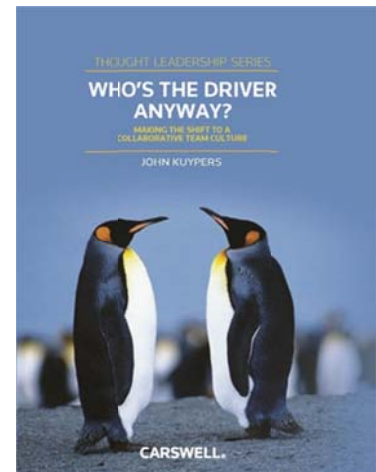


# A SHIFT TOWARDS ENTITLEMENT AND DEFLECTING RESPONSIBILITY

BY JOHN KUYPERS

*In this excerpt from *Who's The Driver Anyway? Making the Shift to a Collaborative Team Culture*, author John Kuypers links the prosperity of the last twenty years with a major cultural shift towards unearned entitlement while deflecting responsibilities that rightly belong to employees at all levels. This excerpt speaks to how progressive leaders need to become much more flexible in order to achieve team success in the coming years.*



With prosperity has come a sense of entitlement. Somebody owes us. If things go wrong, it's somebody's responsibility and most certainly not our own. The thriving legal business anchored in suing for damages is testament to this truth. If you get hurt, someone did it to you and they must pay. The effects show up everywhere in daily life. A famous example is the 1994 case of the McDonald's customer who spilled hot coffee on herself and successfully sued for over two million dollars. Today, the abundance of advertising by injury attorneys is testament to how lucrative this business has become.

In the McDonald's lawsuit, however, the kernel of what this book contains emerged. The jury determined that McDonald's was 80% responsible for what happened and the woman was 20% responsible. Agree or disagree, the principle is a good one. Responsibility for decisions can be shared in a defined way. There is indeed room for gray.

To work and even live together well with others, you need to know and accept who's responsible for what. For example, when

you're driving a car, you know who is controlling the steering wheel, but do you know who's controlling where you're going? If I say turn left and you keep going straight, who's really responsible? The truth is that driving anything involves two components - a doer and a decider. You may be doing the driving but someone else may be deciding where you're going.

The key to clarifying responsibilities is a new leadership tool called *The 7 Performance Drivers*. It contains seven levels of shared decision-making responsibilities that make it clear and easy to understand who is the doer and who is the decider. The tool is objective. It simply measures decision-making weight, not unlike how a thermometer measures the temperature, without bias or opinion. If a fully endorsed decision needs 100% decision-making authority, then the doer and the decider need to share that power as a ratio. If you have 60% of the decision-making authority, I must have 40%. If we agree on how we will make decisions, we will be in sync on getting the work done, happily and productively. The silver bullet in this tool is

that you can intentionally shift the weight of decision-making responsibility and in so doing shift the way people get things done together. Good things are sure to follow.

Unfortunately, our society has made major shifts in the direction of deflecting responsibility. Nowhere is this more obvious than in personal relationships. Nearly one million couples divorce each year in the United States and Canada. As someone with more than a passing interest in that topic, I must say that I occasionally meet people who acknowledge their own role in the break up. It is a refreshing occasion when it happens. For most, their partner did it to them and they were mere victims, entitled to something better than they were getting. I myself acted on that very reasoning some fourteen years ago. Accountability and personal responsibility do not come easily. Getting there is vital for leaders in the 21st century who want to successfully get others to do the same. The following Aesop fable speaks to how we protect ourselves by denying or rationalizing our role in driving results.

*A trumpeter, bravely leading on the soldiers, was captured by the enemy. He cried out to his captors, "Pray spare me, and do not take my life without cause or without inquiry. I have not slain a single man of your troop. I have no arms, and carry nothing but this one brass trumpet." "That is the very reason for which you should be put to death," they said; "for, while you do not fight yourself, your trumpet stirs all the others to battle."*

*You are accountable for your role in how others perform*

Aesop's Fables: The Trumpeter Taken Prisoner

Deflecting responsibility onto others is also evident politically in the 21st century. Greece is a present-day example of this. Over the years, the Greek government slid down the slippery slope of giving the people what they wanted...and borrowing billions to do it. Spending tomorrow's wealth for today's benefit. When it all collapsed in 2010, harsh economic measures ensued. The people were upset, even to the point of violence. One can understand why. No one wants to lose their pensions, their jobs, their benefits, or accept pay cuts. One Greek citizen interviewed by a major US television network spoke out passionately, "A job is a right, not a privilege!" Fantasy thinking, most North Americans would say. There is no guaranteed Santa Claus. Yet the people of many Western countries would undoubtedly have reacted the same way were such misfortune to have befallen them. It just happens to be the Greeks who are actually living it out most severely. We are all part of the whole, like it or not. This is true at work too.

Fortunately, the European Union has stepped in to lend billions to Greece, with tight conditions attached of course. Prior to that, many Greeks cried out, "Default on the loans! We need our scarce resources to maintain our jobs, our pensions, our social benefits." Ignoring those cries, Greece's leadership has made tough decisions to live up to commitments and repay huge debts. They are inflicting short term pain and promising that among a set of tough choices, this one will have the best long term result. Like a parent with a rebellious teenager, the president of Greece, Karolos Papoulias, is in

a difficult leadership role. His government's decisions will affect the country for the next twenty years and beyond.

On the home front, we have a new generation entering the workforce. They are fondly named, Generation Y. Born in the 1980s and 1990s, they are the children of late Baby Boomers and Generation X. In my business travels, one word has come to be tightly associated with this new generation: Entitlement. And why not? This is the generation whose parents involved them in most major decisions. "Ashley, what colour car do you think daddy should buy?" As a baby boomer, I'm sure such a question never entered my father's mind, not even once. His idea of involving us was to let us have a ride in it after he bought it. I never even knew he was thinking of trading the car in the first place!

And what about vacations? Our family discussions were short and to the point. "Get in the car. We're going to New Brunswick." Since that was only my third (and last) extended trip of my childhood, I was pretty happy to get in. But wealth and education

has caused my generation to give our children many delightful choices. My fourteen year old son has already accompanied his well-traveled mother to the Caribbean many times in his young life! Combined with Generation Y's penchant for the self-gratifying thrills of video games, I sometimes wonder how an employer will keep this next generation "engaged," as the HR experts call it, for eight hours a day.

I have great faith in humanity and I trust this generation will rise up to its challenges. The only question is whether it will be painfully or willingly. This sea of social change, combined with the vast impact of technology on how we communicate, measure and control work, is leading to a great change. Leaders need to be flexible about how they get people to do things together or face a level of resistance not known by prior generations.

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