

**Not wanting to appoint blame and take responsibility
for fear of being disliked, victimised or reprisal;
yet necessary for the greater good**

Food for thought

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It is utterly tragic that in South Africa, Africa - and arguably worldwide - we remain with an increasing and pandemic (WHO) situation of road fatalities and injuries. South Africa continues to be at the forefront of the pandemic with our crash, fatality and injury rates - with no evident abatement.

While there is an ongoing plethora of research published, much of which is, let's be frank, a regurgitation and re-analysis of what we already know, nothing improves. Similarly, we see an abundance of improved technology implementation, standards and laws being applied but with no appreciable outcome. Why is this?

It has become the norm to try find the "silver bullet", which is simply an unrealistic impossibility. Among the many clever minds that have researched and published on the topic, it is very often directly said or implied that there is no "silver bullet" and that correction is an unwavering, if not unnerving and very unpopular, hard stance of improvement and enforcement of many factors across the transport "systems".

The new industry buzzword is "systems" and one only has to read a few research papers to realise this. The reference to the "system" - in its many iterations and wide applications - very often seeks to avoid the blame game. This has become the societal norm. Not for a second is the principal of the "system" not a valid analysis. Yet, it is being used to circumnavigate - or perhaps "transfer" - what is essentially "the buck stops with YOU", real world problem.

Let us briefly consider this. In doing so, I am sure this will again raise an alternative perspective, nonetheless it is made to highlight the point. A commercial driver, as a trained and accepted professional driver, chooses to travel at 105 km/h where he should be at 80 km/h. This driver chooses to overtake over a blind rise and double solid barrier line - placed there for obvious reason - and in doing so, collides partially head-on with a minibus and kills several people. To our amazement, or perhaps not, the commercial vehicle is from a reputable company and is fitted with a tracking system and camera and all is caught and shown. With absolutely no doubt, we could argue that the "system" has failed and that, due to many flaws in the system, the driver was able to choose what he chose to do.

But hold on! The driver and his actions, even with the full system, tracking, monitoring and even cameras, chose to do what he did. It was the driver's choice. This is the anomaly of the "human-factor", or thorn in the side of the system. Rather annoyingly, this brings us full-circle where the fully integrated system has a fault, and that ultimately, there has to be blame appointed. In this particular case example, the driver, as part of the system, would certainly be "blamed" and face criminal repercussions, and likely civil issues in regards his employment.

Perhaps some would find the word "blame" too strong, and would prefer us to say that someone has to take "responsibility". The reality is that no matter what this blame or responsibility may be - financial or even criminal such as imprisonment - for a particular incident, there are almost always consequences to the transporter, the insurer and to the driver. In the greater scheme of the transport system, this ***Not wanting to appoint blame and take responsibility for fear of being disliked, victimised or reprisal***, is having a major effect on society and the economy.

It is this civil, or criminal action that brings about a need to take responsibility and even take the blame. Hence, all of us, cannot continue with this shirking of duties, responsibilities and appointing or transferring of blame. Someone, you, I and the Department of Transport and all in the transport system, need to take responsibility. There needs to be an unpopular and difficult hard line drawn and the necessary unpopular decisions and implementations made with a hard stance.

As has been penned before, let us all stop shirking and avoiding taking direct responsibility for fear of what we know is going to bring about a negative and perhaps confrontational situation. But that, for the greater good of all, is what is needed.

Food for thought.