



Embedding Safety Culture: A Case Study

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Building and embedding a comprehensive safety culture:

A comprehensive safety culture includes physical, cultural and psychological safety. All three must be present for an organization and a work site to have a comprehensive safety culture.

Goal: Everyone owns their safety performance and that of others.

Embedding a safety culture within an organization requires:

1. A model to assess your current safety culture (example: Hudson Model of Safety Culture)
2. A commitment from senior leaders
3. A structural foundation of a robust health, safety and environment management system
4. Measurable initiatives around four pillars
 - a. Buy-in and organizational alignment: All leaders consistently, visibly and vocally model safety; adopt structures and processes for consistent accountability
 - b. Employee empowerment: Training, skills and confidence to enhance health and safety practices and to stop unsafe practices
 - c. Recognition and rewards: Encourage and celebrate behaviours
 - d. Reporting systems: Track progress, identify gaps, and continually improve
5. Time – enhancing an organization's safety culture takes time

Takeaways:

1. Why an organization must address all three aspects of safety (physical, psychological and cultural) if they want to achieve a comprehensive safety culture.
 - o Each aspect of safety is different and requires separate but complementary strategies.
 - o If an individual does not feel culturally or psychological safe they are highly unlikely to raise physical safety issues.
2. Risks to an organization if they do not develop a comprehensive safety culture.
 - o In the absence of a comprehensive safety culture you could face the following risks:
 - Risk to supervisors – departure from actions of a reasonable person
 - Risk of damage or loss of infrastructure
 - Legal and financial risk to company and individuals
 - Potential criminal charges against directors/supervisors
 - Reputational Risk
 - Risk of injury/fatality of workers

3. Specific actions you can take to achieve this safety culture.
 - Build a safety culture action plan
 - Secure support from senior leaders
 - Ensure safety training is mandatory including for leaders/supervisors
 - Have senior leaders and supervisors sign safety declarations
 - Entrench safety as an organizational core commitment and a shared responsibility
 - Report to workers and leaders on safety performance
 - Reward safety performance

4. Benefits to an organization of having a strong safety culture.
 - Reduced costs
 - Improved productivity
 - Enhanced morale
 - Reduced down time
 - Enhanced reputation
 - Improved worker recruitment and retention

5. The University of Alberta's lessons learned and success factors from its journey so far.
 - Action plan: Address physical, cultural and psychological safety together
 - Conversations: Build on structures and processes by starting the culture conversation
 - Focus group: Testing language, tools and templates
 - Clearly defined outcomes, timelines and accountabilities for each initiative

Questions to ask:

- Is cultural and psychological safety part of your safety culture?
 - What actions would be required to incorporate cultural and psychological safety into your overall safety plans?
- Are all your organization's leader's safety champions and demonstrating a commitment to safety?
 - What actions could be implemented to turn all leaders into safety champions?
- How would you assess your organization's safety culture?
 - What two or three specific actions could you take to improve your safety culture?
- Is your safety culture real, i.e. are all your workers safety champions?
 - How could you make every worker a safety champion?

