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## LEADERSHIP

# Management Mumbo Jumbo: Words Leaders Use to Shun Accountability

by  [Dianna Booher](#) on Apr 2, 2014, 9:03 AM | [1 Comment](#)

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Words can clarify or confuse.

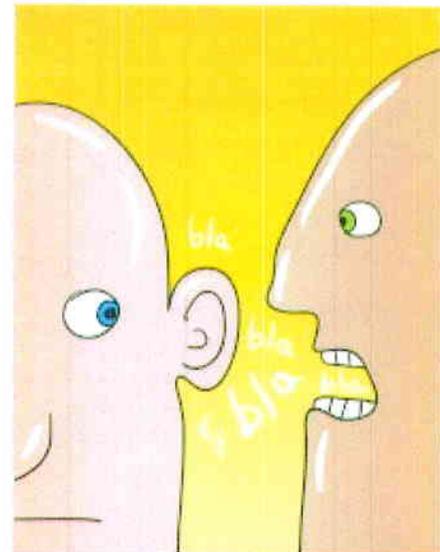
A favorite pastime of mine is to watch politicians or corporate CEOs squirm when asked straightforward questions on sensitive issues.

Accountability can be tough; the language of leadership is not for the faint-hearted.

Here are some of the top code words and phrases that contribute to the growing cynicism in today's workplace:

***"We're not here to talk about the past. My focus is on the future."***

- **Translation:** "I've made some mistakes and bad decisions that I don't want to admit. Let's not discuss those."
- **Result:** Others resist. They push to talk about those mistakes the leader is trying to push under the proverbial rug. And followers tend to emulate the leader, learning to side-step discussions about mistakes, weaknesses, or errors. Lesson learned by observation: Obfuscate. Distract. Triangulate.



***“With all due respect...”***

- **Translation:** ‘I’m about to make a disrespectful, insensitive comment that could be phrased more tactfully and objectively if I thought about it a moment.’
- **Result:** Uncivil discourse prevails when open, honest dialogue would better solve challenging problems and strengthen, rather than weaken, relationships.

***”He left to pursue other opportunities.”***

- **Translation:** “He has been fired or asked to resign.” We routinely see and hear this statement when someone leaves an organization abruptly — even when a scandal involving them has made national headlines, when rumors run rampant, or when tweets trend to the top.
- **Result:** Skepticism and distrust grow.

***”That division has seen less than stellar performance.”***

- **Translation:** “This division has hit rock bottom.” Or: “This division has decreased from its typically high performance.”
- **Result:** This ambiguous statement sets off a scramble to accurately assess the department’s performance and its ramifications. Defenders of the performance will be upset. Outsiders will be alarmed.

***”It’s a no-brainer; this is a win-win opportunity.”***

- **Translation:** “I don’t want to take the time to identify, assess, and explain the real benefits.”
- **Result:** The staff learns that declaring is as good as doing. That is, a phone call made... is as good as a phone call returned. A promise is as good as a signed contract. A product ordered is as good as a product installed.

***”She fell short of her potential.”***

- **Translation:** “We never set realistic goals, communicated those goals, nor prepared her to reach those goals.”
- **Result:** Leaders continue to lie to themselves about the frequent cause of poor performance. Other observers fail to understand the cost of employee development.

So what’s a leader to do to become a straight-talker and build credibility?

**Three things:** Own up, polish up speak up.

This was originally published on Dianna Booher's [Booher Banter blog](#).

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