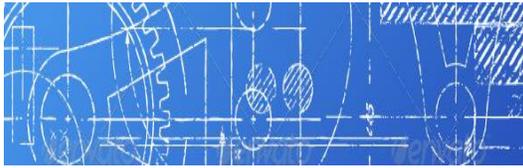


CULTURE IMPROVEMENT: BLUEPRINT No.1



FIVE WAYS TO ENCOURAGE A POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURE

Safety culture, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), is “the characteristics of the work environment, such as the norms, rules, and common understandings that influence employee perceptions of the importance that the organisation places on safety.” When leaders embrace the ideas around a mature safety culture, not only do safety and health outcomes improve, so too does employee morale and productivity.

Employee perceptions determine safety behaviour. If they believe those they look to for leadership think it’s important, they’re more likely to behave as if it is.

Here are five things that can be done to show employees how much their safety is valued.

1. Take the long view. Rather than looking at safety as a compliance requirement, present it as a continuous process of improvement. How is your workplace safer today than it was a year ago—or 5 years ago? What strategic plans are being actioned to make your workplace even safer 1 year or 5 years from now?

2. Look for learning. Look at near-misses or accidents as indicators of a series of connected events that led to the incident, not as one-time or isolated events—or worse, as an opportunity to lay blame on individuals. Conducting a Root Cause analysis only to then blame an employee fosters poor labour-management relationships, while careful investigations invite workers to analyse, participate and contribute to their own safety.

3. Integrate safety. Safety activities should be part of your overall operation. Don’t just announce new safety activities as a new priority that appears to employees as another add-on, or flavour-of-the-month initiative. Treating safety as an integral part of the systems and processes that make your business successful will encourage everyone to do the same.

4. Accentuate the positive. Make the effort to encourage employees to improve safety performance. Watch for improvements and recognise them. Can you catch employees following safe work practices, wearing PPE, or encouraging others to be safe? Recognition doesn’t have to be expensive or flashy. A positive word at the right moment can lift spirits and encourage him or her to continue doing the right thing.

5. Build from the bottom up. Get employees involved in the safety decision-making process instead of simply dictating new policies and priorities from the top down. Use a strategy of ‘Ask and Listen’ rather than ‘Sell and Tell’. Create communication structures that encourage workers to make suggestions, participate on safety committees, mentor new employees, or otherwise make positive contributions and take ownership of their own safety.

Adapted from an article by Jennifer Busick


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