

## Risk and Responsibility

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I have talked about risk vs. reward before. Many want the reward but do not want to take the risk. They want the payoff but not the process to get there.

We live and work in a culture that is saturated with the diffusion of responsibility. The best example of this is still the 1964 Kitty Genovese murder.

Genovese — a 28-year-old bar manager — was raped and stabbed and attacked on the way to her Kew Gardens apartment in the early morning of March 13, 1964. Moseley stabbed Genovese and retreated into the shadows, then reportedly returned to finish the deed as she struggled unsuccessfully to make it home.

Her cries for help went unanswered, seen and heard by at least 38 different people. After investigating, it was determined that each witness simply figured someone else would either help or call for help---diffusion of responsibility.

So how does this relate to risk? There is a risk in the decisions that we make. The greater the stake, generally the greater the risk. In the medical profession, therefore, we see so many physicians join group practices vs. starting an independent practice. With group practices, there is less risk.

No doubt risk can be scary, and consequences and stakes must be weighed. However, it is not possible to achieve your dreams, goals, and aspirations to the level you have envisioned them without assuming some level of risk.

Think of inventors: People often think they are crazy. They assume the risk, and if it is successful, then people want to jump on the bandwagon. Why? Because someone else has assumed the risk and there is now proven safety/success. The issue is this: those that jump on the bandwagon want/expect the same benefit.

Society has, unfortunately, embraced the fictitious “take me along with you” concept. This sounds good in theory but is as detrimental as the “everyone gets a trophy” movement.

There has to be action, movement and sacrifice on your part to get what you want or where you are trying to go. The harsh reality is the world owes none of us anything. I am not saying we don't help each other, but at some point, you must cut people off, loose, and they must get off the coattails.

There are two kinds of people reaching out for help:

- People with drive, ideas, and initiative looking to add value, innovate, and create. These people are not afraid of hard work and are even willing to take some risks.
- People who are looking to play it safe. They are opportunistic in spotting those doing and creating and strategically align themselves behind those people to benefit if things work out; however, they hop off the train with no cost to them because there was no risk if things don't work out.

Think about our professional organizations and societies that we are members of. We pay an annual fee, and we diffuse our responsibilities to them. When issues arise that threaten the profession, we get angered or are quick to voice our opinions. This didn't happen overnight. Where was our involvement? Did we only pay to appease the situation, while someone else took the risk?

Here is a question I often get. **I am at a job that is not producing the results I want or is not fulfilling?** There are two answers to this question, and both involve risks:

1. Stay at the job and try to voice your expectations and ideas to see if you can get what you want from the job, or
2. Leave and try to find a job that meets your demands, goals, and expectations.

There is an associated cost and risk with both options that only you can decide.

It is also important to understand that if someone allows you the "luxury" to benefit from their successes without risks, you CANNOT play the victim when it is taken away or goes away. This is again something that our society has embraced—sustained benefit with no risk. Rather than being grateful, it seems most become angered and resentful, which makes entirely no sense.

The bottom line is that your level of benefit, success and impact in this life is ultimately dependent on you and that success or failure CANNOT be delegated or "diffused" to someone else.