

'Implementing' a Safety Culture

We should be cautious of attempts to 'implement' or 'create' a culture as one would a new program.

Cultures are not transformed overnight, but you can change the working environment and the way people work together. You can assess attitudes and behaviors, but people will not change unless the new ways are accepted as an improvement.

Management needs to create the working environment, provide the tools and clear policy, and demonstrate behaviours that foster desirable safety behaviors.

Safety Culture and National Culture

National culture differentiates the characteristics of particular nations. This includes the role of the individual within society, the manner in which authority is distributed, and national priorities with respect to resources, accountabilities, morality, objectives, and different legal systems.

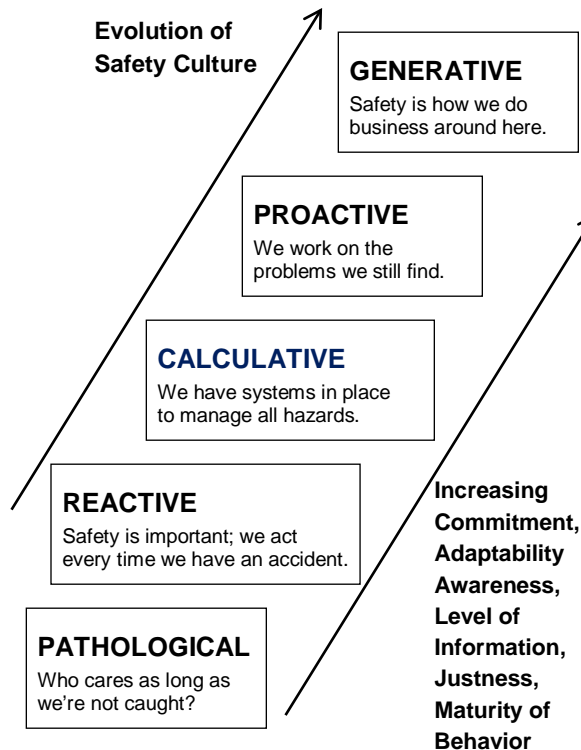
A mature approach to safety needs to understand the national culture and be consistent with it. Communication and leadership styles as well as the interaction between supervisors and subordinates may need to reflect a multicultural workforce.

Organizational Subcultures

An organization can also contain several subcultures throughout different departments or locations. Every area should be assessed with appropriate strategies applied to each subculture.

Safety Culture Maturity

An organization's safety culture can move up and down through the five maturity levels as shown in the evolutionary model of safety culture. These levels reflect the way safety information is used and valued.



*Evolutionary Model of Safety Culture
by Patrick Hudson*

Assessing Safety Culture

Assessing the safety culture of an organization is a subjective task, based on a range of indicators.

Assessing it will give you a valuable insight into how people 'feel' about the organization and how importantly safety is perceived. This will also influence their attitudes and behaviours.

Organizations cannot directly control how people think and feel and have only limited influence on their behavior. However, they can provide systems and management actions that will foster desirable safety behaviors.

Further reference material can be found at:

http://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/Category:Safety_Culture

SAFETY CULTURE

FOR
EFFECTIVE
SAFETY
MANAGEMENT



May 2017

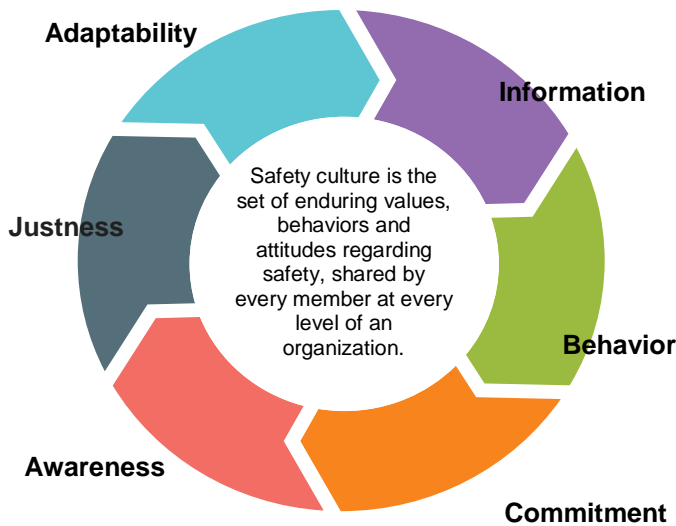
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What is Safety Culture?

Safety culture is the set of enduring values, behaviors and attitudes regarding safety, shared by every member at every level of an organization. An organization's culture is influenced from the top through the actions and behaviors of the senior management team, which permeate through to the bottom. It should be assessed at all levels of the organization.

In simple terms, safety culture is how people behave towards safety when no one is watching.

Safety culture can be described by six high level characteristics, which provide a framework for analysis as shown below:



Awareness

The extent to which employees and management are aware of the risks for themselves and for others implied by the organization's operations. Employees and management should be constantly maintaining a high degree of vigilance with respect to safety issues.

Justness (Just Culture)

The extent to which safe behavior and reporting of safety issues are encouraged or even rewarded and unsafe behavior is discouraged.

Adaptability

The extent to which employees and management are willing to learn from past experiences and are able to take whatever action is necessary to enhance the level of safety within the organization.

Information

The extent to which information is distributed to the right people in the organization. Work related information must be communicated in the right way to the right people.

Behavior

The extent to which every level of the organization behaves so as to maintain and improve the level of safety. From the management side, the importance of safety should be recognized and everything needed to maintain and enhance safety should be put in place.

Commitment

The extent to which every level of the organization has a positive attitude towards safety and recognizes its importance. Top management should be genuinely committed to maintaining a high level of safety and motivating employees to do so as well.

Safety Culture and Safety Reporting

Reporting culture emerges from personal beliefs about, and attitudes toward, the benefits and disadvantages associated with reporting systems.

A healthy reporting culture is built on a just culture, which aims to differentiate between intentional and unintentional deviations, and determines the best course of action for both the organization as a whole and the individuals involved.

Employees must know that confidentiality will be maintained and the information they submit will

be acted upon. Otherwise, they will determine there is little or no benefit in submitting a report.

Informed Decision Making

A positive safety culture is essential to an effective SMS. It creates an openness that encourages people to report safety issues. This in turn will help people at the top of the organization make informed decisions based on what is really going on through having a:

Reporting culture: Does the organization encourage reporting?

Just culture: How does the organization treat people who make errors?

Learning culture: Does the organization treat information as an opportunity to grow its safety culture?

Flexible culture: Does the organization act on information to improve safety?

Organizational Behaviors

The following are ways that organizations can consistently operate safely. These are important to both the safety culture and safety performance of an organization.

Preoccupation with failure: Continuously looking for the subtle signs of trouble.

Looking for practical drift: Understanding the realities of front line activities; 'work as designed' compared to the reality of 'work as done.'

Deference to expertise: It is important to value the input from front line staff who interact with the system every day.

Commitment to resilience: Undesired and unexpected things will occur. How an organization responds to them is part of the continuous improvement element of a Safety Management System (SMS) and a learning culture.