Building an Accountable Workplace

Key Actions and Characteristics

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Learning Objectives

At the end of this session, you will:

- Identify key characteristics of accountable organizations
- Determine steps to build an accountable workplace and environment
- Identify certain features for enhancing accountability in your organization
- Discuss how employees can be autonomous and accountable and the importance of goals for every job role in the workplace.

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What does Accountability mean?

- Merriam-Webster:
  - an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions
- How do we define or identify an accountable workplace:
  - All members of the team are responsible for their actions and decisions
  - Ownership of results and outcomes
  - A **commitment** to others and to the goals/objectives of the organization

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Why is Accountability Important

- For our discussion – let's agree that accountability does impact and influence the following:
  - More effective performance of tasks and goals
  - Better monitoring and measurement of work performance and reporting of value & objectives
  - Improved morale amongst employees & colleagues
  - Minimizing distractions, and better aligning activities with specific goals and roles/functions
  - *"Accountability is about taking care of each other"*

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Are We Accountable??

POLLING QUESTIONS:

- *Do you believe that you demonstrate accountability in your role and function within your organization?*

- *Now – Do you believe that OTHERS demonstrate accountability in the workplace?*

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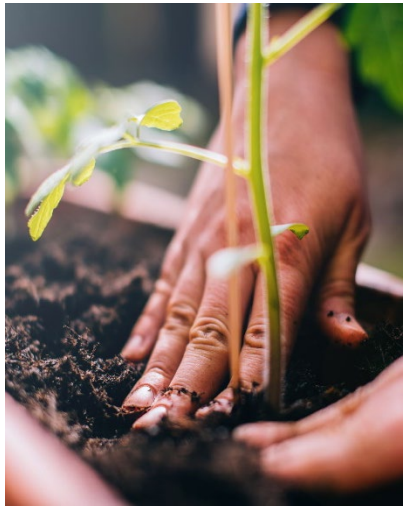
Establishing Accountability

- Key Characteristics/Attributes:
  - Lead by Example
  - Clearly Define Goals, Expectations, and Results
  - Gain Commitment and Agreement
  - Be Open to Feedback and Problem Solving (discussed at previous sessions)
  - Coach and Communicate with Employees
  - Communicate and Resolve Consequences and Support
  - Plant the Seeds (i.e. – just get started… make progress)



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Lead By Example

- Are we being accountable?
  - *Be Transparent*
  - *Responsive and Own decisions, actions, and results*
  - *Do we offer excuses? Do we deflect?*
  - *Workplace starts with "I"*

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Clearly Define Goals and Expectations

- What is included at On-Boarding?
  - *Are we sure this is clear?*
- Does the organization clearly define and communications goals and expected results/outcomes?
- Are roles and tasks clearly defined AND linked to the goals/objectives?
- Are timelines given?
- The answers to these provide us valuable insight into whether the organization can ever be truly “accountable”

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Gain Commitment

- How are goals established and communicated?
  - If others don't have input and "buy-in" – commitment is hard to achieve.
  - Are rewards/incentives included in any part of the process of working towards goals?

- Are there interdependencies with others?
  - Are these roles and expectations communicated and outlined?

- Have we gone through the activity to actually discuss the items and confirm understanding and commitment, or is it "assumed"?

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Be Open to Feedback

- Are we open to responses and comments on goals?
  - Do we lead by example to demonstrate positive ways to give and receive feedback? Or is there negativity?
  - Does the culture of the organization “presume positive intent” in messaging?

- How do we know if others feel comfortable to respond?

- Do we actively seek feedback?
  - Do we LISTEN?

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Coach and Communicate

POLLING QUESTION:

- *Do you believe that your organization has a culture of accountable conversations and direct coaching/feedback discussions with staff?*

- Is Feedback consistent and routine?
- Do we avoid difficult conversations? Do we “sugar coat” our communications on performance and results?
- Do we document these conversations?
  - Ever have misinterpretation of coaching discussions?

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Communicate Consequences

- Are impacts and consequences documented and communicated?
- Is it “all stick and no carrot” in our approach?
- Do staff understand organization, team, and individual goals and consequences?
- Are we communicating in a way that helps staff feel connected to the results/outcomes?
- Vendors/3rd parties – are there consequences/impacts within contracts?
    - Many contracts show “guarantees” with no penalties… or “goals” – but no consequences.

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How do we get there??

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Get Started

- Plant the Seeds!
  - Show Progress
  - Show Effort
- Be Empathetic!
- Be Willing to Fail and Show Courage

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Courage

- Discussion of skills and characteristics needs to start with a willingness and “courage” to push ahead and lead to drive accountability and responsibility. Are we willing to lead and be responsible and ‘own’ our actions and outcomes, despite what we may perceive around us?

- Does the organization encourage and foster a sense of “risk taking”? Are we afraid to take risks? Can we be accountable if there is little freedom to take risks or be innovative?

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Skills/Characteristics

- Willingness to Change. Being able to adapt and accept feedback without negativity and being defensive is critical.

- Positive Intent. Accountable leaders focus effectively to avoid blame. Focus on “next steps” and how to evolve going forward, rather than overemphasizing past mistakes or “pointing fingers”.

- Tough Conversations: Are we receptive to feedback and input? Do we assume positive intent? Further though – are we open and willing to have the tough conversations on performance and poor outcomes? This is listed in many articles as the key roadblock to accountable workplace culture.

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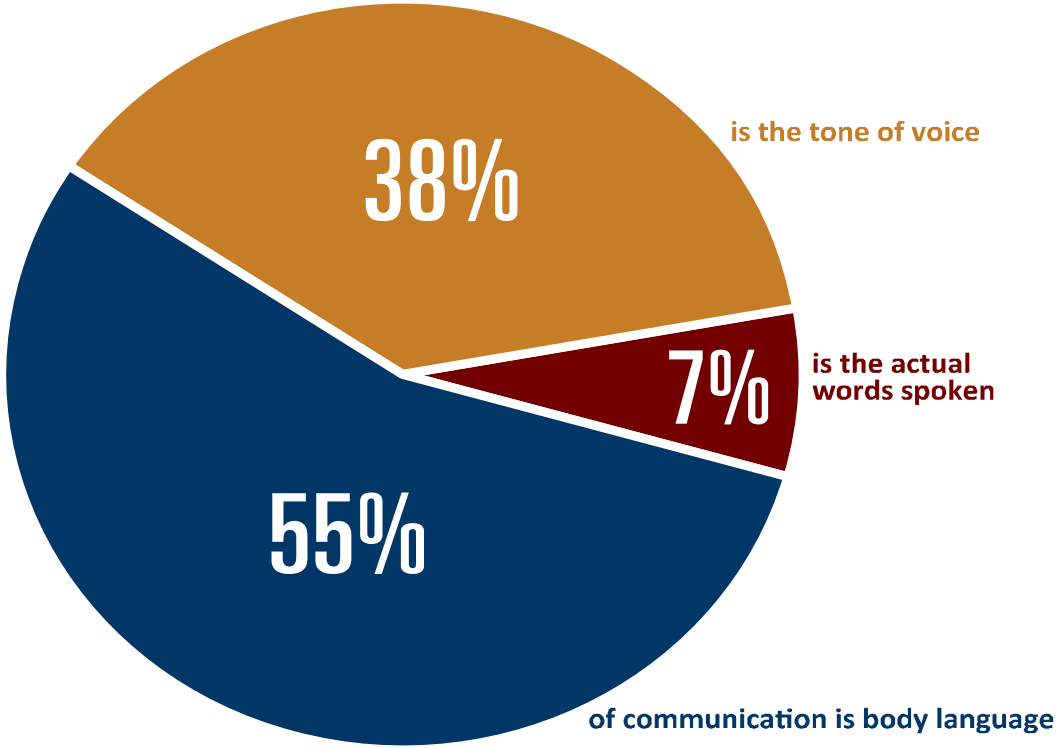
The Importance of Nonverbal Communication



Source: Dr. Albert Mehrabian, UCLA

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Metrics and Results

- Goals need to be measurable and tangible
  - Some subjectivity or intangible outcomes are hard to avoid, but too many lead to confusion, misunderstanding and disagreement on results/outcomes
- Are results documented and reported?
- Are there “moving targets”?
  - These may occur – but critically important to identify ASAP and communicate effectively.
  - Are consequences, timelines, roles, expectations, etc. “re-defined” if goals/results change?
    - WHY NOT?

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Know Your Role

- Being Accountable yourself is key… but beyond that we need to ensure that roles/activities are defined in terms of your role as:
  - Leader/manager?
  - Subordinate?
  - Team member/colleague?
  - Coach/mentor?
  - “Coachee”?

- This goes beyond job descriptions… what is my role regarding:
  - Tasks
  - Projects
  - Culture

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Summary

- Know the characteristics
- Know your goals and objectives
- Take steps… be vulnerable and courageous
- Know your results
- Create a culture of dialogue, feedback, and candid conversations

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Thank you!

Jim Kreiser, CRMA, CISA, CFSA
Principal ; CLA, Specialty Advisory Services
James.Kreiser@CLAConnect.com
717-857-2613

CLAconnect.com

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