"Change" seems to be the only constant in both the private and public sectors, and as your organization evolves, the demands on your employees change. As you grow and as your operating environment changes, with new market conditions and client demands, you need all the value that your employees offer.

Open communication is important for getting all of an employee's best contributions, but getting that communication to happen is a challenge. Many cultures have their own unique factors that negatively affect communication, while some obstacles are just human nature throughout the world. If you can overcome the common challenges to communication, you can create more business value, manage change, and pull ahead of your competitors. **A culture of open communication can help you find new revenue opportunities; improve relationships with, and referrals from, existing customers; reduce talent costs by building a stronger employment brand; and, improve your team's skills though knowledge sharing and informal development.**

The discussion addresses the business value of open communication, examines why it does not happen naturally, and explores business practices to create an environment where communication becomes a normal part of the culture. Rather than simply telling people "communication is good" or spending time in team-building exercises whose lessons may not translate into the real business world, this session focuses on your specific needs and the structural changes that will help an important cultural transformation to happen.

Examining the Need for Communication

Open communication can be a value-adding element of a company's culture. The pace of technology and market change can make it hard for employees to keep up, so it helps when everyone can stay informed to support each other. Future growth requires a synergistic team to look for opportunities. Meanwhile, talking openly with customers means their unique requirements can be addressed more quickly and their expectations can be managed.

Common Barriers to Communication

It can be challenging to get people to communicate openly. Many people grow up in cultures that encourage them not to challenge others, especially those who are more senior. Educational experiences may encourage listening and memorizing more than questioning and challenging. A fear of failure may lead some to keep ideas to themselves. Understanding why people hesitate to be open is the first step to overcoming those barriers.

Creating a Culture of Open Communication

When recruiting, we can search for candidates who fit into an open communication culture. During onboarding, KPI-setting, and performance reviews, we can set expectations for how we need people to communicate. Development opportunities can include classes and coaching to improve communication skills. We cannot change societies, so the next best step is to implement business processes can help overcome the socio-cultural challenges to communication.