

Book Review on
“QBQ! – The Question Behind the Question?” by John Miller

(Review by Gary Tomlinson)
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What ever happened to personal responsibility? Why does it seem the only thing people know how to do anymore is point the finger elsewhere, blaming something or someone else for their problems, their actions, their feelings? In one form or another, we often hear, “It’s not my fault,” “It’s not my job,” or “It’s not my problem.”

The lack of personal accountability is a problem that has resulted in an epidemic of blame, complaining, and procrastination. No organization or individual can achieve goals, compete in the marketplace, fulfill a vision, or develop people and teams without personal accountability. For this reason, I have chosen John Miller’s *QBQ! – The Question Behind the Question* for this month’s book review.

Who is this book for? Anyone who’s ever heard questions like these:

- “When is that department going to do its job?”
- “Why don’t they communicate better?”
- “Who dropped the ball?”
- “Why do we have to go through all this change?”
- “When is someone going to train me?”

These questions seem innocent enough, but they indicate a lack of personal responsibility. Miller prefers the term “personal accountability,” which he believes goes right to the heart of many of the problems we face today. He believes that turning our thinking around and asking more personally accountable questions is one of the most powerful and effective things we can do to improve our lives and our organizations. The Question Behind the Question (QBQ) is a tool that’s been developed and refined over the years that helps individuals practice personal accountability by asking better questions.

Each day as we journey into the unexplored wilds of our personal and professional lives, we have countless choices to make. And what are we choosing? Not our next action but our next thought. Choose the wrong thought and we’re off in the emotional negative world of blame, complaining, and procrastination. But the right thoughts lead us to a richer, more fulfilling life and the feelings of pride and accomplishment that come from making productive decisions. The idea that we are accountable for our own choices and are free to make better ones is fundamental to the QBQ. Sometimes people think they have no choice. They’ll say things like “I have to” or “I can’t.” But Miller says we always have a choice. Always. Even deciding *not* to choose is making a choice. Realizing this and taking responsibility for our choices is a big step toward making great things happen.

The Question Behind the Question is built on the observation that our first reactions are often negative, bringing to mind Incorrect Questions (IQs). But if in each moment of

decision we can instead discipline our thoughts to look behind those initial questions and ask better ones (QBQs), the questions themselves will lead us to better results.

Miller believes that the troubles that plague organizations cannot be solved by pointing fingers and blaming others. Rather, the real solutions are found when each of us recognizes the power of personal accountability. In his book, Miller explains how negative inappropriate questions like “Why do we have to go through all this change?” and “Who dropped the ball?” represent a lack of personal accountability. Conversely, when we ask better questions – QBQs – such as “What can I do to contribute?” or “How can I help solve the problem?” our lives and our organizations are transformed.

Personal accountability is about each of us holding *ourselves* accountable for our own thinking and behaviors and the results they produce. Personal accountability is not about changing others. It’s about making a difference by changing ourselves. Miller says this change begins by asking better questions (QBQs).

Miller’s book is a quick read that is full of practical methods for putting personal accountability into daily action that will produce astonishing results. QBQ is an invaluable resource for anyone seeking to learn, grow, and change. Using this tool, each of us can add tremendous worth to our organizations and to our lives by eliminating blame, complaining, and procrastination.

Enjoy this month’s selection, *QBQ! - The Question Behind the Question* and share it with others in your life because as Alvin Toffler says; “*The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.*”