

# Jive eXchange

## **Your Problem, Not Mine**

Whether you think of members of your family or wider social circles, people with whom you work or employ you and public figures like politicians, can you remember the last time someone publicly took responsibility for their actions and admitted they were wrong, made a mistake or even just apologised. I would hasten to guess that you haven't heard it often in any of these or other areas of your life. Older generations like to remind us that not that long ago, in all walks of life people were more accountable for their actions and has time as moved forward we have moved in to the excuse driven, blame everybody and everything else before ourselves. Why has this happened and what does this mean for society if these trends continue?

One reason people often give for lack of accountability particularly in business and government circles is the litigious society we now live in meaning that admission of fault makes it easier for a suing party to receive damages usually financial compensation. Another major reason is that living in the fast food, on demand, time poor, big today and gone tomorrow society means that it requires less effort, time and thought on our part blaming our ills on another than trying to fix ourselves. Finally the vicious circle of the general public stating that our leaders don't take responsibility so why should I. Followed by these leaders realising the public are lowering their standard of accountability meaning more freedom for them.

These all may be true wholly or in part but did you ever pause and ponder that technology might be an underlying perpetuator for all this lack of accountability. I can imagine the puzzled look on your faces at this point so let me explain using a common example in today's society. A scandal breaks involving a government minister and because of the speed of communication and huge number of media sources the public are aware within minutes. At the same time the minister and his/her staff are aware of this and determining a response and overall strategy to combat these allegations. Realising a lot of these allegations are true, a flat out denial wont work but a non-specific denial and lack of awareness may work and at worst buy a little time. As technology has allowed so many media sources and modes of communication that media releases can be issued very quickly. A friendly media source can always be found for a not too probing, carefully planned interview. The Internet can be used to spread rumours of others involvement making the heat less intensive on a single person. Finally all of this has probably bought enough time until the next major world event or sporting success meaning the media and public have shifted their focus, too bored to ever return. If you are sceptical think back to the AWB enquiry closely followed by the Beaconsfield Mine Disaster closely followed by the World Cup. Firstly the heat was on some of our most senior Government figures then suddenly it was the rescue of two trapped miners and the safety of our mining industry and before you could blink that to was forgotten and it was the Socceroos who themselves are now largely forgotten by the majority of the public.

I posed the question earlier what does this mean for society if these trends continue. Well technology is only becoming more sophisticated so it will continue to be an effective medium to help people and institution perpetuate their own lack of accountability. However more fundamentally a lack of acceptance of our own faults means we will never learn from our mistakes and accept others to pick up the tab which may work in the good times but not in the bad. Moreso is a society where depression, suicide, divorce rates and homelessness are rising, this inability to admit fault and be considerate of others will diminish our overall happiness.

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