



By Richard D. Czerniawski

## **AVOID PLAYING THE BLAME GAME**

The blame game is perhaps one of the most popular and widely played games in the world. It is front and center daily in politics. Is it not?

Consider, for example, the rampant inflation that our nation and others are experiencing. What is the cause? Our “leaders” are blaming it on their predecessors; they claim the pandemic wrought it; it's the high price of oil (well, what's its cause?) that is exacting the toll; Putin and his war in Ukraine are the culprits; the greed of big business is causing it—whatever the cause celebre of the day.

Members of media are premier players. They march in a bevy of pundits who denounce from their bully pulpit every decision and act not with facts but opinions colored by their biases and shared views with the audience the media is targeting.

Disastrous policies, strategies, execution, etc., are laid everywhere but those responsible.

Let's not rule out business. It knows how to play the blame game too.

- “Marketing is wasting money on advertising that doesn't work.”
- “The sales force is poorly trained.”
- Manufacturing isn't doing its job.”
- “The access team isn't selling our differentiation.”
- “R&D strapped us with a product that is not meaningfully different from our competitors.”
- “The customer doesn't get it.”
- “Competition engages in unethical practices.”

We've heard it all, and more, before! Sadly, we continue to listen to the same things ad nauseum.

What makes the blame game so popular? It's a way to dodge accountability when it doesn't suit the individual or party and their narrative. It deflects responsibility for doing the right things in the right way.

Poor practices make it possible. Accordingly, we need to identify and address those practices to avoid the blame game and, importantly, learn from our experiences and improve performance.

What should we be doing to avoid the blame game?

1. ***Set expectations with SMART Behavior Objectives.*** What is it that we need to achieve? Identify and quantify it. Make your behavior objectives “SMART.” The acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound.
2. ***Inspect for what you expect.*** In other words, track and measure results versus your expectations. I'm amazed by how few organizations engage in rigorous performance analysis. Instead, they prefer to bury their heads in the sand and chase after the next “silver bullet,” resulting in yet another mediocre effort. Begin tracking and analyzing results early so that you can implement course corrections as appropriate.
3. ***Test before going broadscale.*** Ensure that the decisions we make and our actions work as anticipated before overcommitting resources.
4. ***Don't view the rigorous process as an indictment but as an important learning event to make future decisions and actions more productive.*** I recall a story about an IBMer who made a mistake that cost the company 10-million dollars. He admitted his error to his manager and said, "I guess you're going to fire me." The manager responded, "We just spent 10-million dollars to train you. Don't make this mistake again."

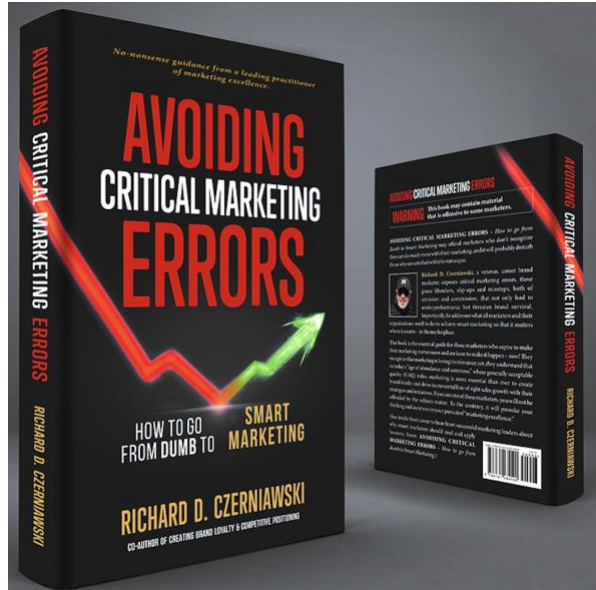
Blame gamers don't engage in the practices mentioned above. Ask why a launch didn't achieve its Business Objectives, and you'll get opinions instead of hard evidence.

Consequently, the team learns nothing or little, leading to more sub-par performing launches, decisions, and actions. Additionally, personal and organizational growth stalls. Moreover, the blame game will invite politics, divide people and undermine morale.

Avoiding playing the blame game will make your marketing (and organization performance) matter more!

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Peace and best wishes in making your marketing matter even more,

*Richard Czerniawski*



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