Leadership Strategies for Building and Sustaining a Culture of Safety

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Overview

• Discuss why many safety initiatives often fail to meet expectations
• Creating and sustaining a positive safety culture: Outlining a strategy
• Explore management and supervisory responsibilities
The Dynamic Curve of Change

All organizational programs, safety initiatives, etc., have a defined life span.

- Change Initiated
- Initial Resistance
- Initial Acceptance
- Acceptance and Integration Phase
- Decline Phase
The Dynamic Curve of Change

Re-inventing / Re-Investing Team
A cross-functional team that develops new ideas and or approaches to existing problems and or identifying elements which may be both known and unknown to the organization

Change Initiated

Initial Resistance

Acceptance And Integration Phase

Initial Acceptance

Change initiative must occur Prior to the decline phase! Why? Because in the decline phase, the Standard response is to “cut” Spending and programs.
The Reality of Change in Organizations

5%  10%  80%  5%

Explorers  Pioneers  Homesteaders  Resistors & Saboteurs

Lewis & Clark: Explorers of the New Frontier

Ah jeez...
The Champions for change

- Develop change and improvement momentum by building around the champions who are most likely to make the effort succeed.
- They will help to bring the others on board.
- They are also the ones you and everyone else can learn the most from.
Resistance Strategies

Don't automatically label resistance to change as negative and something to be overcome or beaten back.
The real enemy of organizational change, is apathy.

"Just tell me what you want done, boss, so I can get out of this place and on with my real life"

is the attitude that kills change.
Resistance Strategies

• Resistors often have strong passion and high energy. They resist because they care. Understand the roots of their resistance and re-channel it.

• Get them inside the circle of wagons, shooting out.
Overcoming Internal Resistance

So how do we manage that resistance?
- WIIFM
- Create a rally symbol
- DWP
- Inclusion not exclusion
- Open door management

*People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care!*
Leadership…. Has been defined in many ways.

But the real definition is creating a vision others can see and realize.

Effective leadership is about influence! And getting others to follow you.
Overcoming Internal Resistance

Developing effective leadership begins with....

Give people something to believe in!

Give people someone to believe in!

Give people someone who believes in them!
“It may chance of wheat”
Safety Initiatives

How safety initiatives often look:

• Top level rhetoric about the importance of safety in site value hierarchy (i.e. versus production)

• Targeted training or “caned courses”

• System implementation –
  – Without attention to employee engagement!
Safety Initiatives

Problem: Behavior change not sustained over time

- Attendees of program change their behavior temporarily
- System implementation often marks a short term improvement on safety metrics followed by a return to previous levels, or
- System utilization ineffective
The futility of enforcement

What happens when you have a safety enforcement environment rather than a safety culture?
Defining Organizational Culture

• Organizational learning, development and planned change cannot be understood without considering culture as the primary source of resistance to change.

• **If leaders do not understand the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them.**
Defining an Organizations’ Culture

Three Levels of Culture

Artifacts

Visual organizational structures and processed (hard to decipher)

Espoused Values

Strategies, goals, philosophies (espouses justifications)

Basic Underlying Assumptions

Unconscious, taken for granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings (ultimate source of values and actions)
Defining Organizational Culture

Culture is:
• Norms of behavior – reflecting the organization's practiced values
The origins of culture

Organizational culture is comprised of all the stories told intentionally or incidentally by a collection of corporate storytellers.
The origins of culture

• The storytellers tell us what we "should" do; how we "should" do it as well as the "should not's" or taboos.
The origins of culture

When the messages of cultural stories are ambiguous or conflict with one another, members are left to infer what values should guide behavior.

As the members normalize on those values their own words and actions become corporate storytellers, communicating the values to others and further entrenching the corporate culture.
Defining Organizational Culture

Simply stated, culture is:

“The way we do things around here”
Safety Culture

How then to create an enduring, positive safety culture?

• Requires a whole of system approach

• Requires changes to individual behavior and also those factors that influence and sustain individual behavior

• Requires total engagement of every manager and front-line supervisor!
BASIC SAFETY CULTURE

- Begins with hiring procedures
- Established through an engaging employee orientation program
- Style and effectiveness of safety meeting
- Style and effectiveness of safety training
- Quality and focus of inspections
- Rules and policies
- Quality of safety equipment
- Safety techniques and procedures
BASIC SAFETY CULTURE

• People don’t respect what you don’t inspect!
Leadership Strategies

- Define safety expectations in every job description
- Conduct Job Safety Analysis (JSA) and integrate them in the job
- Use safety as a measurable criteria in performance reviews
- Organize workplace safety audits and involve workers in the audit process
- Train first-line supervisors!
Leadership Strategies

• Actively engage a safety committee
• Investigate all accidents and near misses – and conduct root cause analysis.
• Discuss findings with workers and supervisors.
• Use Visual Management techniques to re-enforce safe work practices.
The Leadership Role

• Successful leaders are prepared to set out in new directions - to find new opportunities and different ways to take things forward.
• Successful leaders begin with their people. They build a shared vision, then together determine what destination "success" should mean.
• Successful leaders find the new and look to the future. They don't rest in the past.
Questions?
A Culture of Safety

“When people are highly motivated, it’s easy to accomplish the impossible. And when they are not, it’s impossible to accomplish the easy”