**It Is Not Your Fault….**

**But It Is Your Problem**

This phrase was taught to me over and over by my mentor and father, Chris Booth. The first time my Dad used it, I was completely caught off guard. “What did he just say?” My first thought “Dang! This situation just got reversed on me!” My second thought “What am I going to do now to fix the problem? WHOA!”

This phrase “It is not your fault, but it is your problem” has become part of the culture of our business at CCB Technology. CCB employees use it with each other, and I have used it in many talks and even with other CEO groups.

What does it mean and how does it impact people?

Let’s breakdown the phrase and see if it helps.

**It is not your fault**

We have all found ourselves in situations where it was not our fault. Perhaps someone didn’t do his or her job correctly or maybe ignored his or her tasks. That mistake has caused a ripple effect which has hit you and possibly your entire team. You know it is not your fault. It doesn’t feel fair. You have been working so hard to get your tasks done. It’s not your fault, but the lack of follow through or ownership is creating a gap. It is a critical time to decide how you will respond because it is now your problem.

**But it is your problem**

This problem is now creating chaos in your world or in the world of your team. It has caused a hole in the boat and someone must do something. You recognize the issue is there, but it’s not your fault. It’s very hard to stop what you are doing and now pick up more work because of someone else’s poor performance. This feels unfair, but you are stuck with it. At this point, you are possibly ready to take your frustrations out on the person or situation that has you feeling stuck. On the other hand, you might choose to rise to the occasion to lead others forward in a stressful situation.

**Now what?!**

Someone didn’t do his or her job or follow through on a commitment. You are feeling the pain and starring at the problem in front of you. What are you going to do? I see three options…

1. Ignore it
2. Push it to someone else
3. Fix it

Option one is to ignore it. If you ignore it, how will that impact your job and your team? Will it come back and make things worse for you? What about the emotional turmoil of knowing you just let it go? Let’s be honest. If you are leader, this option doesn’t work for you.

Your second option is to push the work onto someone else and say, “Not my problem!” As a leader, it’s unlikely that you are a person who wants to push a problem onto someone simply because you don’t want to be associated with the problem. Someone must step up and take control. Asking others to help is also a good option. Someone must be the leader! As a leader, I don’t think dropping a problem on someone’s desk then running away is an option.

Your third option is to fix the problem. Leaders who understand “It is not your fault, but it is your problem” can recognize that it was not their lack of effort or commitment to create the problem, but someone must step up. You can share this phrase with others to challenge them to be better and lead in difficult times.

As a leader, you cannot ignore the problem. Yes, it is not your fault however there is a problem that you are aware of, and now you must address it. It is extremely frustrating to have to readjust your focus for someone else’s mistakes, but you are not like everyone else. You could ignore it, but that is not you! You are the person who says, “Let’s fix this before things get worse!” You accept the responsibly when someone else won’t. Your leadership will change a bad situation to a positive one by setting an example and taking on the problem.

So, what is the main take away? Be ready to step up when others have let their responsibilities go. You aren’t a door mat, and the person who is failing should ultimately be held accountable. Your leadership in helping to resolve the problem is done to help rectify the situation. You are accepting the task as a leader who refuses to ignore problems.

On June 14th 2021, my dad experienced a bad fall and suffered a spinal cord injury. He has been in therapy for the past four months trying to relearn how to walk and use his arms. I visit him several times a week to help encourage him. One of his favorite things is when I tell him about work and things I am learning.

Recently I had two different leaders from across the country tell me that they have the phrase “It is not your fault, but it is your problem” on a sticky note placed on their computers so they can use it often. That is amazing! I made sure to tell them that it was not my quote but one taught to me by my father. Again, how exciting to hear others using this phrase to help solve problems?! As I told my Dad the two stories, his eyes lit up and a huge smile crossed his face as he asked “Really?!” My response, “Dad, you have made an impact on so many, and your legacy will always be remembered!” With tears in his eyes, he gave me a head nod of acknowledgement.

**Need more?**

Listen to episode #69, [**Legacy**](https://podcast.impactofleadership.com/podcast/legacy-chris-and-patti-booth/)with my parents, Chris & Patti Booth

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