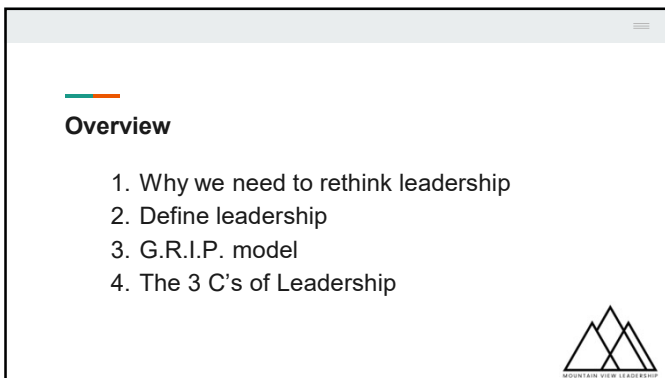# Rethinking Leadership:

How to Cultivate a Safer and More Resilient Workplace

Mike Thompson, MBA
Mountain View Leadership
Portage County Safety Council
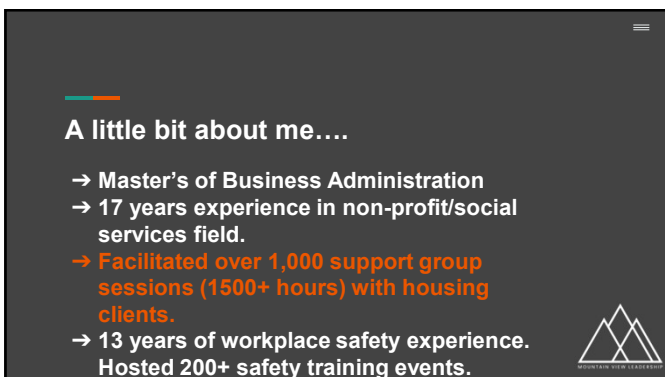
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Overview

1. Why we need to rethink leadership
2. Define leadership
3. G.R.I.P. model
4. The 3 C's of Leadership

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A little bit about me….

➜ Master's of Business Administration
➜ 17 years experience in non-profit/social services field.
➜ Facilitated over 1,000 support group sessions (1500+ hours) with housing clients.
➜ 13 years of workplace safety experience. Hosted 200+ safety training events.

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Why do we need to rethink leadership?

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Employee Trust

- **Only 29% trust immediate managers** - *DDI Research (2024)*
- Only 19% of non-executive employees trust their CEO to tell the truth - *Edelman (2024)*
- 68% worry that business leaders purposely mislead people - *Edelman (2024)*

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Employee Engagement

- **Only 31% of employees are engaged**
- Only 27% of managers are engaged
- Low engagement drains $89 trillion from the global economy annually

Source: Gallup (2024) via Pumble

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Employee Burnout

- **77% of surveyed employees had experienced burnout in their current job.** - *Deloitte (2024)*
- 3 in 5 American workers experienced moderate to high burnout.- *AFLAC (2024)*
- Burnout is at a 10-year high. - *The Hill (2025)*

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Are we in a leadership crisis?

Gap between leaders and employees: In an August 2025 U.S. News/Harris Poll survey, **72% of Americans reported a business leadership crisis.** A majority felt that business leaders' values did not align with those of everyday Americans.

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What is leadership?

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What is Leadership?

"<u>Leadership is the act of influencing, motivating, and guiding a group of people toward achieving a common goal</u>. It involves a set of skills and behaviors that empower individuals to provide direction, foster collaboration, and inspire action."

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"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it"

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

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So what's the solution?

How do we get there?

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What Employees Want

GROWTH
Advancement, achievement

RELATIONSHIPS
Healthy relationships, belonging

IDENTITY
A strong sense of who they are and where they fit in

PURPOSE
Meaningful work, impact, having a role to play

Mike Thompson 2025

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CASE STUDY #1

Parker-Hannifin Ravenna

- **Just 10 Minutes Program**
- New hires take one 10m safety training every shift for first 20 days.
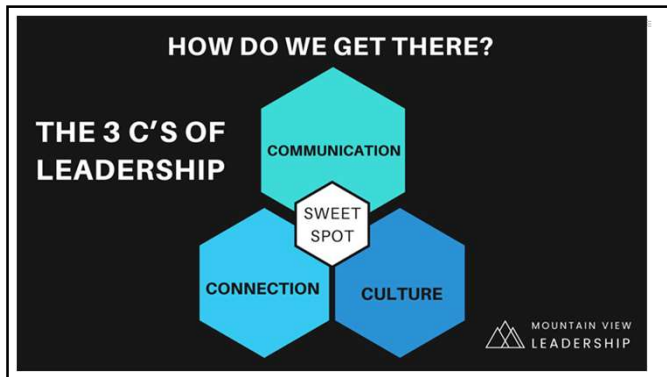- Sessions are led by various EHS, Operations, Engineering reps.
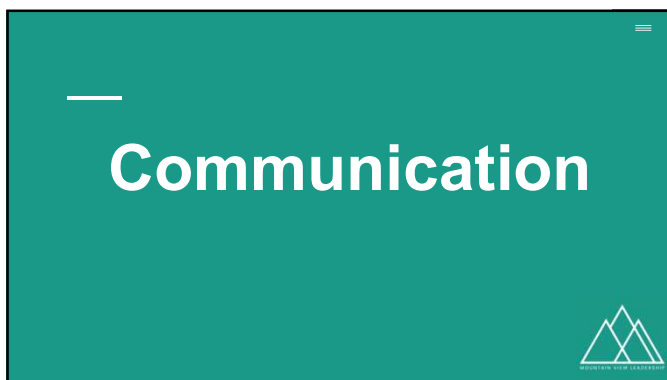
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"It goes without saying that no company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it."

– Jack Welch

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"60% of workplace accidents involve communication breakdowns, such as misunderstandings or unclear instructions."

Source: OSHA via Three Sixty Safety

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Communication should always:

1. Lead to a common vision or shared values
2. Build trust, credibility & morale
3. Provide clarity & direction
4. Resolve issues without hurting people
5. Empower people to be and do their best

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Praise to Criticism Ratio*

Highest Performing Teams	Medium Performing Teams	Lowest Performing Teams
6+ to 1-	**2+ to 1-**	**3- to 1+**

Source: Harvard Business Review
*Figures are rounded up.

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Questions to ask…

1. Is my communication helpful or hurtful?
2. Am I building up my team or tearing them down?
3. Am I building capacity or killing it?

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CASE STUDY #2

Pyrotek - Aurora Plant

- Find it - Fix it program
- Safety participation rate went from 5% to over 70% in 9 months!
- Reduction in maintenance request & labor costs
- 250 safety issues resolved

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Connection

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Employee Engagement

A study by the ASSP found injury rates were **60% higher** among disengaged employees.

Source: ASSP

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Psychological Safety

Workers who feel <u>psychologically unsafe</u> are 80% more likely to report being injured on the job.

Source: National Safety Council

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Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

① Self-Actualization
② Esteem, Self-Respect
③ Belonging
④ Safety
⑤ Physiological Needs

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Employees are asking…

1. Do I belong here?
2. Am I valued?
3. Do I bring value?

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Lead by example first, then by connection. Leverage authority only when needed.

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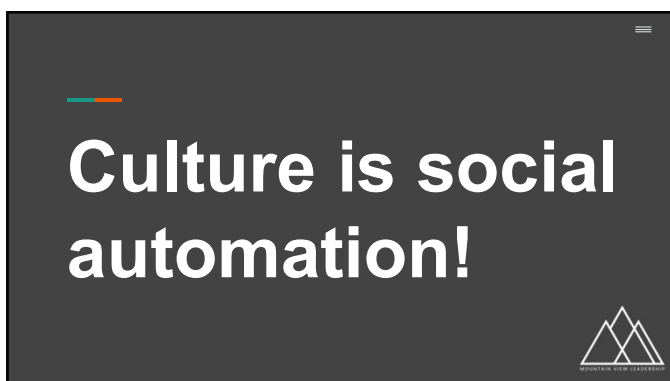**"Customers will never love a company until the employees love it first."**
– Jon Alm

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Culture

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> **"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."**
> — Peter Drucker

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Culture is social automation!

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Employee perceptions that shape safety culture

1. Perception of Organizational Ethics
2. Perception of Organizational Support
3. Perception of Management's Safety Concern
4. Leadership-Membership Exchange

Source: Auburn University

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Final Thoughts

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Final thoughts…

1. Great leadership begins with clear, honest, and courageous **communication**.
2. **Connection is the bridge between trust and performance**—build it intentionally.

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Final thoughts…

3. **Culture isn't what we say—it's what we consistently do**. Shape it with purpose.
4. A safer, more resilient workplace starts with leaders who are present, human, and willing to evolve.

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"Safety leadership isn't about rules—it's about relationships. When we lift people up, safety rises with them."

- Anonymous

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Thank you.

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