

Driving a Positive Safety Culture

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

1. QUALITY OF SAFETY PROCEDURES

Listen to workers when they bring forward concerns about safety procedure complexity or challenges in applying certain procedures. Show concern and support them to escalate the issue and find a resolution if you are unable to address the challenge yourself.

Shadow a worker for a day with the aim of understanding how they access procedures, how clear/complex the procedures are and how easily procedures are applied in the field.

Consider running a session with your workers to determine whether the standard procedures for your work area are easy to find, use and implement. If they are not, escalate the issue to have it resolved, but also work with your team to decide on how they will manage the task safely in the meantime.

Push for your organisation to consult workers when new procedures are being written. This will ensure they are practical, simple and easy to follow in the field, which will make it more likely that workers will comply with the procedure, going forward.

2. MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITMENT

Ensure the organisation has a clear safety strategy that is shared with all employees and that all leaders are on board with the strategy and accept accountability for their portion of responsibility.

Once the strategy is set, implement a process for cascading actions to all levels of the organisation so that every person understands how they can contribute to the end result.

Communicate the achievement of milestones in the strategy to reinforce the positive progress being made towards improving the safety culture.

Report on and celebrate the success of key objectives once they have been achieved. Where they haven't, be transparent and communicate the reasons why, as well as the actions in place to achieve them.

Prioritise spending time in the field, building trust by getting to know workers, seeking feedback, acting on concerns raised and closing the feedback loop.

Hold other leaders accountable when decisions are made that will negatively impact safety.

Role model helpful safety attitudes and behaviours by taking safety concerns seriously, showing interest in safety challenges the team is experiencing and supporting them to resolution.

Demonstrate transparency and honesty when communicating decisions or outcomes to ensure trust is maintained between leaders and their team members.

Show concern for the health, safety and wellbeing of workers. Getting to know your workers will help them recognise when someone is "off" or experiencing challenges outside of work that may impact their ability to work safely.

3. INTERNAL CONTEXT

Follow established change management processes, or, if your organisation does not have one, put a change management process in place.

Remember the human brain is slow at adapting to change—so try not to change too many things at one time. Space changes out where possible so the team doesn't feel that everything is changing at once.

Talk to your team often about upcoming change. Even if you don't know the details and impact, let them know that you don't know! This will increase the transparency and maintain trust levels.

As part of the change communication, reinforce the things that are going to stay the same, as the change is likely to be small when compared to the number of things that will remain unchanged.

When change is being rolled out, help your workers understand the "why". If they know why the change is occurring, they are more likely to get on board.

If a major organisational change is pending, which is creating job security concerns, consider running additional safety sessions with your team each morning to ensure that for the remainder of their time on site, they are focused on doing their job safely.

If a team member seems to be struggling with the thought that they might lose their job due to a restructure and this is impacting their performance, consider referring them to your EAP to talk through their concerns.

Treat all change as worthy of proper communication. While a change to procedure may seem like something the workforce just needs to "get on with", think about people who have been doing their job the same way for years and are now being asked to do it differently.

Remember the brain hates change because it takes a huge amount of energy to change our habits and subconscious behaviours. Show your workers empathy if they express concern about the new way of doing things. Open a two-way dialogue about how they are feeling and try to help them to see the change differently.

If your team is resisting an upcoming change, consider opening up a discussion with them around why the old way was broken and how they will benefit from the new way of doing things. Remember not to lecture them, but rather ask them to find the answers themselves.

4. WILLINGNESS TO REPORT INCIDENTS AND ERRORS

Communicate to your team the importance of reporting for their safety, the safety of other team members and the strategic objectives of the business.

Celebrate individuals and teams who report, especially when their report leads to an improvement.

Role model helpful behaviours by lodging reports yourself if necessary and/or supporting your workers to do the same.

Offer support to workers who may find the reporting process challenging by providing assistance with the online platform.

Make sure you provide feedback to your team and close the feedback loop about events that were reported, to create a culture of continuous learning.

When incidents are reported, focus on what can be learned from the situation, rather than who can be blamed. Try to influence other leaders to do the same.

5. EMPLOYEE SAFETY PERFORMANCE

Influence your organisation to consider alternative reward and recognition processes if you have monetary bonuses in place that may be driving unsafe or counterproductive safety behaviours.

Clearly communicate with your team the values and behaviours that you want to see from them. Spend time in the field trying to catch them doing the right thing, and then offer recognition and reward for the positive behaviours.

Create an opportunity or mechanism for peers to recognise each other for strong role modelling of key values and behaviours, to encourage them to own the culture towards *Citizenship*.

Consider the goal you are trying to achieve and ensure you are rewarding the behaviours that support that goal. If your goal is to improve people's safety on site, consider the quality of the behaviours being recognised in addition to the quantity. For example, are observations a tick and flick activity, or a genuine opportunity for learning?

Get to know your team and learn what will motivate them. How would they respond to a Bunnings gift voucher, or a ticket in a draw to win an esky? What will they think of a certificate or token of appreciation? Would they prefer public or private recognition?

Consider rewards outside of tangible gifts. If they are doing a great job, can you send them to a training course to increase their skills? Can you give them additional responsibility if they want to progress in their career?

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6. SAFETY MISSION AND VISION

Review your safety vision. Is it clear, understood and communicated throughout all levels of the organisation? If you don't have a safety vision, make a plan to create one.

Ensure your vision addresses not only the "what" and "how", but also the "why". A clear and compelling "why" helps workers to buy in and commit to achieving the safety vision.

Make time to plan and develop specific goals and activities to help your team engage with and aspire to achieve the vision.

Hold yourself and other leaders in the business accountable for driving enthusiasm and ownership over the safety vision.

When communicating business decisions, explain the "why" and how these relate to the overall safety vision of the organisation. This is especially important during difficult times to ensure workers remained focused on safety.

Integrate the vision into regular processes and meetings such as toolbox talks and prestarts. Keep the vision front of mind and help team members understand how their role contributes to the vision.

Provide detailed and regular feedback to your workers on their behaviour as it relates to the vision. Let them know if they're hitting or missing the mark and why.

7. MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITMENT

Review incentives tied to safety and production. What message are they sending? Do they prioritise production over safety or encourage an environment of safe production?

Demonstrate a genuine commitment to safety by prioritising safety above production and spending time on site with your workers talking about health and safety. Be prepared to stop production to address and ensure safety for your workers.

Provide easy access to budget to purchase necessary equipment and implement strategies that ensure safe work.

Spend time getting to know your team to establish trust and meaningful relationships, and provide them the autonomy to discover the best process to achieve safe and productive outcomes.

Ask your team for feedback on how you can help to support their safety and develop their skills. Make sure to communicate the outcome of any requests and follow through on commitments that you make.

8. WITHIN-TEAM SAFETY COMMUNICATION

Review your safety briefings for frequency, attendance and quality engagement. Do workers find them to be relevant and useful? Are permanent workers and contractors all involved in discussion? Is there a strong emphasis on ensuring adequate planning prior to starting work?

Encourage two-way communication during safety briefings and open discussion about safety hazards and controls.

Use safety briefings as an opportunity to discuss improvements and lessons learned, providing feedback on any issues or incidents raised in a previous briefing or by other teams in the business.

Ask helpful questions, share relevant videos and use activities or recent events to make safety discussions relevant and interesting.

Recognise employees who talk about safety outside of formal prestarts or toolbox talks, and consciously link this behaviour back to the overall safety vision.

9. SAFETY RESPONSIBILITY

Help workers to understand the importance of safety and how it relates to their personal goals, as well as their teammates and the organisation. If they understand and connect with the "why", they will be more likely to accept safety as their own responsibility.

When coaching your team on how to make safer choices, show genuine concern for their safety and frame the conversation in relation to their personal "why" for working safely. This is easier if you invest time in getting to know your team and the reasons they choose to stay safe.

Reflect on your team's interactions with the health and safety team. Are their attitudes surrounding this helpful or hindering? Consider how you might influence your team to see the health and safety team as supporting their work.

Encourage your team to get involved in initiatives organised by the health and safety team. Lead by example and ensure you actively support and participate in these initiatives yourself.

10. TEAM SUPPORT FOR SAFETY

Reflect on the level of psychological safety within your team and their willingness to speak up for safety. Do team members feel empowered to identify and address hazards in their own and others' work? Would they stop work for safety and provide feedback to peers working unsafely?

Shift the focus of potentially difficult conversations and incident investigations away from attributing blame and towards creating a culture of learning and improvement.

Buddy up new employees with workers who consistently demonstrate their commitment to safe work and the organisational vision, to help set them up for success.

Spend time with your team to get to know them on a personal level. Understanding what makes your people "tick" is important to recognise when they may be struggling mentally or physically in a way that may affect their focus and safety at work.

