career at Harley and had no plans for leaving any time soon. There was no benefit in spending my

time blaming Jorge because I knew that I couldn't change him and the only thing I could control was my response to the circumstances.

I wasn't happy with the entire situation as I had worked hard to establish myself and had supported several other General Managers with very good results. I focused on what I could control and returned to Powertrain Operations with a solid plan for addressing the tension between Jorge and me while demonstrating my value as a member of the plant's leadership team.

Our relationship improved as well as Jorge's perception of my performance and value as a leader. The key was my approach of focusing on what I could control and not blaming Jorge or other circumstances beyond my control.

The foundation for realizing the success you desire in life is taking 100% responsibility for your results.

“Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future.”

John F. Kennedy

This isn't just my own personal observation. It's the first principle listed in Jack Canfield's bestselling book *The Success Principles*. It's also the first of the “Top Ten Characteristics of the Best Salesmen” listed by Jeff Smith, international conference speaker and author of seven bestselling books on key performance indicators and profit improvement, in his book *Close More Deals*.

Chapter 2

The Duty Chart

If you were like me, you experienced a 'Duty Chart' when you were growing up. You're familiar with a Duty Chart. It's the chart that hung on the wall that listed you and all your siblings and who was responsible for what chores. For us it meant a daily or weekly responsibility to support the proper functioning and condition of our house and yard.

My reaction to being sent to Florida had its roots in the duty chart. It took some reflection after hearing my performance coach's comments to figure out that my ability to take responsibility for my circumstances and not blame others originated with the Duty Chart.

It was one of my earliest lessons in taking responsibility. The Duty Chart didn't lie and it offered no opportunity to escape. You see, before being allowed to watch TV on a weeknight or go outside and play on Saturdays, we had to finish our jobs listed on the Duty Chart. It was very clear who was responsible to do what, and you couldn't blame others or the Duty Chart for not doing your chores.

Either your room was properly picked up and vacuumed or it wasn't. The old newspapers were properly bundled for recycling or they weren't. The Duty Chart left no room for interpretation and our father, a former paratrooper in the Korean War, didn't want to hear any excuses.

I learned at an early age that blaming others or making excuses for not performing was not a formula for success. Taking responsibility for my results has served me well throughout my life. Taking 100% responsibility for your results will serve you well too.

When you make excuses or blame others, you are giving up your ability to affect the outcomes that you desire. I can't do anything about it, so I won't even try.

'I can't sell any cars today because the weather is bad' or 'I have a lousy marriage because my spouse doesn't listen to me' are classic examples of people giving up their ability to affect the outcomes they desire.

"Find joy in everything you choose to do. Every job, relationship, home... it's your responsibility to love it, or change it."

Chuck Palahniuk

Complaining about the situation indicates they have a different and better outcome in mind but it also indicates they aren't willing to take the courageous actions to change the situation for the better.

Making a commitment to stop making excuses or blaming others and accepting responsibility for our actions is the tougher road to follow but it leads to a better place. You can not blame your way to the success you want in life.

We can't control the weather or what our spouse does or doesn't do so we need to change our response to the circumstances we face or the event, to affect the outcome we want.

These behaviors of blaming others or making excuses are learned at an early age so these behaviors are hard to change. The good news is that they are behaviors and you can develop new and more effective behaviors. It's not easy but it can be done.

Think about the words you use when you haven't met your goals or delivered something on time. Are you blaming others or making excuses? Or are you taking 100% responsibility for the shortcomings and working to have better success the next time?

Part 1

Reflections

What does it sound like when you experience setbacks or don't get the results you desire? Are you making excuses or blaming others for the problems or are you taking responsibility and choosing a more effective response?

Listen to how you respond to events and choose a response of 100% responsibility. This will not always be the easiest path forward, but it will be the path forward with the most success.

Part 2

Focusing on Your Response

We can't control or change the events in our life. We can only try to create a better outcome by choosing a more effective response.

In this section you'll learn how critical it is to focus on your response and not give up your power to choose by blaming the event.

Chapter 3

E + R = O

This simple yet powerful formula is what Jack Canfield learned from Dr. Robert Resnick, a Los Angeles psychotherapist.

Blaming the event (E) is an option when you don't achieve the results you desire. People do it all the time to explain their circumstances. It's the easy-way out. I don't have to accept responsibility, it was something else that cause the undesirable outcome (O) it wasn't my response (R).

You've heard them all and maybe even said a few yourself. 'The sun was in my eyes'. 'It was too hard'. 'The refs called a bad game' and the classic, 'the dog ate my homework'. These are all excuses for not achieving the desired results.

There are times in life when the circumstances we face make things difficult to achieve our desired results. Of course, bad weather makes it more challenging to sell motorcycles. Of course, growing up in a poor neighborhood makes it harder to get the education needed to get into a top university. But there have been lots of motorcycles sold in bad weather and there have been many students from poor neighborhoods who have gotten into top universities. What makes the difference?

The difference is not blaming our circumstances for our lack of results, it's acting as if we are 100% responsible for our results and accomplishing success because of our response (R) to the event.

We can't ignore or deny the event, rather we need to understand the event (E), so we can choose a better more effective response (R) to get the outcome (O) we desire.

“You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of.”

Jim Rohn

$$E + R = O$$

Chapter 4

“I Don’t Want to be Ken’s Executive Assistant!”

Michelle was a bright, energetic, young administrative assistant working in our human resources department. We had worked together for a couple of years and developed a good working relationship, so I wasn’t all that surprised that she asked if we could talk about something that was bothering her. As she began to talk, I could see she was on the verge of tears as she said, “I don’t want to be Ken’s executive assistant!”

We had recently hired a top-level executive away from General Motors to help us ramp up our production capacity to meet the growing demand for Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Ken was the new executive and the heir apparent to our current plant manager. He talked to Michelle to let her know how impressed he was with her abilities and that he would like her to be his executive assistant when the time came.

That conversation triggered Michelle’s emotional response about being an executive assistant. Michelle had big aspirations and rightfully so because she was a very talented and hard-working employee. I’m sure Ken had no idea at that moment how hard his ‘compliments’ had impacted Michelle.

My response to Michelle once the tears and emotions subsided was quite simple and straight forward. She

needed to take responsibility for how people perceived her and more importantly, it was her responsibility to paint the picture for others regarding her career aspirations. She need to take charge of her future career path and engage others in helping her get there.

It didn't mean doing less than the excellent job she had been doing as an administrative support person, rather it meant informing others of where she wanted to go with her career. It meant thanking Ken for his intended compliment but also letting him know she wasn't interested in the job of executive assistant and that she wanted his help in moving to her desired next position.

“One's philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes... and the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

This was not easy for a person in Michelle's position, just starting out in her career and pushing back on a high-level executive. To her credit, she fully accepted responsibility for getting to where she wanted to be in the future. Within five years of informing Ken that she was flattered but she wouldn't be accepting his 'offer', Michelle received a couple of promotions and secured a very important position in field sales for the Buell Motorcycle brand.

Michelle did a great job of moving beyond the event and focusing on her response to get the outcome she desired.

Chapter 5

“Look in the Mirror!”

The room usually got pretty quiet when John, the plant manager, would say in a very firm voice while looking over the top of his glasses, “look in the mirror”. He didn’t say it often, but he got everyone’s attention when he said it. They were just about the last words any of us managers wanted to hear, including me.

It was usually a response to when he had heard enough excuses and blaming of others for not producing the expected results. When he said that, it was pretty clear that the time for finger pointing was over and it was time to figure out what you were going to do to fix whatever it was that was causing the quality problem or preventing us from making the build schedule for the day.

When life is tough and you’re struggling to have the success you desire, you need to recall John’s words “look in the mirror”. You won’t have the success you want if you don’t take 100% responsibility for your results.

So, what can you do to get out of this trap and begin taking 100% responsibility for your results. It sounds easy but does hard. The next part of the book will provide some helpful tips and actions you can start to take right now.

Part 2

Reflections

Blaming the event or making excuses for our shortcomings is the easy way out. It absolves us from owning the outcome by giving up our power to affect a better outcome.

Think about the choices you make and where your energy is focused when confronted by setbacks or challenges. Do you take the easy way out by blaming the event or are you focused on your response and how you can get the results you desire?

Listen to your words and reflect on your actions. Choose to focus on your response.

Part 3

Taking Action

Taking 100% Responsibility for Your Results is the foundation for the success you want in life, but nothing happens until you take action.

You'll learn some powerful principles to help focus your actions and inspire you to not give up until you achieve your desired results.

Chapter 6

Act As If...

A powerful concept that Jack Canfield talks about in his bestselling book, *The Success Principles*, is the concept of “Act As If”. What does that mean and how do you live it?

Act As If is a simple but powerful mindset shift that sets you up to take responsibility for results and stop the blame game. The mindset shift that needs to occur is to Act As If you are responsible for the circumstances as they exist whether or not they are within your control.

That means if the weather is bad and you sell cars or motorcycles, you Act As If you’re responsible and you look for creative solutions to getting customers in the showroom or take the showroom to the customers. You could throw up your hands and blame the weather for not selling any cars or motorcycles. Both approaches will have predictable results, so you need to choose the strategy that leads to success. Like Henry Ford said, “whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you are correct”. If you think you won’t sell any cars or motorcycles because it’s raining you will be correct. Act As If you’re 100% responsible for your results and change your response when it rains and sell some cars or motorcycles!

You have the ability to be creative and very industrious. Use those abilities when the circumstances get difficult to figure out a pathway to the success you desire.

Don't be afraid to ask for help or do some research to see what others have done to be successful in similar circumstances. Talk with your co-workers and leadership team about ideas they may have and make it fun by adding some friendly competition. Be careful that the game drives towards the desired results without crossing the line into being 'unhealthy' competition.

“Concern yourself more with accepting responsibility than with assigning blame. Let the possibilities inspire you more than the obstacles discourage you.”

Ralph Marston

Jack Canfield writes about a great example of a Lexus dealership taking 100% responsibility and acting as if in his best-selling book, *The Success Principles*.

A friend of Jack's owned a Lexus dealership and when war broke out in the Middle East, people suddenly stopped coming into the dealership and sales dropped significantly.

The team accepted responsibility for their results, so they took action to increase sales despite the circumstances. The team tried several options but the one that really took off was taking the cars to where the customers were and not waiting around for the customers to come to the showroom.

They took the cars to country clubs, polo matches and other events where they knew there would be wealthy people. They had them sit in the cars and take the cars for a test

drive. Sales increased beyond the pre-war levels as if there was no recession!

Their success was a result of taking 100% responsibility for their results and taking action. Nothing happens until you take action.

Chapter 7

Practice Persistence and Never Give Up!

Even when you Take 100% Responsibility and Act As If, the results are not always easy and they don't necessarily come immediately.

You have experienced setbacks in the past and you will experience more in your future so be prepared to respond. Remember that life is a marathon and not a sprint so practice persistence and never give up on your dreams of success.

I worked at the local K-Mart when in high school and so did several of my friends. It was a good place to work and I received a pay raise from 1.96 an hour to \$2.30 an hour working in the garden center!

Besides the big pay raise, it was fun to work with a bunch of my friends and we often told work stories whenever we got together.

We had a friend, Jeff, who listened to our stories and was interested in working there too. He applied and was told by the human resources manager that they weren't hiring and to come back later.

Jeff came back the next week and applied again. He didn't get hired. He kept coming back every week for over 12 weeks until he finally got hired.

Soon Jeff was making the big bucks just like us and not only got to listen to the stories that we told but he got to add his own stories. After high school and using the money he had saved from working at K-mart, Jeff completed technical college and became a successful journeyman tool and die maker.

Jeff's success was a result of taking responsibility for his results and practicing persistence. Few people would have blamed Jeff for giving up on working at K-mart after being turned down the first two or three times let alone after being turned down ten or eleven times. Jeff didn't take no for an answer and it paid off in the end.

It isn't necessarily widely known that Michael Jordan didn't make the varsity basketball team as a sophomore when he was in high school. He was bitterly disappointed and upset about what he perceived as a slight to something he thought he had earned.

Undaunted and yet fueled by the rejection, he chose to work on his game and come back even better the following season. He made the varsity basketball team the next year and needless to say it paid off for him in the long run. He was named a McDonald's All-American his senior year and he averaged a triple-double for the season: 29.2 points, 11.6 rebounds, and 10.1 assists.

If Michael Jordan had given up on his basketball dreams after his sophomore year, we never would have known Air Jordan and who knows if Nike shoes would have taken off as they did.

Remember that taking-action includes practicing persistence and never giving up.

Part 3

Take Action

Now it's up to you. You've learned the principle that is the foundation to all the success you desire. It's time to put these simple but powerful principles to work in your life every day. What follows are some easy to implement steps for Taking 100% Responsibility for Your Results.

Next Steps

Listen to your response to difficult situations or times when your results aren't what you wanted. Reflect on whether you're blaming the event or taking responsibility for the failure and focused on choosing a more effective response?

Ask someone at work or at home that you trust and who knows you well how they perceive how well you take responsibility for your results? Is this an area of strength for you or is it an opportunity for improvement?

Find a mentor or 'accountability partner' who can provide honest, constructive feedback on how well you accept responsibility for your results. Explain to them your desired behavior and approach and ask them to point out when you're doing that well and when you're coming up short. Work at it every day.

Final Thoughts

You now have the foundational concepts to achieve the results you desire in life. It's up to you to put these concepts to work and realize the success you want. Remember to 'look in the mirror' if things aren't going well and choose a more effective response!

All success starts with taking 100% responsibility for your life!