

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Click on our social media icons please and as always thanks for tuning in. Please give us the benefit of your thinking and your comments below.

So, this week I want to talk about getting your projects done on time and on budget. I want you to learn the number one, the overarching number one reason why projects generally fail to get done on time, on budget or with the appropriate quality. And some of this comes from book, a great book, I recommend it highly, Influencer. There are five authors, I won't name them here. It's one of the best leadership books I've ever read. I couldn't wait to get back on the plane and finish the second half of the book. It was really an excellent book, but they make the claim in the book and we have no reason to think this isn't true.

In all, roughly 90% of major projects violate their own schedules, budgets or quality standards. Furthermore, 88% of the people these experts surveyed were able to predict that the very projects on which they were working right now were going to fail on one of those three measures. So, it's like they said, it's like a slow motion train wreck, everybody sees it coming, nobody does anything about it. Why is that? Okay, think back to the Challenger disaster. If you're as old as I am, you remember exactly where you were when you heard about the Challenger disaster and if you think about the research the study about why that disaster happened, there was a company, a public company, I won't mention any names, but the O-rings that sealed the sections of the rocket were brittle because of cold, the launch that day was cold if you remember, and that brittleness caused failure in the O-rings.

And everybody at the company, all the engineers at the company, knew it. They knew it! But still, the project continued. Why was that? I'll give you another example. I'm going to answer my own question in a minute, stay with me here, okay. A client called recently, and he said he had a little bit of a culture issue, a culture issue in one of his remote offices and basically there were projects going sideways or maybe even backwards and people were afraid in that particular office to speak up about it. That's what happened with the Challenger disaster. All those engineers could see this slow-motion train wreck happening, but nobody spoke up. There was a culture of silence and that's the number one barrier to getting your projects done on time and on budget, a culture of silence.

So, if that exists in most companies and believe me it does, nobody wants to deliver bad news, nobody ever wants to deliver bad news, how do you change that? Because we all want an open and trusting culture. That's one of the things we value here. One of our key values is to have an open and trusting culture and believe me it gets pretty blunt around here sometimes, it really does. So, how do you change this unhealthy code of silence?

The first thing is, make the undiscussable discussable. Bring darkness into the light and that has to start with the leaders. You have to be willing to be critiqued, you have to be willing to be challenged, you have to be willing to defend your ideas and everybody on the team also has to be willing to do that.

You need to talk about this, this is the second thing. You need to talk about the norm as it exists now, the culture of silence, but also the desired norm. You have to shine light on this issue and you have to talk about how you see the future. What's your vision for the future when you do have that open and trusting communication in your culture?

The third thing and I love this and it comes from this terrific book, create a culture of 200% accountability. I love that. 200% accountability, what does that mean? Number one, I'm accountable and I have to hold myself accountable, okay? That makes perfect sense. The second thing is I'm going to encourage correct behavior, I'm going to praise correct

behavior, I'm going to encourage it, I'm going to appreciate it. I'm going to call out correct behavior in front of other people instead of just calling out incorrect behavior, the old Vince Lombardi leadership thing.

And then the most important piece is I'm going to confront incorrect behaviors and that's where you really break down this code of silence. So, this book talks about an amazing program in San Francisco that takes in ex-cons, drug addicts and gang members and attempts to rehabilitate them. Well, you know that the typical reform program is 90% a failure. This turns that on its head. 90 plus percent of the people, the drug addicts and the alcoholics that come into this program never take drugs again, never touch another drop of alcohol again. And the reason, the culture, this incredible culture they've created there, is all about 200% accountability. Yes, I'm going to hold myself accountable to this standard but other people are going to call me out in a constructive way when they see me using, exercising, incorrect behavior and that happened here at The Family Business Institute.

I can remember sitting in one of our Monday meetings and my second in charge called me out on something that I had failed to do, something I told the team I was going to do, and I hadn't done it. And he said, "As an example, if somebody had done this you would probably be holding them accountable right now." And I said, "Yes." And he held me accountable and it was a great moment. I thanked him for it because that's what 200% accountability is all about. He was not afraid, he was not afraid to call me out on something that I clearly had failed to do. Whether it's you dealing with your own project managers or your own superintendents or your own employees or you're dealing with drug addicts and ex-convicts, this 200% accountability concept is wonderful. And the breaking through that culture of silence is the number one key to bringing your projects on time and on budget.

Coincidentally, it's also why the peer group programs that we participate in are so successful because CEOs don't often get called out in their organizations. It's rare for a second in charge to do what mine did. That just doesn't happen but that's what the peer groups do so well. CEOs sitting around the table holding each other accountable for their commitments is a powerful thing.

Love to have your comments. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you.