Safety climate:

The role of leadership in enhancing workplace safety

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Overview

1. Safety Climate

2. The Leadership Literature

3. Safety Leadership Development

Results
How we got here:

What is the prevention literature saying?

Intersection with management literature

Test practical approaches to add value to prevention effort
Comprehensive safety & health

Safe & Healthy Workplaces

Organizational Wellness
(Leadership & Culture)

Personal Wellness
(Health Practices & Lifestyles)

Physical Work Environment,
(Materials & Process)
Prevention: no simple answers

Multiple ingredients

Audit, inspection, prosecution, orders, incentives, policies, standards & procedures

Training, supervision, motivation, equipment, financial standards, commitment

Effective leadership ties systems & people together
Leadership: social & emotional intelligence

Understanding what is important to individuals

Speaking to it requires social/emotional awareness & takes time

Being a leader is not easy; requires self-awareness & self management

Creates a climate to explore differences
Ethics: leadership and safety

Business ethics literature dominated by high-intensity moral dilemmas

Ethical leadership is exemplified mostly in routine, low-intensity situations

Addressing employees’ safety/health is a ethical daily matter (front line & corporate)
Leadership at all Levels

Networks & norms facilitate collaborative action

Norms should be framed at the top

Top leadership must be informed & be seen to listen & support constructive safety environment

Safety orientation must support & be supported by front line leaders relative to production
Flow of management & safety information

Information flow management - who knows what & when, for information &/or action

Differences between policy & practice
- safety climate measurement

What gets measured does not necessarily get done
- reported & accountably assigned does get done
Alf’s View:

lateral view: lumbar spine

fracture

vertebra

rod
Safety leadership message

Effective leaders monitor their team’s situation to provide feedback & recognition

Feedback & recognition can be:
- as effective a motivator as pay
- when people feel understood & valued
Safety leadership accepts

Safety precautions – usually have modest & immediate cost (slower pace, extra effort, & personal discomfort)

Unsafe behaviour offers immediate rewards

Safe behavior delayed/ uncertain rewards
Safety leadership

Builds on leaders’ understanding & discussing workers’ views on their safety

Recognizes & accepts **bounded rationality**:

- *drives most action & is natural*
- *decision-making is based on short-term maximizing*
- *strong tendency to act unsafely in routine situations*

Accepts safety is a long term investment & that leaders must take action & are responsible
Leaders are the key to change

Leaders can reverse the payoff structure of short term versus long term

Strategic leaders should create culture

Information from random sample & confidential measurement as lever for change supported by coaching leaders
What is the difference?
Change requires

Feedback & recognition positive & negative

Framework for change demonstrated & re-enforced as it is normal to do what was always done

**Leaders to listen & act**

- Safety checklists formal & informal
- Hazard removal report - ideas from floor reported & reviewed
- Action on items committed to in the hazard report
- Safety talks become – discussions
Getting Started: Safety Climate Survey

Measures workplace practices, as there are often differences between policy and practice.

“Through the eyes of the employees” - what is the trade off between productivity, comfort, & safety?

“Is it expected” that we will act safely?

Perceptions of firm’s & leaders’ approach to safety can with repeatable accuracy be measured.
Leadership Development Model

Management’s true values major influence in safety culture

Leadership coaching supports change via exploring random sample data:
- Employees’ perceptions: Climate
- Observations of Leader – Staff interactions
- % Safe operations

Improvement in Climate leads to reduction in injury rate
Leadership development results: NS heavy manufacturing plant

Year & half project guided by:
- joint labour management committee
- safety climate survey results
- random sample safety observations and
- leadership interactions observations starting at the work team and building to the organizational level

Coaching of leaders

Assisted in reducing incidents by 40%
B-Shop comparison daily safety exchanges, and % of safe operations housekeeping

Total B-Shop: Daily Safety Exchanges (DSEs) versus Safe Operations (housekeeping)
Oil Refinery
Israeli company

Main activities: Upgrading, canning and distribution of oil products

Results:
Synchronized change: Safety exchanges increased & unsafe operations decreased

Significant changes seen in safety climate scores during the post-intervention period
Safety exchanges & unsafe operations (%

- Supervisory Interactions
- Electric work
- Movement in zones

Weeks
One year later
Food-processing Company: (% unsafe) Israeli company
Relationship between Safety Culture and Performance

Range: Safety Culture (25-192); Safety Performance (33-198)

Correlation Coefficient: 0.61
Based on WorkSafe BC Lower Mainland Data Collection
Relationship between Safety Culture and Performance

Correlation Coefficient: 0.77

Based on WorkSafe BC Vancouver Island Data Collection

Range: Safety Culture (62-156); Safety Performance (67-198)
Research: next steps

Build Canadian data set to calibrate survey relationship to illness & injury rate

Develop cost effective survey delivery

Develop cost effective support for leaders willing to receive & use feedback
References:


References: (cont’d)


