5,011
people interviewed

597
hours of interviews

562
focus groups

155
observations made

73
sites visited

819
cultural themes analysed

21,711
surveys completed

Driving a Positive
Safety Culture

Lessons for safety leaders and management from 73 sites across agriculture, construction, government, healthcare, manufacturing, mining, oil and gas, and utilities.

Driving a Positive Safety Culture

"

Safety is important **if it doesn't cost money**.

You come to work and **no one gives a s*** about safety**.

Some of them **just don't care** about safety procedures.

A piece of paper won't stop someone dying—it's developed as an **a***-covering exercise**.

I think people are so used to living in filth at work that they **don't care anymore**.

When you **work unsafely**, you get higher production and praise.

If you report something, then you have an issue; **it's a blame game**.

My experience was so poor **I wouldn't try and report again**.

I worry at times that the commitment to safety is a **fear-based motive**.

We have **fired people who have been injured** and then avoided recording it.

We are constantly complaining to managers about the air quality, that **after 4pm we can't breathe**.

They need to **kill a few [people]** before anything is done.

"

86%

of organisational sites operate from a negative safety culture

A negative safety culture is driven by shared safety attitudes and beliefs that are unhelpful. Safety is seen as a burden, a waste of time or something that gets in the way of getting the job done. Safety is often viewed as something that is imposed by leaders or the organisation, rather than coming from a place of internal motivation. As a result, compliance with safety processes, rules and procedures is sporadic and often depends on whether or not a leader is watching, monitoring and enforcing performance. In negative safety cultures, employees are less willing to get involved in safety activities and more likely to look out for themselves rather than think about the good of their team or organisation.

"

EVEN WITH THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT, EXPERIENCE AND SYSTEMS, IF YOUR PEOPLE LACK THE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY, IT'S NOT A QUESTION OF IF AN INCIDENT WILL OCCUR, BUT WHEN.

"

INTRODUCTION

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Despite the progress that industry has made, there's still more to be done to reduce incidents and create strong workplace cultures where people not only return home in the same state that they left, but where they thrive and are better for their experiences each day. While this type of change doesn't happen overnight, it is our hope that the insights from this study provide a starting point and roadmap for organisations courageous enough to take on the challenge of safety culture improvement.

The study that follows provides insights into the state of safety culture across industry. It challenges the unsafe and unhelpful safety practices, attitudes and behaviours that are still far too prevalent, and offers people-centred solutions that are backed by research and more than 16 years' experience using cognitive-behavioural techniques to successfully create positive culture change in some of the world's most respected brands.

Contained in the pages of this resource are insights from 21,711 people from 73 organisational sites across nine countries. It's important to note that these findings encompass far more than survey data. They also include data from 597 hours of interviews, 562 hours of focus groups and 155 observations made on the ground, rigorously analysed and validated. While some direct quotes have been censored to ensure sensitivity, no other edits have been made as we believe that the most important insights come directly from the people.

Because the data has come from real clients and represents all levels—from executive through to the frontline—it provides the "why" behind the safety results we get. This information allows us to address the actual cultural challenge underlying these results, rather than just addressing the symptoms.

It is our hope that these insights will challenge leaders to think more deeply about their role in their current safety culture and to take ownership of driving different results. So, as you read through this resource, we encourage you to engage in deep reflection and where possible take the opportunities to implement positive change. If one life is saved or one injury avoided, then the effort invested by Sentis and you in reading and applying the learning will truly be repaid.

Thank you for investing this time in your people.

Anthony Gibbs
Chief Executive Officer

THE IMPACT OF SAFETY CULTURE

Investment in safety culture is crucial. Even with the right equipment, experience and systems, if your people lack the intrinsic motivation to take responsibility for their own safety, it's not a question of if an incident will occur, but when.

HOW IS SAFETY PERCEIVED?

Safety is difficult to see, except for when it's been breached. More often than not, it's seen as a cost of time, effort or money. As evidenced by the study that follows, in many organisations, safety is seen as something to be feared, where workers must comply or face the consequences.

Simply pop the word "safety" into a Google image search and you're met with rows upon rows of warning, hazard and danger signs—anything that says "Follow the rules or else you'll be in trouble, or get hurt." So, it's not hard to understand why this might be the general attitude that many workers have towards safety.

The impact of these messages is that we focus our people's attention on what we don't want, rather than what we do want. Typically, as a result, we find that safety is perceived as a burden, too difficult to control or out of a leader's hands.

While workplace safety has generally improved over the past 20 years, the data suggests we still have more work to do. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 563,000 people experienced a work-related injury or illness in Australia between July 2017 and June 2018.[1] And while fatalities and injuries are generally trending down, the cost of work-related injuries and diseases is increasing—from a total estimated cost of $34.3 billion in 2000-01 to $61.8 billion in 2012-13.[2] But the cost is more than just financial.

According to Safe Work Australia, in 2019, 155 Australian workers were killed at work in just the first eleven months.[3] This raises the question, what do we need to do differently to break through this safety plateau? More importantly, how do you—as a leader—take this opportunity to make a systematic shift around safety culture and "the way things are done"? At the end of the day, you have a responsibility to make a choice for change.

safety noun

safe·ty

plural safeties

Definition:
the condition of being safe from undergoing or causing hurt, injury or loss.[4]

Consider the messages that your people hear about safety in the workplace. Do these focus on errors, incidents, policies, procedures and PPE? Do workers only hear about safety when things go wrong? Or do they also hear about safety when things go right?

1   Safe Work Australia. (2019). Fatality statistics. Retrieved from: https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/statistics-and-research/statistics/safetyfatalities/fatality-statistics

2   Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2018). Work-related injuries, Australia, Jul 2017 to Jun 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6324.0

3   Safe Work Australia. (2018). Costs of work-related injuries and diseases: Key WHS statistics Australia 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/book/costs-work-related-injuries-and-diseases-key-whs-statistics-australia-2018

4   Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (2019). Definition of safety. Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary

SHOULD WE BE VIEWING SAFETY AS A WAY TO AVOID HARM, OR AS A WAY TO IMPROVE HOW A BUSINESS OPERATES?

Clearly, people don't feel like things are moving forward when it comes to safety. This is reflective in the data we'll explore further in this report that shows that teams have more confidence in each other than they do in leadership or their organisation. This is fuelling an "us vs them" culture of blame and avoidance within less mature safety cultures. So, how do we flip the script and change the way workers view safety in the workplace?

WHAT IF...

... we viewed safety as the **answer instead of the problem**?

... we used safety as the **vehicle to create an entire cultural shift** within our business?

... we used safety as **a common language to unlock the true potential of our leaders and teams** for greater business performance?

... we used safety culture improvement to **unlock the discretionary effort of our employees**, resulting in benefits across the broader business?

While at its essence safety will always be about avoiding harm, there is much more to be gained from improving an organisation's safety culture maturity. Organisations with mature safety cultures are more likely to have:

- leaders who demonstrate strong leadership skills—particularly in the areas of communication, authenticity and trust;

- team members who accept responsibility and accountability for their work and work areas, demonstrate pride in what they do and go above and beyond the basic requirements of their role;

- an internally motivated workforce that acts to improve the workplace for all employees;

- effective two-way communication that occurs between leaders and teams, as well as between departments, sites or teams;

- increased discretionary effort by all employees, which translates beyond safety to other areas of the business as well.

It's hard to argue that these outcomes are anything but desirable. Whether you're looking to be at the forefront of your industry in every way, or simply a great place to work where your people return home safe and well every day, investment in safety culture is a must.

This report aims to not only explore the current state of safety culture maturity across industry, but also to provide practical strategies you can implement within your business to begin this shift. Remember, change starts with you.

UNDERSTANDING SAFETY CULTURE

WHAT IS SAFETY CULTURE?

SAFETY CULTURE IS AN ORGANISATION'S SHARED ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND VALUES ABOUT SAFETY—ESSENTIALLY, "THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE AROUND HERE".

Think of safety culture as "the way things are done around here in relation to safety". Specifically, employees' attitudes, values and beliefs about safety in the workplace—including the implicit safety rules or guidelines present at the frontline. Safety culture influences safety performance and is a significant factor in predicting the likelihood of safety incidents. It has four overarching dimensions: environment, practices, person and leadership (see Figure 1).

Organisations need to invest in all four dimensions to effectively manage risk and create a positive and strong safety culture.
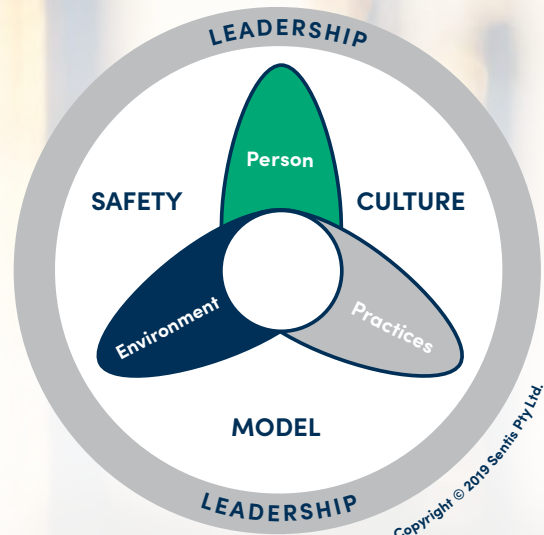

Figure 1. Sentis Safety Culture Model

A **positive safety culture** is driven by shared safety attitudes and beliefs that are helpful. In organisations with a positive safety culture, people genuinely buy into safety. They see safety as a personal value and actively choose to follow safety procedures—not because they have to, but because they want to. People see safety systems as tools that add value to their job, rather than as barriers that make work difficult. Relationships are characterised by high trust and mutual respect, with a common understanding around how safety helps everyone to return home safe at the end of their shift. In this type of culture, safety is a precondition of doing business. This fosters a willingness to go above and beyond minimum role requirements to help others and, more broadly, contribute to the organisation's safety goals.

In contrast, a **negative safety culture** is driven by shared safety attitudes and beliefs that are unhelpful. Safety is seen as a burden, a waste of time or something that gets in the way of getting the job done. Safety is often viewed as something that is imposed by leaders or the organisation, rather than coming from a place of internal motivation. As a result, compliance with safety processes, rules and procedures is sporadic and often depends on a leader watching, monitoring and enforcing performance. In negative safety cultures, employees are less willing to get involved in safety activities and more likely to look out for themselves rather than think about the good of their team or organisation.

WHAT DOES "GOOD" LOOK LIKE?

The Sentis Safety Culture Maturity Model describes the journey organisations take as they progress towards a positive safety culture (see Figure 2). On this journey, organisations display different types or "profiles" of safety culture. Each of these profiles differ in their level of maturity or effectiveness. More mature safety cultures are more conducive to good safety performance.

Figure 2. Examples of safety-related attitudes and behaviours associated with different levels of safety culture maturity

COUNTER PRODUCTIVITY	PUBLIC COMPLIANCE	PRIVATE COMPLIANCE	MATESHIP	CITIZENSHIP
The company doesn't care much about me or my safety, so I don't care much about anything besides looking out for myself and getting the job done.	Most of the time, safety procedures are a burden to getting the job done. But, I need to make sure I'm following them when management is looking.	Safety rules and procedures are there to protect me. It is my responsibility to follow them so that I can stay safe for the things that matter to me.	In part, my safety depends on my teammates. To stay safe as a team, we need to work together and look out for one another.	The company's safety is a core part of everyone's job and a shared responsibility. We strive to improve ourselves and learn from our collective mistakes.
Fails to follow rules or regulations; sabotages and engages in deliberate unsafe acts.	"Tick and flick" approach to safety systems; only does the right thing (e.g. wear PPE) when the boss is looking.	Compliance with systems is based on personal choice to stay safe; uses systems, processes and machinery as they're designed to be used.	Pulls up teammates for unsafe behaviour; works together to control risks; has safety conversations with teammates.	Looks for opportunities to improve safety; shares learnings from incidents/errors.

Negative safety culture
Low discretionary effort

Positive safety culture
High discretionary effort

CITIZENSHIP

CITIZENSHIP IS THE GOLD-STANDARD OF SAFETY CULTURE. IT DESCRIBES A CULTURE WHERE INDIVIDUALS MAKE A CONSCIOUS CHOICE TO GO ABOVE AND BEYOND THE DUTIES OF THEIR ROLE TO IMPROVE SAFETY FOR EVERY PERSON IN THE ORGANISATION.

Safety citizenship behaviours include:

- going above and beyond basic compliance;

- identifying opportunities to improve safety;

- willingly discussing safety concerns with leaders and teammates;

- voluntary membership of safety committees;

- actively engaging with safety initiatives;

- keeping informed about the latest safety changes on site;

- monitoring the safety performance of team members to ensure everyone is working safely.

IN CULTURES OPERATING AT A *CITIZENSHIP* LEVEL OF MATURITY:

- Safety is always maintained at the highest level possible, regardless of internal or external challenges.

- Teams have a budget and discretion to buy what they need to be safe and productive (e.g. tools and equipment) and take pride in maintaining a clean and well-organised work area.

- Workers are trusted to do job planning and have the flexibility to adjust and perform work tasks as the situation requires for a safe outcome.

- High safety performers act as coaches and help drive safety initiatives across the business, and supervisors are seen as "safety champions" who are passionately committed to workplace safety.

- Continuous improvement is a core part of the culture and workers speak up for safety without fear of retribution.

- Time is spent selecting the right contractors who align with the organisation's safety vision and effort is made to build strong, long-term partnerships.

- Emergency readiness is a core part of the culture, with lessons learned and improvement targets communicated.

- Safety training is a critical area of employee development that the company takes seriously and focuses on more than just achieving compliance.

- Employee wellbeing is supported with significant investment and integrated into the way work is done and how the business is run.

- Safety is a natural part of daily discussions and is not limited to one's immediate team—workers go out of their way to make sure other teams know about safety issues or learnings.

- Open and transparent reporting takes place, with lessons learned shared across the company.

- Workers at all levels are actively involved in major safety decisions through representation on committees or other formal consultation forums.

| COUNTER PRODUCTIVITY | PUBLIC COMPLIANCE | PRIVATE COMPLIANCE | MATESHIP | CITIZENSHIP |
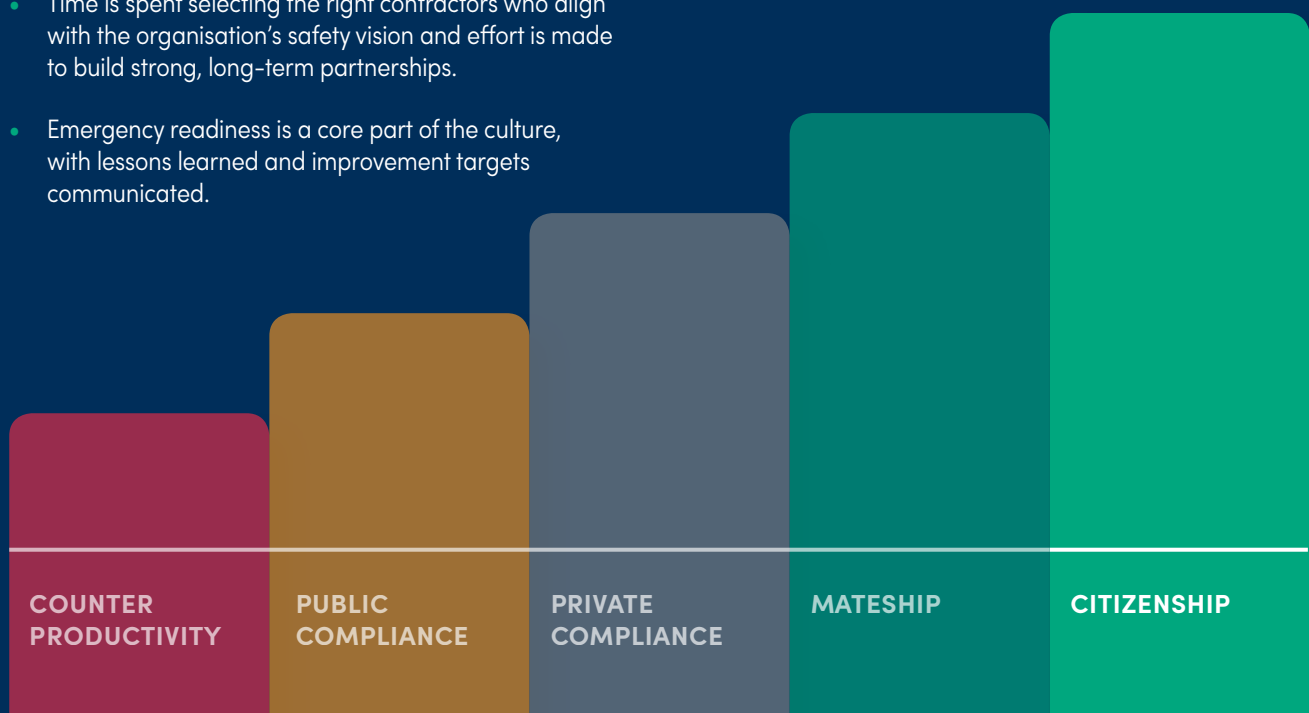
Safety citizenship represents a significant opportunity for organisations to capitalise on their greatest asset—their people—to further reduce safety-related incidents and increase engagement and ownership both with regards to safety and more broadly.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

THE FIRST STEP IN ACHIEVING A POSITIVE CHANGE AND UNLOCKING A CULTURE OF OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY IS TO REACH *PRIVATE COMPLIANCE*—THE FOUNDATION FOR A POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURE.

It's hard to argue against the idea that a culture of *Citizenship* should be the ultimate goal. Yet, the data explored in this study shows that as a society we're a long way off achieving this outcome. What's most concerning is the split of organisations across the levels of maturity. With 86% of organisational sites operating in a negative culture of blame and avoidance (i.e. *Counterproductivity* or *Public Compliance*), it's no wonder that the cost of work-related injuries and diseases is continuing to increase across Australia.[5]

Achieving *Citizenship,* or any cultural change for that matter, cannot, and does not, happen overnight. It requires dedicated and continuous effort. The first step in achieving a positive change and unlocking a culture of ownership and responsibility is to reach *Private Compliance*—the foundation for a positive safety culture. What is unique about this level of maturity is the creation of intrinsic (or internal) motivation to behave safely at work, even when no one is watching, making it a key stepping stone for a culture of *Mateship* and then, ultimately, *Citizenship.*

5   Safe Work Australia. (2018). Costs of work-related injuries and diseases—Key WHS statistics Australia 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/book/costs-work-related-injuries-and-diseases-key-whs-statistics-australia-2018

STUDY OVERVIEW

Although employee perceptions and attitudes towards safety are easily assessed via surveys, collecting data about the underlying safety culture requires a different approach. At Sentis, we use a combination of quantitative (e.g. surveys) and qualitative (e.g. observations) methods to measure safety culture across our clients' sites. This ensures that the quantitative strength of a survey is complemented with the qualitative richness of interviews, focus groups and observations to provide meaningful, contextual data on the key dimensions of safety culture.

This study draws on data collected from real clients, who completed both of the following assessments:

Safety Climate Survey (SCS) – A quantitative diagnostic survey that identifies organisational strengths and opportunities across four components of safety culture: environment, practices, person and leadership. The SCS enables the measurement of leading indicators of safety performance and develops specific recommendations to improve perceptions of safety. It is also used to track the impact of safety interventions over time and provide a benchmark against industry.

Onsite Safety Evaluation (OSE) – A qualitative assessment of an organisation's safety culture maturity. Using focus groups, interviews and observation, the OSE measures the workforce's safety attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, providing a third-party perspective. The OSE also allows a benchmark against the Sentis Safety Culture Maturity Model.

RECOGNITION FOR SENTIS' APPROACH:

The Sentis approach to safety culture diagnosis and measurement was endorsed at the 31st Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology (SIOP) held in California in April, 2016. Sentis' paper, outlining our approach to measuring the maturity of a company's safety culture, was selected as a top ten submission and won recognition over 1400 other submissions, through a rigorous blind peer review process. The paper *Applying Industrial/Organisational Science Methods to Diagnose Safety Culture Maturity* received praise for Sentis' rigorous methodology and diagnostic assessment process.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

73
organisational sites
across 8 industries

Agriculture
Government
Mining
Oil and Gas

Construction
Healthcare
Manufacturing
Utilities

562
focus groups

597
hours of interviews

5,011
people interviewed
(representative of 15% of the
population of organisations
included in the study)

21,711
surveys completed
to validate findings

155
observations made
(prestarts, site tours,
inductions etc.)

819
**total cultural themes
analysed**

9
COUNTRIES
(AFRICA, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, GERMANY,
NEW ZEALAND, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA, UNITED KINGDOM AND VIETNAM).

UNPACKING THE DATA

INDUSTRY-WIDE SAFETY CULTURE MATURITY

86%

of organisational sites sit
below *Private Compliance*

Counterproductive		**6 sites (8%)**
Public Compliance		**57 sites (78%)**
Private Compliance		**8 sites (11%)**
Mateship		**2 sites (3%)**
Citizenship		**no sites (0%)**

Figure 3. Industry-wide safety culture maturity results

Overall, the results show that 86% of organisations sit below the *Private Compliance* level of safety culture maturity, with the majority sitting at *Public Compliance*. A key characteristic of these sites is that employees comply with safety regulations and procedures only when they believe a negative consequence will occur if they don't—for example, getting caught and being reprimanded for non-compliance. This results in a culture where workers:

- take a tick and flick approach to safety;

- only comply with safety procedures when being watched and monitored;

- cover up incidents and errors;

- cut corners and turn a blind eye to safety procedures they don't see value in during times of production pressure.

DANGERS OF A *PUBLIC COMPLIANCE* CULTURE

Consider this scenario:

It's a typical day in your company's processing plant. Safety seems to be looking good. As you walk around site you notice people wearing PPE, procedures being followed, hazards being reported and teams mentioning safety during prestarts. You stop to check the incident rate. It hasn't changed. Team members are still getting hurt. You can't remember the last time someone provided a suggestion to improve safety. Something doesn't add up.

15 minutes earlier...

Daryl* works in the processing plant. It's his turn to take watch. He stands by the entrance, keeping his focus on the main office on the opposite side of the pond nearby. He sees someone approaching and subtly reaches for his two-way radio.

"Ducks on the pond," he says into the radio.

"I repeat, ducks on the pond."

Daryl walks over to his station and joins his teammates on the job as they quickly put on their safety gloves, cover up any obvious hazards and stop cutting corners to instead follow procedure. "Ducks on the pond" is the known code for "leader approaching" and everyone knows exactly what to do when they hear it.

*name changed.

This is a real-life example from one of our clients and, unfortunately, isn't unique. There are dozens more similar scenarios that demonstrate the real danger of a *Public Compliance* culture that we see and hear about every day across industry.

In this type of culture, safety procedures are considered a tick-box exercise and something separate to production (i.e. something extra that workers have to do). What we typically see is that policies and procedures are followed, but only when someone (generally a leader) is watching. When not watched, workers are more likely to cut corners or choose to behave in a way that is unsafe. We've seen this first-hand with even the simplest of safety procedures most of us would take for granted. On one remote site we visited, we were escorted around in a ute. When getting into the vehicle, the driver turned to our consultant and said, "Ah s***, you're here. I'd better put my seatbelt on, eh?"

Typically, workers do the minimum that is required when supervised, but their motivation comes from a desire to avoid getting into trouble, rather than an internal motivation to comply. Organisations that rely on external motivators for compliance find that leaders need to constantly oversee workers during their shift—but this just isn't realistic.

You can't monitor workers' behaviour 24/7, nor should you. Yet despite this, it's not uncommon to hear leaders offer solutions like, "We'll just add cameras to monitor safety behaviours and performance." This type of approach just adds fuel to the fire, creating an even bigger divide between the workforce (us) and management (them). Shifting from this type of culture is not easy, but it is critical.

A *Public Compliance* culture can only take safety to a certain point. The attitudes and perceptions prevalent in the workforce at this level of maturity mean that an incident can and likely will occur at any time, regardless of whether a leader is present. Workers are also far more likely to avoid reporting a near miss or incident, out of fear and intimidation. In fact, at this level of maturity, 30% of incidents fail to be reported—the highest across all levels of maturity—with fear stated as the top reason for choosing not to report.[6] In today's workplace, the list of risks is constantly changing, requiring ongoing effort from all workers to manage these effectively. In a *Public Compliance* culture, this effort just isn't displayed.

6   Sentis. (2018). *Underreporting of Safety Incidents in the Workplace: Recommendations for Improved Safety Outcomes.* Available at sentis.com.au/insights

ACHIEVING *PRIVATE COMPLIANCE* IS KEY TO UNLOCKING A POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURE

AT *PRIVATE COMPLIANCE*, WORKERS ENGAGE WITH SAFETY AND COMPLY WITH POLICY AND PROCEDURES BECAUSE THEY WANT TO, NOT BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO—AND REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY ARE BEING SUPERVISED OR NOT.

Achieving *Private Compliance* is the first stepping stone towards unlocking a positive safety culture. This is because it unlocks personal ownership and accountability for one's safety, a core building block for a positive safety culture.

When we refer to compliance, we mean it in the literal sense—i.e. the act of complying with a given command or set of protocols. The key difference between *Public* and *Private Compliance* is where the motivation to comply comes from. *Public Compliance* means the motivation is external or extrinsic—workers comply with safety procedures because they fear getting into trouble if they are caught doing the wrong thing.

However, at *Private Compliance*, the motivation is internal or intrinsic, meaning workers are motivated to comply with safety systems and procedures because they want to stay safe and they understand the link between compliance and increased safety. Essentially, at *Private Compliance*, workers engage with safety and comply with policy and procedures because they want to, not because they have to—and regardless of whether they are being supervised or not.

This is because workers see personal value and benefit in staying safe. As a result, they display an internal motivation to make safe choices—ultimately to return to the people, places and experiences that they care about most. At Sentis, we call these our Personal Big5™ or PB5™. This is where we see the shift from safety as something that costs us time, effort or money, towards safety as something that buys us opportunities to engage with our PB5™ in the future.

Achieving a culture of *Private Compliance* is the first step towards achieving a positive safety culture—but it isn't the end of the journey. While at this level, individuals make choices to keep themselves safe, they don't apply discretionary effort to further benefit or improve safety for their team or wider organisation. This means that continuous improvement in safety is limited unless maturity progresses. However, *Private Compliance* still remains the key tipping point for shifting towards a positive safety culture and is a critical step in the journey towards *Citizenship* that should not be undervalued.

THE POWER OF MINDSET

The following example is from a client in the construction industry. Two operators are scheduled to work in-field on the same pipeline. They experience the same incident, but with two very different outcomes. Both workers start their shift at the depot and engage in a prestart with their team and supervisor. Everyone is wearing their full PPE. Shortly after, they get to work in the field and are no longer being supervised.

On the job, one of the workers (Worker A) decides to remove his gloves because they "get in the way of getting the job done." He claims he "can't handle tools properly and no one is watching." The other worker (Worker B) chooses to keep wearing his gloves for his own safety, and despite his best efforts can't convince his co-worker to do the same. As they start working on the pipeline, an uncontrolled movement scrapes both workers' hands. Worker A suffers a minor puncture injury to his hand; Worker B's hand is protected because his gloves take the brunt of the damage.

The worker who suffers the cut doesn't think much of it and chooses not to follow procedure. He takes a "she'll be right" approach and considers the injury a "normal" part of his job. However, the pipe is a breeding ground for bacteria, which is one of the reasons why gloves are required to be worn at all times. After three days, the worker starts to experience a fever and rapid breathing. He's taken to hospital and diagnosed with sepsis—a potentially fatal condition most commonly caused by a bacterial infection—assumed to be caused by residual bacteria from the water present in the pipe. In this case, the worker was extremely fortunate and returned to work two months later.

WORKER A - PUBLIC COMPLIANCE

The actions of this worker are typical of a *Public Compliance* mindset—I'll comply when supervised (i.e. wear my PPE when my supervisor runs our prestart) but if I think safety gets in the way and no-one is watching, I'll decide if I follow the rules (i.e. choosing to remove my gloves because it's quicker without them). The consequence of these attitudes and resulting behaviours led to a serious injury that could have been fatal if treated any later—a result none of us would ever choose to be faced with.
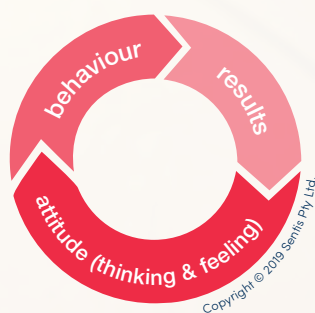

Attitude	I just want to get the job done quickly and easily
Behaviour	Remove gloves
Results	Minor cut, transforming into a life threatening injury

Figure 4. Attitude, behaviour, results model applied to Worker A

WORKER B - PRIVATE COMPLIANCE

The worker who wore gloves chose to take ownership of his personal safety. His actions were reflective of a *Private Compliance* mindset—My safety comes first because I want to get home safe and well at the end of the day (i.e. I choose to follow the rules because I don't want to risk any injury that would prevent me from returning home in a worse state than when I came to work.)
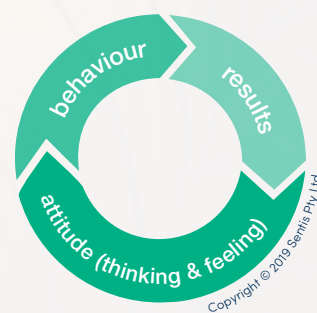
Attitude	My safety comes first because I want to get home safe and well at the end of the day
Behaviour	Keep my gloves on even if it's clunky/ takes me more time to do the job
Results	Gloves scraped and injury avoided

Figure 5. Attitude, behaviour, results model applied to Worker B

A seemingly simple change of mindset from "I just want to get the job done quickly and easily" to "My safety comes first because I want to get home safe and well at the end of the day" could have made all the difference for Worker A—especially if the outcome had been more dire. While attitude change isn't easy—in fact, for our brains it is pretty hard work—it is critical when seeking to shift from a negative to positive safety culture.
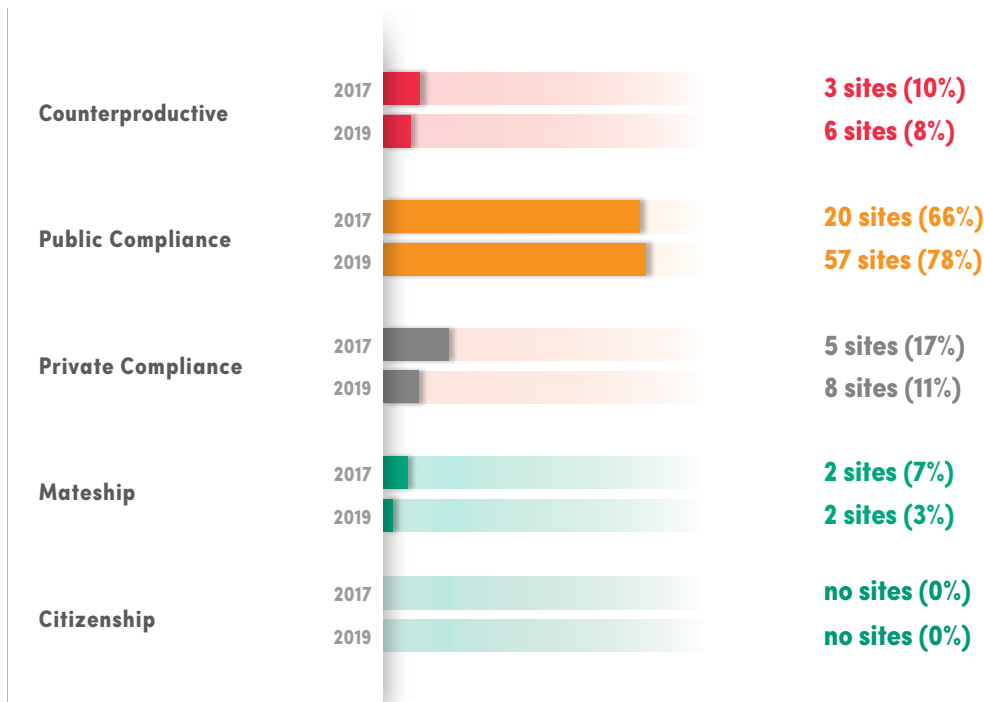
A CONCERNING TREND FOR SAFETY CULTURE

Counterproductive
2017 — **3 sites (10%)**
2019 — **6 sites (8%)**

Public Compliance
2017 — **20 sites (66%)**
2019 — **57 sites (78%)**

Private Compliance
2017 — **5 sites (17%)**
2019 — **8 sites (11%)**

Mateship
2017 — **2 sites (7%)**
2019 — **2 sites (3%)**

Citizenship
2017 — **no sites (0%)**
2019 — **no sites (0%)**

Figure 6. Safety Culture Maturity Results: 2017 versus 2019.

In 2017, Sentis released an initial report detailing the results of a two-year study into safety culture. This report is the result of an updated and extended version of the original 2017 study. Only two and a half years later, we find a concerning trend. While we have seen a slight decrease in the percentage of sites operating in a Counterproductive culture (–2%), the number of sites operating at Public Compliance has significantly increased from 67% to 78%, with little to no positive movement in terms of sites progressing towards more mature levels.

When it comes to investing in safety culture development, it's important to remember that culture isn't a "set and forget" activity. Continual focus is required and the most successful organisations that do progress understand it is a long-term commitment that often requires third-party, expert support.

As a safety or operations executive, you are an expert specialist in your trade, commodity, service or product and the technical safety requirements for your industry. That's why you're in the role you're in. Strategic culture change requires a similar level of specialist expertise and rarely can a person truly be both. It's okay and even admirable to seek support from a third-party that can help you to achieve the change you need to help your people not only return home safe, but also thrive at work.

This means doing more than just running a handful of training programs. It requires a data-driven governance process supported by ongoing measurement of progress;

agile interventions to address key opportunities as they arise; and coaching support to help your organisation and executive team not only create the motivation for change, but embed it in a sustainable and effective way. See *A Roadmap for Change* (page 54) for more information.

A lack of strategic planning and on-going conscious commitment is why most safety initiatives fail to achieve long-term and lasting change. We see it all the time—organisations frustrated with interventions that don't transfer back to the tools or those that "hop" between solutions and approaches hoping that eventually something will stick. While the organisation feels they have done a lot to improve safety culture, they haven't directed their focus and resources towards one strategic plan that will help them make improvements and measure progress. It is only when you create a clear safety strategy and direct every leader's energy towards achieving it that you will start to see long-term cultural change.

THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES

When we looked more closely at the strengths and opportunities of each of the sites included in the study, several themes became evident. In this section we focus on the top five opportunity areas identified across the sites operating at *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* levels of safety culture maturity. In doing so, we hope to help leaders identify opportunity areas in their own organisations and provide an understanding of where to start if you suspect your organisation may be sitting at *Public Compliance*.

Table 1. Opportunity areas for sites sitting at *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* levels of safety culture maturity

	Safety Culture Dimension	Opportunity Frequency (Percentage of Sites)
TOP 5 OPPORTUNITIES	Quality of safety procedures*	56%
	Management safety commitment*	51%
	Internal context*	48%
	Willingness to report incidents and errors	40%
	Employee safety performance*	37%
	Hazard awareness and control	35%
	Health and wellbeing	33%
	Safety training and development*	30%
	Safety responsibility*	30%
	Safety input*	27%
	Contractor management	27%
	Between-team safety communication*	24%
	Supervisor safety commitment*	22%
	Equipment, tools and machinery*	22%
	Safety mission and vision*	21%
	Emergency readiness	17%
	Downwards safety communication	16%
	Maintenance	16%
	Within-team safety communication	13%
	External context*	10%
	Organisational learning and improvement	6%
	Work planning	5%
	Team support for safety	3%

*Denotes dimensions that have a strong correlation with safety culture maturity (Pearson Correlation ≥0.70)

Overall, in organisations sitting at lower levels of cultural maturity i.e. *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance*, workers were typically highly critical of the organisation, expressing that:

- change management is poor;

- they only hear about safety when things go wrong;

- management and leaders are all talk and no action, and don't provide the guidelines or processes required to do the job well.

As a result, workers indicated that they were less willing to report incidents and near misses out of fear because their leaders don't reward them when things go well, but rather punish them when an error happens—regardless of the circumstances under which it occurred.

These findings back up earlier research conducted by Sentis into safety leadership and its link to cultural maturity. In *The State of Safety Leadership* (2018), we found that poor safety climate was indicative of poor safety leadership, and vice versa. The study also found that employees who had more positive perceptions of their direct leader's safety leadership ability reported more positive safety behaviours and performance.

The following five opportunity areas for sites sitting at *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* levels of maturity were determined by aggregating the opportunity areas across all sites in the sample and how frequently each opportunity occurred.

A note about team support for safety

Interestingly, at these levels of maturity, "team support for safety" is a top strength for 67% of sites. While on the surface this may seem like a silver lining, when coupled with the fact that for 51% of sites "management safety commitment" was a top opportunity, the cracks begin to show. This pattern of results often indicates that teams have more confidence in each other than they do in leadership or their organisation. This only continues to fuel an "us vs them" culture of blame and avoidance when it comes to safety—a hallmark of lower levels of maturity.

1. QUALITY OF SAFETY PROCEDURES

Safety procedures are an important foundational component of safety culture, not only to meet legal obligations, but also to provide guidance on how to safely manage risks and hazards in the workplace. Safety procedures provide guidance for workers on how to work safely while completing the tasks required in their job. But, simply having procedures documented doesn't mean that they are user-friendly or effective.

Quality of safety procedures was the most common opportunity area for the *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* sites in this study, occurring in 56% of cases. Specifically, procedures were seen to lack value or importance, or were perceived to be too complicated or difficult to implement.

Procedures were seen to be more about serving the company's interests than the safety of workers, acting as an obligation-meeting activity to cover the company's legal responsibilities. This "tick and flick" mentality is typical of lower levels of cultural maturity and has a ripple effect on workers' engagement with the procedures themselves.

Because adhering to procedures is perceived as protecting the company from possible legal action, rather than protecting oneself from risk or harm, workers are more likely to cut corners if they think they can get away with doing so. In fact, many of the workers in our study expressed that procedures "get in the way" of doing their job. This is true not only for frontline workers, but also for leaders who perceive the time spent completing procedure-related paperwork to be cutting into their time supervising in the field.

When workers perceive procedures to be too complicated, confusing or inconvenient, it can lead to a shared set of attitudes that procedures don't help them stay safe. As a result, compliance decreases. Put simply, if safety procedures aren't easy to access, easy to read and relevant for the context the employee is working within, there is a very high likelihood that they will not be followed. This was evident in our study where workers noted that people don't always follow safety procedures because they feel swamped with too much information, lack training in how to use the tools and processes, or because they simply don't understand the "engineer language" used in the procedures.

This last point in particular—a result of a lack of worker consultation—further perpetuates the "us vs them" mentality so typical of negative or low maturity safety cultures. We see this time and again with clients, where procedures are written in head office by engineers who haven't spent time in the field. The workers who are then supposed to follow the procedures find that they are written in complex language that is difficult to understand, are long and complicated, and at times are completely impractical.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

☐ 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.

> A piece of paper won't stop someone dying—it's developed as an a***-covering exercise.

> Procedures are just read out and they don't check for understanding, but then you have to sign off that it has been communicated to you.

> Safety culture is largely focused on correct paperwork, not necessarily doing the job right.

> As a business, we aren't very good at simplifying processes.

> Everyone just opens the SOP, doesn't read it, clicks acknowledge and then it shows that you've reviewed it. You click yes, but you never read the new SOPs.

> They've made it too hard for us to do the job with all the paperwork and then they want to know why it takes longer.

> Safety systems are over-complicated and hard to get around.

> Safety procedures don't make the job any safer; we do it because we have to and to cover our a****.
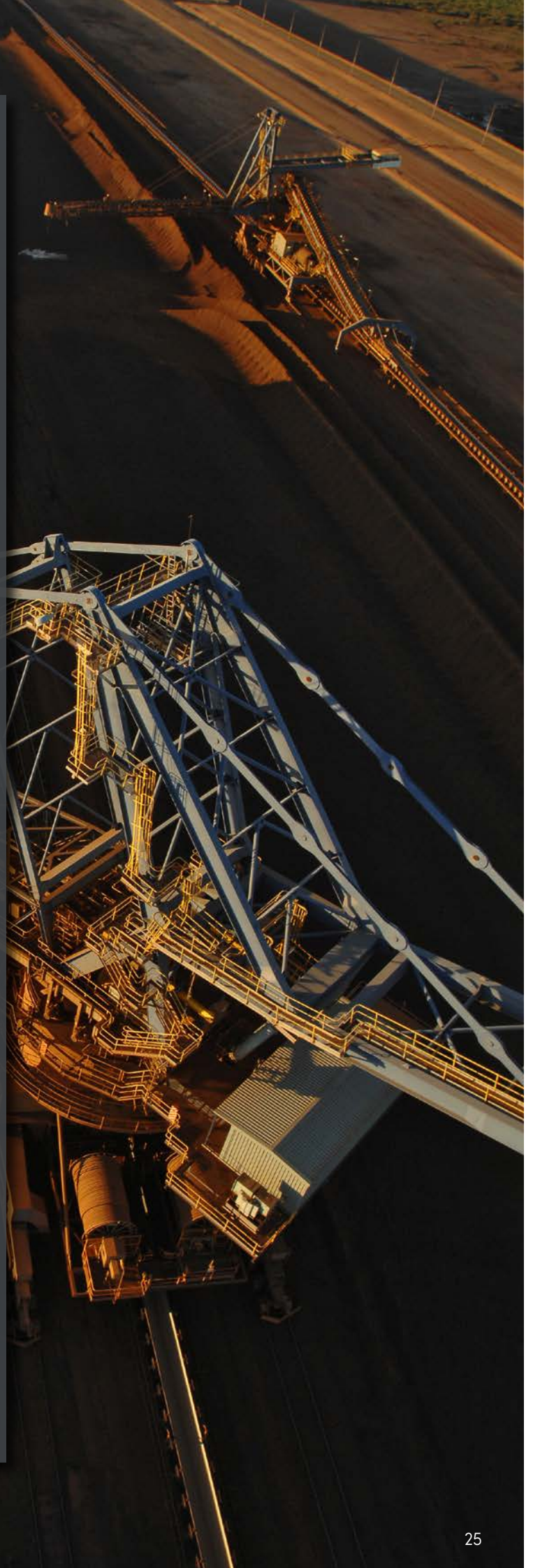
> The people writing it from the top, they are engineers; it is difficult for operators to understand engineer language.

> Terrible, unorganised, difficult to navigate, difficult to understand, inconsistent.

> If you did everything by the book here, you wouldn't get anything done.

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

MAKING THE SIMPLE, COMPLEX

We have seen several clients, especially in heavy industry, where workers describe the number of procedures as well as their length and complexity as over-the-top or impractical. Workers at mine sites often describe the dozens of procedures they are expected to know about and follow—with each procedure being long, complex and often irrelevant to the current situation they are working within. Expecting workers to remember which procedure to use—as well as every detail and step—is simply not practical. The human brain is easily overwhelmed and can only consciously focus on a limited amount of information. When there are multiple procedures for the same piece of machinery, a procedure is long or it's written in technical language, this can overwhelm the brain's conscious capacity and as a result, the procedure isn't followed.

An over-abundance of procedures is usually a result of a barrier approach to safety. When an incident occurs, the response is to put in place a new barrier or procedure. When another incident occurs, the cycle repeats. Over time, and without careful management and review, organisations can end up with hundreds if not thousands of procedures that workers are expected to know about, understand and follow.

This approach to safety isn't inherently bad, but it can sometimes be misguided. For example, a New Zealand client had a corporate office with a large car park. To get to the main entrance, workers needed to walk to the far right of the car park to follow a long and cumbersome pedestrian pathway. This also meant crossing the entire car park and, during peak periods, navigating incoming/outgoing vehicles.
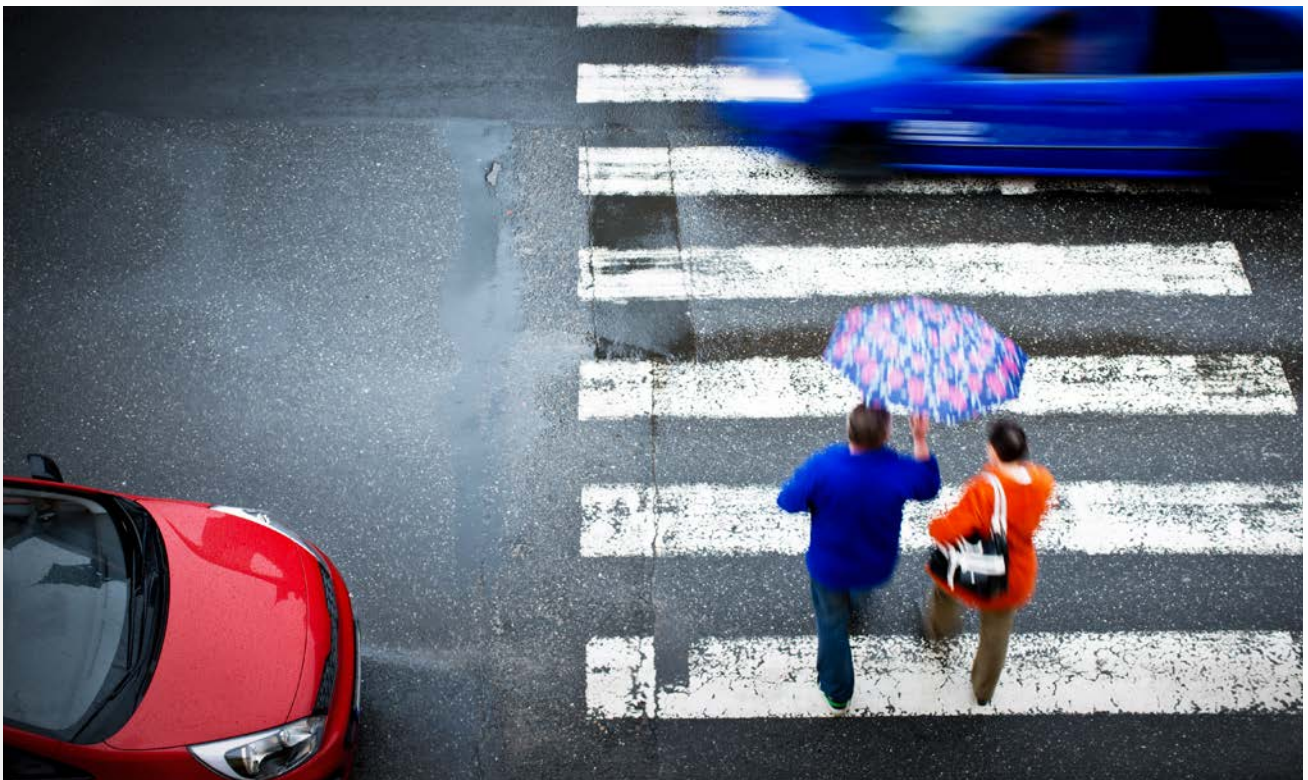
As humans, our brains love to save energy, so we often look for the shortest way to achieve our goals. In this case, the shortest path was to walk through a small garden bed that divided the car park from the building. Most employees took this route every day, so much so that the garden bed was eroded into a makeshift path. The company was aware of the shortcut and likely saw the risk as low or non-existent, so turned a blind eye to the behaviour.

One day, an employee tripped while walking through the garden bed, falling and breaking her nose. She had to have both corrective and cosmetic surgery as a result. The company's response wasn't to create a safer, more practical route for their people; instead they built a fence around the garden.

Sometimes in our haste to prevent an incident from reoccurring, we fail to see how impractical or unhelpful our proposed solution might be—especially when we haven't considered all the data or consulted the workers who carry out the task on the frontline.

OFTEN CITED WAS THE BELIEF THAT MANAGEMENT STAFF TALK THE TALK, BUT DON'T WALK THE WALK—ESPECIALLY IN PERIODS OF HIGH PRESSURE OR WHERE PRODUCTION IS INVOLVED.

2. MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITMENT

Management safety commitment refers to the quality of management's in-field safety visits as well as perceptions of management prioritisation of employee safety. For those sites operating at a *Counterproductive* or *Public Compliance* level of maturity, 51% had management safety commitment as a top opportunity.

Three key themes emerged in this area:

- inconsistent commitment from management;

- poor prioritisation of safety;

- a lack of safety leadership skills, especially role-modelling, inspiring, motivating and actively caring.

Often cited was the belief that management staff talk the talk but don't walk the walk—especially in periods of high pressure or where production is involved. That is, those in management say the right things about safety, but contradict this in their actions. For example, the manager who emphasises to his team that safety is the number one priority, but then questions the purchase of specialised gloves for the team, puts pressure on his frontline leaders to rush a job, or doesn't approve the spend to bring on additional resources to handle a particularly busy period. This poor role-modelling sets a standard for acceptable behaviour on site, even if it's in direct contradiction to safe processes.

MAKING TIME FOR SAFETY

Inconsistent management commitment to safety can lead to serious consequences, especially at a senior leadership level. The following is a real example experienced by a client in regional Australia.

A new safety manager had just set foot into the role. Knowing that there were concerns with safety on the frontline, he decided to run a diagnostic to understand where the site was performing well and where there was room for improvement. The results showed the site to be sitting at *Public Compliance* and highlighted immediate risks to safety on site. While the safety manager made himself available to be debriefed on the results, despite his best efforts he was unable to receive the same commitment from senior leaders. Even though safety was a core organisational value and senior leaders approved the diagnostic in the first place, they insisted that they "didn't have time" in their busy schedules to hear the results. A classic example of talking the talk but failing to walk the walk.

Tragically for this site, they experienced a serious incident and fatality only a few months later. Several workers were also injured and the ripple effect throughout both the company and the local community was significant. It raises the question, had leadership chosen to act could this tragedy have been avoided? While we'll never know for sure, it's situations like this that make us work even harder to help organisations to improve their safety culture. Every worker deserves to go home safe and well, in the same or better condition than when they arrived at work.

Another concern raised in this area is the lack of leader visibility on site. Managers who don't make time to interact with workers both formally and informally in the field are sending a very clear message to workers—that they are not important. If frontline workers are perceived as important by leaders, those leaders prioritise getting out into the field, learning the names and interests of the workers, seeking and listening to worker feedback and following up on prior concerns raised.

Over time, poor management safety commitment erodes trust between workers and leadership and the organisation in general. Workers begin to feel that they are a commodity rather than a valued part of the organisation and as though they don't have a voice. If workers raise concerns or safety issues and hear nothing further from leadership, their only conclusion is that leadership doesn't care enough about them to resolve the issue. While this may not be the case, if leadership doesn't provide regular feedback to workers about issues that have been reported, workers are left with no option but to assume nothing is happening.

Once workers start to assume that leadership doesn't value them or their safety, and there is little trust between parties, this continues to drive a negative safety culture where employees do the bare minimum required to keep their jobs. They stop raising concerns with leaders and essentially cut off communication between leadership and the frontline.

> Safety is important if it doesn't cost money.
>
> The mine talks the talk, but doesn't walk the walk.
>
> Managers' commitment to safety is visible and heard a lot and it appears they care about safety; however, pushing production up sends a bit of a mixed message when expecting us to do more and more work.
>
> When we get an LTI, it's more of an issue with not winning work, not because someone got hurt.
>
> If the s*** hits the fan and we can't get something done, we waive safety, get it done, and safety is then back again.
>
> [It's a] good message they are saying, but it's not translating into action or changes in what is actually happening in the workplace.
>
> If you need eight months to do a project, management will give you five. They'll tell you it's your job to figure out how.
>
> Quantity over quality—the company drives metrics and KPIs.
>
> They don't care about us; they don't care about safety. They care about production.
>
> I worry at times that the commitment to safety is a fear-based motive.
>
> It's difficult to know what good safety looks like if management hasn't shown us.

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

- [ ] 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

Internal context refers to factors internal to the organisation that impact safety performance. These factors include areas such as change management, job security, general morale and perceptions of culture. This safety culture dimension appeared as a key opportunity area for 48% of the *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* sites in this study. When drilling down to the detailed responses, one primary opportunity emerged: change management.

Effective management of major organisational change is critical to ensure employee resistance is minimised and the change doesn't become a distraction for workers. When change is poorly managed, workers can become anxious, withdrawn or hostile, disengaging with safety processes and displaying an increased number of unhelpful safety behaviours. While leaders typically consider restructures, mergers or the closure of a site as major organisational changes that requires attention, remember that for workers, changes to their routines, rosters or the way they do their job also feel like major changes.

If change happens often or suddenly, workers may express change cynicism and describe organisational change as a knee jerk reaction. This was reflected in our sample, which showed the following issues raised with regards to change management:

- a lack of communication about the reasons why change is occurring, with feedback on change rarely, if ever, heard;

- a general feeling of fatigue and disengagement towards change, with workers stating they were tired of not knowing what would happen next;

- perceptions that change was implemented quickly, sometimes deliberately, so did not allow time for consultation periods.

Mismanaged change erodes workers' trust in leadership, resulting in negatively biased perceptions of management's safety commitment and the belief that leaders do not genuinely care about workers' welfare. This further fuels the "us vs them" mentality that is typical of *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* safety cultures.

> "
>
> Change isn't managed well; [it's] often secretive and communication is an issue.
>
> Change management is not very good. We change procedures but we don't communicate them.
>
> People with university qualifications are writing complicated communications. They understand it, but the guys on the floor don't.
>
> There is so much more change these days, the older guys are struggling.
>
> The change management process is very laborious, so many people don't follow it.
>
> They don't talk to the people on the ground. It's top-down change. [We] feel disheartened.
>
> Fear exists that new change will be managed the way that old change was.
>
> I made a suggestion, but it took four years for them to change it. We don't get feedback about our suggestions.
>
> We've stopped making suggestions because they don't listen to us. What's the point? We think our suggestions aren't taken on because of cost.
>
> "

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

☐ 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.

Consider this

Our brain loves to create habits so that we can conserve energy. That's why we crave routine and predictability. Change often requires breaking one or more of these habits. This takes a significant amount of energy because it involves sustained active thinking and conscious choices. As a result, it's hard! This can trigger a threat response in our brains and is why we naturally resist change.

When rolling out a change, no matter how big or small, consider how you bring people along for the journey. Remember, they are not necessarily trying to be difficult if their brain triggers a threat response. Learn more about the brain at sentis.com.au/brain-animation-series
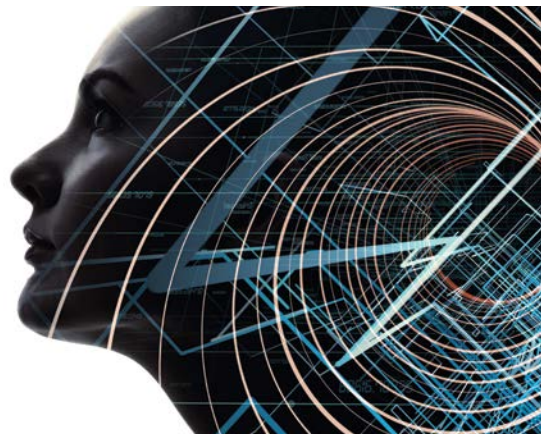
4. WILLINGNESS TO REPORT INCIDENTS AND ERRORS

Willingness to report incidents and errors refers to the clarity of incident reporting and workers' use of reporting channels. Additionally, this safety culture dimension records the extent to which incidents/errors are used as learning opportunities and the perceived repercussions of reporting (both positive and negative).

Worker willingness to report incidents and errors in an accurate and timely manner is an important characteristic of a positive safety culture. Reporting incidents creates invaluable learning opportunities, allowing organisations to adapt, make improvements and prevent future injury. As leaders, if we don't understand the types of incidents occurring in our business, we can't put measures in place to avoid them.

For 40% of sites operating at a *Counterproductive* or *Public Compliance* level of maturity, willingness to report incidents and errors was a key opportunity area. This lack of willingness to report means that workers are more likely to cover up mistakes and turn a blind eye to unsafe behaviour, resulting in a greater risk of safety incidents and the perpetuation of a negative safety culture.

Typically, for the sites in this sample, the reasons driving a reluctance to report were centred around fear of punishment and process issues. Workers expressed fear of losing their jobs or a permanent 'blemish' on their record. The notion of a blame culture also came across strongly, with incident investigations focused more on assigning blame than on shared learning for improvement. A lack of action or feedback from leadership following a report, as well as cumbersome reporting systems and processes, also discouraged workers. These experiences have led many workers to see little point in reporting incidents in the first place, further perpetuating a culture of underreporting.

Consider this

Humans are naturally social conscious beings. Workers may be afraid of being blamed by others, the discomfort of a permanent "blemish" on their record, or being the subject of peer disapproval for the loss of a safety bonus. This need for social approval can play a significant role when deciding whether to report or not and is heavily influenced by the surrounding culture.

Negativity bias also affects people's tendency to report or not report incidents. Negativity bias refers to negative information having a greater effect on our thinking and attitudes than positive information. This is why when an incident occurs and it is reported and managed fairly (e.g. no one is punished), the story doesn't stick in your workers' minds. However, the one worker who got fired for reporting a near miss 10 years ago—that's the story that spreads like wildfire and is used to this day as the reason people don't report incidents.

These results are in line with the results from our 2018 study into underreporting, which found that 37% of workers who underreport do so out of fear, and 25% do so due to perceived or actual issues with the process required to report incidents. Take a deep dive into the drivers of safety incident underreporting and download your complimentary copy of *Underreporting of Safety Incidents in the Workplace: Recommendations for Improved Safety Outcomes*.

"

People aren't owning up to their mistakes for fear of retribution.

Notes on your file last forever.

There's still a lot of "we will get sacked" mentality.

If I can get away with it, I will, because it will be followed up with discipline or a business partner will be fired.

It's fear and intimidation if you report anything.

A guy broke his arm while adjusting a bucket on a dozer with the operator still in it. Both were fired 12 hours later, but we didn't record the injury.

Fingers are pointed to work out who will pay for it.

Management makes you feel bad about doing it and brings incidents involving you back up during review time each year.

If you report something then you have an issue; it's a blame game.

Incident reporting is designed to find fault and not areas of improvement.

I wouldn't bother. My experience was so poor I wouldn't try and report again. Why bother? It just disappears into cyberspace.

To reduce the load being reported in [the system], we speak to our supervisors to first work out a solution. It takes too long, so now we don't report it anymore.

"

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

- [ ] 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.

INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT: MINING
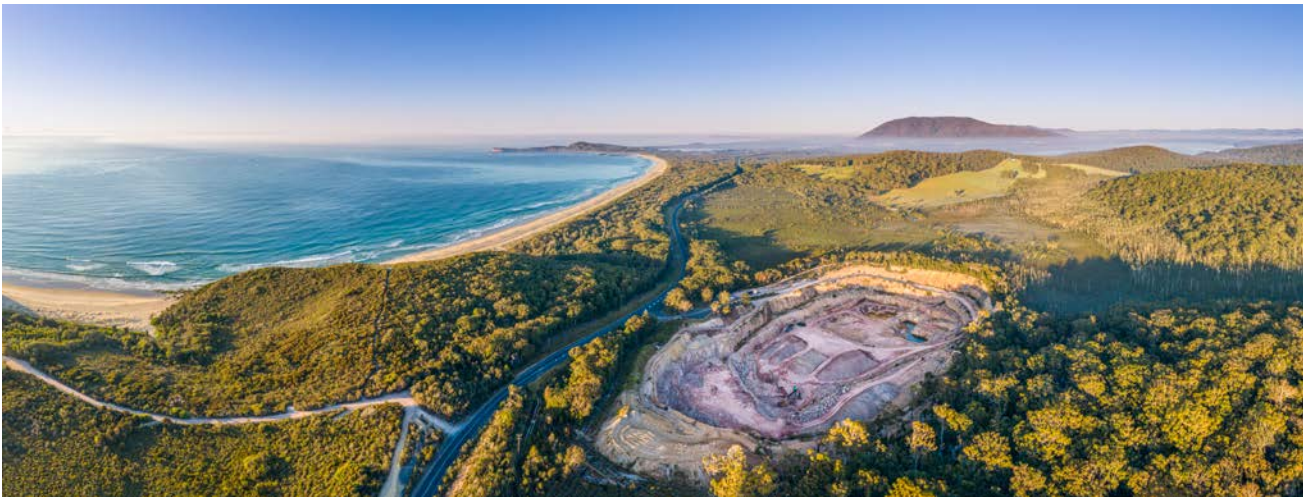
The mining industry represents 28 of the organisational sites in our study, allowing us to take a deeper dive into industry-specific findings.

When it comes to overall maturity, mining performs slightly poorer than the average, with 89% of sites operating within a negative safety culture. However, the result that is the most alarming is the high level of sites sitting at *Counterproductive*, representing a significant and immediate risk to the safety of the workers at these sites.
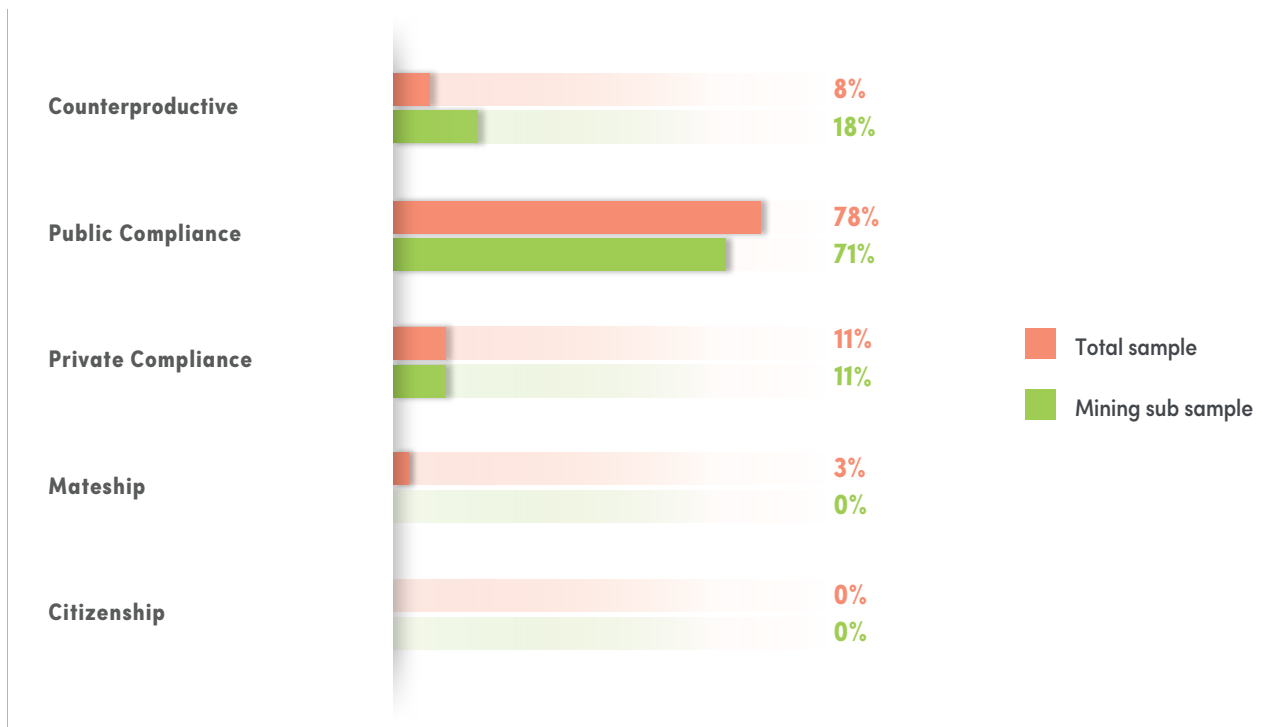

Figure 7. Percentage of sites at each level of safety culture maturity. Total sample versus mining sub-sample.

As stated, our study found that 86% of organisational sites operate from a negative safety culture. Alarmingly, this rate increases to 89% within the mining industry. Furthermore, in 2019, the Queensland mining fatality rate was the highest in 20 years, with six fatalities over a 12 month-period (2018/19)[7,8]. With a "safety crisis" declared, it is clear a safety culture transformation is needed in the industry. But what could be achieved if mining organisations started to drive a positive safety culture?

7   Horn, A. (2019, July 9). Queensland Government wraps up crisis talks with mining industry after sixth death. ABC News. Retrieved from: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-08/queensland-mine-death-response/11287178

8   CFMEU.(2019, July 8). Fatality at Baralaba; Injury at Collinsville. CFMEU. Retrieved from: https://me.cfmeu.org.au/news/fatality-baralaba-injury-collinsville

IMAGINE WHAT YOU COULD ACHIEVE...

Operating sites across Australia, including in remote areas, this global mining company experienced a plateau in their severe injury and recordable injury frequency rates. As a result, the senior leadership team identified the need to address safety culture and leadership to improve safety performance. While the client was aware of certain issues within their business that were acting as barriers to change, a Safety Climate Survey (SCS) and Onsite Safety Evaluation (OSE) uncovered significant and unknown barriers within their business.

Until undertaking an SCS/OSE diagnostic, the client held incorrect assumptions about the workforce with pre-existing beliefs that the workforce was actively hiding incidents and that they were simply too scared or too lazy to report. While the diagnostic did show a deep-seated fear of negative repercussions, this was not the only driver. A lack of feedback and education around the benefits of reporting, as well as the positive outcomes of reporting for overall safety, had cultivated a workforce that did not see the value in reporting incidents or near misses.

The results of the diagnostic triggered senior leadership to closely assess their current systems, processes and communications around reporting, leading to a significant system clean-up, the development of new metrics and targeted communications to shift the perception of reporting in the business.

The client was committed to achieving positive and significant long-term change, so we partnered with them to complement these system improvements with a complete safety culture intervention. In addition to the safety culture diagnostic, the client also assessed safety leadership ability and engaged in targeted training, coaching and embedding.

Over the course of a two-year period, the client not only achieved positive changes in their people's safety attitudes and behaviours, but also achieved a positive shift in their safety culture maturity from *Public Compliance* to *Private Compliance*. By moving from a negative to a positive safety culture, the client achieved:

- 45% reduction in LTIFR;

- improved reporting, with five times more high-potential risk incidents reported post-training;

- positive shift in supervisor commitment to safety;

- improved recognition for employee safety performance;

- more consistent reporting by employees and a greater willingness to exert social pressure on colleagues to comply with safe work practices.

By investing in leaders at all levels and putting in place a strategy and intervention that targeted employee attitudes and fostered personal motivation and ownership over safety, the client was able to shift their business to a more positive safety culture. This led to an improvement in safety performance and outcomes overall. Achieving positive safety culture change takes time. Dedicated to continuous improvement and achieving safety performance excellence, the client continues to partner with Sentis to help them progress towards a culture of *Citizenship*.
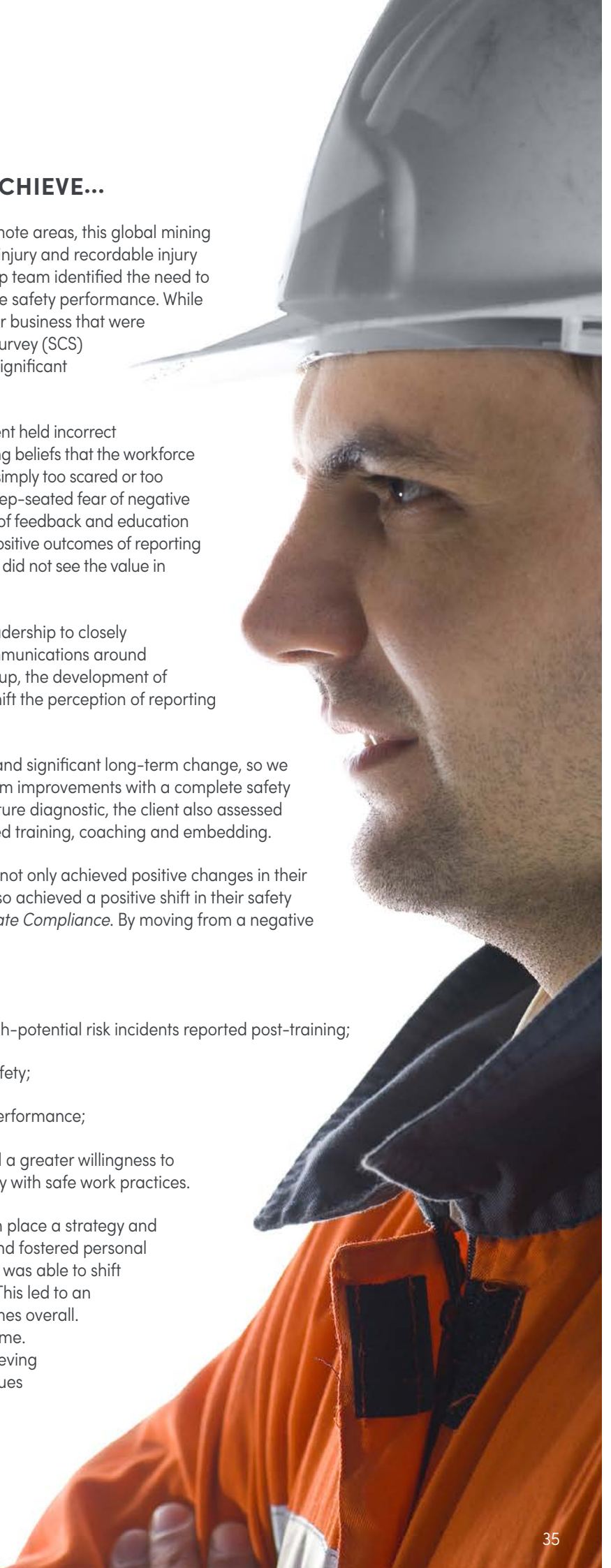
5. EMPLOYEE SAFETY PERFORMANCE

Employee safety performance refers to the effectiveness of safety recognition and performance management processes—in particular, the perceptions of fairness surrounding safety performance management. Our study found that this was an opportunity area for 37% of sites operating at a *Counterproductive* or *Public Compliance* level of safety cultural maturity.

Ineffective or non-existent reward and recognition for positive safety behaviours were key reasons for this result. Where an organisation was rewarding and recognising safe behaviours, it was often cited that these strategies were used ineffectively with rewards perceived as worthless. A pat on the back or a "good job" may be well intentioned, but it doesn't drive a positive safety culture.

The way workers are recognised for performance can impact their perception of the value the organisation places on safety. For example, a refinery we worked with saw workers rewarded for production success with monetary bonuses, but when they reached one-year LTI-free they received a chocolate bar at the gate on their way home. The message to the workforce was clear: we value production more than we value safety.

This was reflected in our study. It was common to hear that in *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* cultures, reward and recognition strategies were directly tied to production. This encourages a culture of production over safety, rather than one of safe production. In these instances, such recognition inadvertently drives counterproductive safety behaviours. For example, praising a team for meeting high production levels when the outcome was achieved by cutting corners or making unsafe choices.

Another concerning trend was the linking of monetary incentives to safety performance data. It's not difficult to predict worker behaviour when their bonus is on the line. We have heard many stories of people failing to report incidents to preserve their bonuses, or in one case, turning up to work with a broken leg to sit in the office all day so the injury wasn't classed as a lost-time injury and therefore didn't impact the safety bonus.

Our study also found that a fear-based culture and a punitive approach to safety hindered employee safety performance. When it comes to improving workplace health and safety, a common management style still in use is the "stick" approach. This results in the punishment of team members for breaking safety protocols with the aim of minimising unsafe behaviours. The problem is that while punishment can lead to a change in behaviour, it doesn't always change the behaviour that you want to change. For example, punishing a worker for not complying with safety procedures may drive them to not report future incidents so they don't get caught again, rather than change their level of compliance.

> Negative feedback overrides positive feedback on safety.
>
> They reward productivity over safety.
>
> There are no initiatives around acknowledgement and recognition.
>
> We struggle to celebrate the good stuff, and focus on the bad stuff.
>
> Reporting incidents can impact my bonus so the first thing I'll do is not report incidents. If I got injured not too badly, I'd just keep quiet.
>
> Supervisors are rewarded for production, not safety. All the incentives are production-based.
>
> It would make the place better if people were getting a little more acknowledgment.
>
> We got pizzas a couple of times for record breaking production, but not safety.
>
> There may also be a perception that we [leaders] use a stick to get it done.
>
> We have a big stick approach to safety. The learning stops a bit.
>
> There is no recognition for good work, but they come down on you like a ton of bricks if you get something wrong.
>
> Safety officers are like police officers.

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

- [ ] 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?

LESSONS FROM ORGANISATIONS DOING WELL

What can we learn from organisations that are performing well? When comparing the sites at *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* against those within *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* cultures, we find significantly better performance in the following areas:

- safety mission and vision;

- management safety commitment;

- within-team safety communication;

- safety responsibility;

- team support for safety.

In these more mature safety cultures, workers described a clear mission and vision that they could get behind, greater leadership alignment across the organisation and a more consistent approach to how workers were engaged in safety. As a result, management in general was perceived as demonstrating a greater commitment to safety.

When expectations are clear and workers are united behind a shared vision, they know what good looks like and are more empowered to speak up for safety. This results in greater team safety communication and commitment, where workers take personal ownership over not only their own safety, but their teammates' as well.

WHEN EXPECTATIONS ARE CLEAR AND WORKERS ARE UNITED BEHIND A SHARED VISION, THEY KNOW WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE AND ARE MORE EMPOWERED TO SPEAK UP FOR SAFETY.
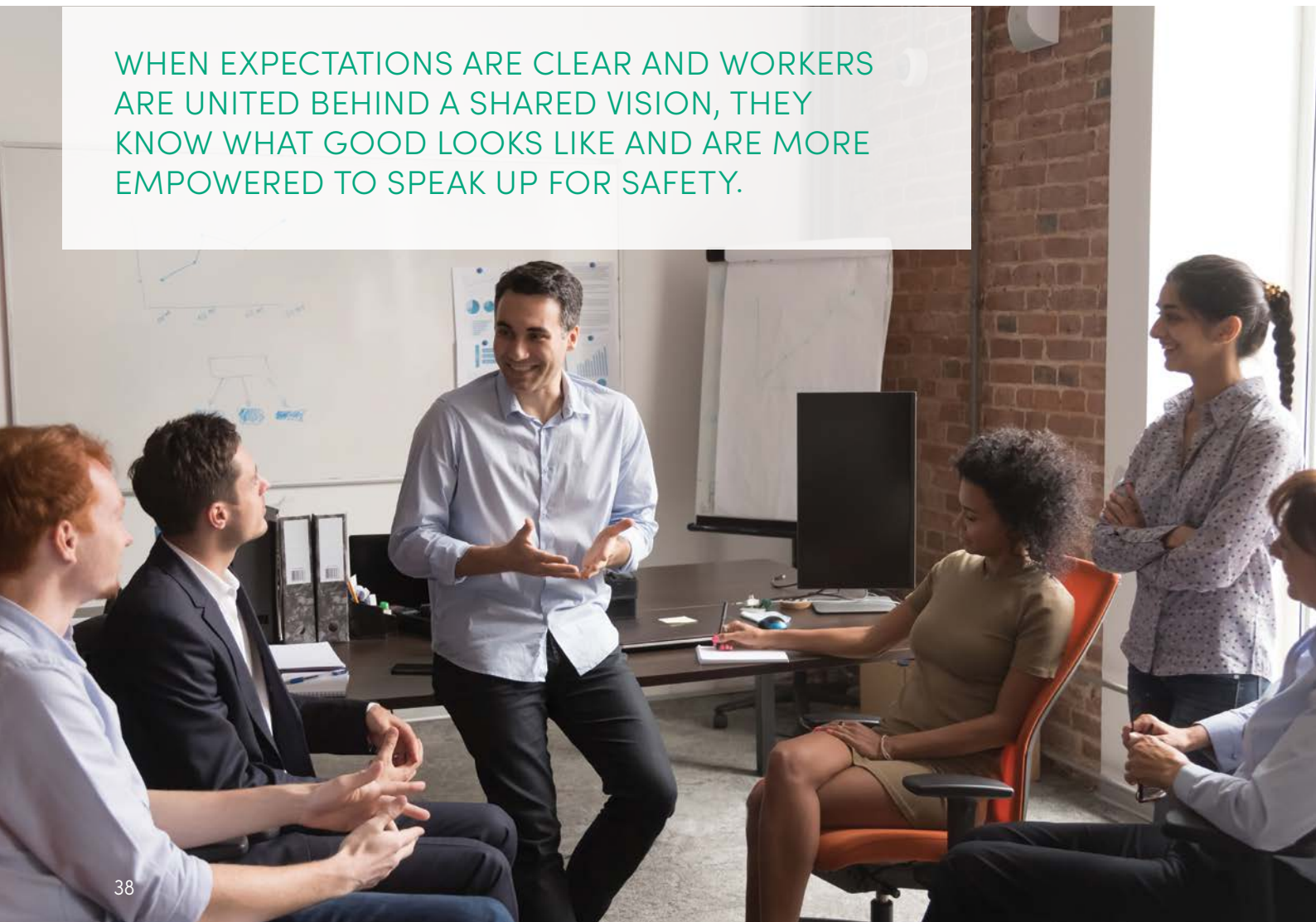
Table 2. Strength areas for sites sitting at Private Compliance and Mateship levels of safety culture maturity

Safety Culture Dimension	Opportunity Frequency (Percentage of Sites)
Safety mission and vision*	60%
Management safety commitment*	60%
Within-team safety communication	50%
Safety responsibility*	50%
Team support for safety	40%
Supervisor safety commitment*	30%
Organisational learning and improvement	30%
Downwards safety communication	30%
Contractor management	30%
Quality of safety procedures*	30%
Health and wellbeing	20%
Emergency readiness	20%
Safety input*	20%
Willingness to report incidents and errors	20%
Employee safety performance*	20%
External context*	20%
Between-team safety communication*	10%
Equipment, tools and machinery*	10%
Hazard awareness and control	10%
Internal context*	10%
Safety training and development*	10%
Work planning	0%
Maintenance	0%

TOP 5 STRENGTHS

*Denotes dimensions that have a strong correlation with safety culture maturity (Pearson Correlation ≥0.70)

1. SAFETY MISSION AND VISION

A safety mission and vision sets the standard of excellence and gives individuals a goal to work towards, creating meaning in the day-to-day activities a team undertakes. When a team is inspired and engaged by a vision, they know where they are going and what they need to do to get there. More importantly, they continue to work towards shared goals associated with the vision, even when their leader is not physically present. This ultimately leads to increased safety performance and increased safety citizenship behaviours.

In this study, safety mission and vision refers to employee awareness of the organisation's safety vision and values, as well as their involvement in the development and integration of the mission and vision into daily activities. Safety mission and vision was a top strength for 60% of *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* sites.

At these sites, workers described a clear vision for safety. They reported that they not only understood the vision, but that they believed in it personally. This is important because at *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* levels, workers only reported being aware of the vision—not that they believed in it. Both the quality of the vision and leaders' commitment to driving it throughout all levels of the business were key differentiators when comparing negative and positive safety cultures.

For the *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* sites where safety mission and vision was a key strength:

- there was a perceived genuine commitment to safety values from the organisation;

- the safety targets/goals/objectives were clearly defined;

- the safety vision was seen as consistent and credible;

- the vision was integrated into regular processes such as toolbox talks and prestart meetings;

- leaders were committed to driving the safety vision, communicating it consistently;

- there was a commitment to the vision at all levels of the business.

Creating and sharing a safety vision is one of the few competencies that is not required at the worker-level. Rather, it is a unique skill only asked of leaders.

As individuals rise through the ranks into a position of leadership, it is no wonder leaders may struggle to demonstrate skill in an area they have likely never had the opportunity to develop.

Developing and sharing an effective vision is no easy task. It takes time to plan, think and develop specific goals and activities to reach this vision. Without specific activities and goals, teams may struggle to engage with the vision or take positive steps towards achieving it. This can often result in leaders placing safety mission and vision in the "too hard" basket with the demands of day-to-day activities making them "too busy" to invest.

The sites which identified safety mission and vision as a strength had leaders at the forefront driving the safety mission and vision and taking on the responsibility of communicating the vision with their team. Leaders who are successful in this area are consistent in their messaging, communicate the vision with their team on a regular basis and invite their team to contribute to the vision where possible.

What can we learn from this? Leaders need to accept responsibility for sharing the safety vision with their teams, and organisations must accept responsibility to support leaders in developing and building the skills they need to do this. Given only 12% of leaders feel they are highly effective at sharing safety vision, this is no doubt an area of leadership development that can be often overlooked.[9] Organisations that invest in their leaders to develop their leadership skills also help to develop broader skills, creating positive effects in all areas of the business.

Furthermore, the importance of clear and concise goals can't be overstated. Positive safety cultures use safety targets and well-defined goals and objectives as a way to motivate their workers towards the safety vision and provide meaning and purpose to everyday activities. Leaders who take the time to break down the safety vision into manageable tasks and goals that their team can achieve realise the benefits of their team being on the same page, pulling together towards that common goal. Also, creating messaging that resonates with workers on a personal level ensures that they buy into the safety vision and take responsibility towards achieving it.

9   Sentis. (2017). *The State of Safety Leadership*. Available at sentis.com.au/insights

A key marker of a positive safety culture is one where the mission and vision remains at the forefront, even in difficult times. This is best upheld when the mission and vision is regularly integrated into meeting processes and discussions. By continually bringing workers' focus back to the safety vision, workers keep the vision top of mind, despite potentially distracting factors.

> "
>
> [Our] safety vision message is terrific; it is easy to understand.
>
> Even during grim periods, I don't think safety dropped off; I think it stayed a very strong focus.
>
> Management gives a really strong chance to have input on what we think works with safety. I hardly think our safety culture is driven from above; really, it's driven from the site and from the department, and hopefully from the work crews.
>
> Safety is our number one value and most people would know that.
>
> We are clear on vision.
>
> At [our company] people do know that safety is number one.
>
> The Personal Big5™ concept helps with safety engagement and our vision of zero harm.
>
> Safe Work is the message people think of when they think of [our] safety vision.
>
> "

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS

☐ 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.

2. MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITMENT

While management safety commitment was a top opportunity for *Counterproductive* or *Public Compliance* cultures, we find the script flipped when it comes to *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* cultures, where this area becomes a key strength for 60% of sites. For organisations seeking a lever for change, this may suggest a good place to start.

Workers felt that in addition to talking the talk, management displayed a genuine commitment to safety, prioritised safety above production and spent an adequate amount of time on site. This genuine commitment is underpinned by trust and credibility, built through repeated demonstration of safety being prioritised. At these more positive sites, management provided easy access to budget to purchase necessary equipment and implement strategies to ensure safe work. In this way, safety is seen as an investment that generates its return through a healthy, productive and safe workforce.

These sites also saw management stepping out into the field and maintaining a visible presence. Simply spending time talking to employees at all levels about health and safety, and particularly to those on the frontline, encourages a more positive perception of safety commitment. So too does prioritising safety over production, with some sites noting recent stops in production to ensure worker safety—despite the financial ramifications. At these sites, safety truly is a non-negotiable priority.

The importance of meaningful relationships with team members should not be underestimated. Positive safety cultures are created when leaders are trusted and respected by their teams. In these cultures, safety leaders establish the "ground rules", yet grant their team the autonomy to discover the best process to achieve safe and productive outcomes. This was also supported by workers' perceptions that leaders genuinely want them to learn the skills needed to be able to support safety, and that they were willing to invest in this.

Consider this

A leader who displays strength in setting a clear safety vision for their team clearly communicates the organisation's safety goals and what needs to be done to achieve them. They also provide detailed and regular feedback on workers' behaviour and if it's hitting or missing the mark. In turn, frontline workers have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to impress their leader. They quickly learn they will earn no praises for cutting corners, but only for staying in line with the safety vision and completing their work in a safe and efficient manner.

> "
>
> Safety, then schedule, then cost.
>
> Consistent from top that safety is [our] number one priority.
>
> There have been stand-downs where we halt production and put safety in front of cost.
>
> Safety is number one priority across all leadership levels.
>
> Safety culture here is pretty good; safety is high on the priority. Always, it's "safety, safety, safety."
>
> Safety is talked about a lot and they put it first.
>
> The board takes safety very seriously.
>
> Daily walkarounds are done; we see leaders out on the plant.
>
> Leaders are in the field all the time, talking about safety.
>
> Visible leadership with safety interactions is what we do well.
>
> "

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS

- [ ] 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.

INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT: UTILITIES

The utilities industry represents 24 of the organisational sites in our study, allowing us to take a deeper dive into industry-specific findings.

When it comes to overall maturity, the utilities industry performs marginally poorer than the average, with 87% of sites operating within a negative safety culture. What is perhaps concerning though is the high level of sites sitting at *Public Compliance* specifically. As we have previously explored, a culture of *Public Compliance* significantly increases the risk of incidents and injury occurring as workers lack intrinsic motivation to behave safely when unsupervised.
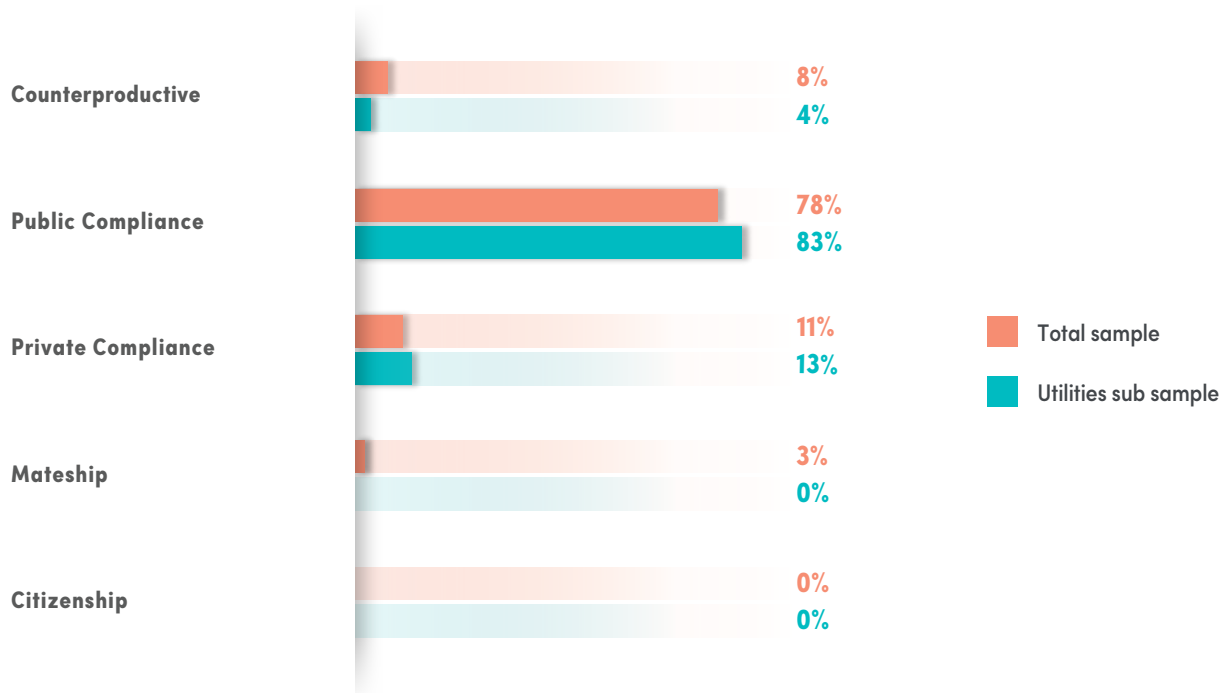
Level	Total sample	Utilities sub sample
Counterproductive	8%	4%
Public Compliance	78%	83%
Private Compliance	11%	13%
Mateship	3%	0%
Citizenship	0%	0%

Figure 8. Percentage of sites at each level of safety culture maturity. Total sample versus utilities sub-sample.

So, what does "good" look like in the utilities industry? To understand the value and importance of investing in your organisation's safety culture, consider the following client case study.

"

THE IMPORTANCE OF
MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS
WITH TEAM MEMBERS SHOULD
NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.
POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURES ARE
CREATED WHEN LEADERS ARE
TRUSTED AND RESPECTED BY
THEIR TEAMS.

"

THE POWER OF INVESTING IN CULTURE:
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN ORGANISATION GETS IT RIGHT?

CS Energy is a Queensland Government owned corporation and major provider of electricity in Australia. With a trading portfolio of 3,535 megawatts and more than 500 people across their power stations throughout Queensland, CS Energy's vision is to be a leading provider of diversified energy solutions to their customers.

Safety, driven by genuine care and concern for people and the environment, is CS Energy's number one driver. With the aim to improve safety performance, and build a high performing culture, they engaged Sentis to run a safety culture diagnostic and implement a cultural improvement program.

Prior to engaging Sentis, CS Energy identified key gaps surrounding:

- consistent application of safety vision/values;
- leaders' roles and expectations;
- personal safety and leadership accountability;
- safety systems;
- managing ambiguity and risk.

However, after undertaking the Sentis diagnostic process, which included safety climate surveys, qualitative focus groups, interviews and on-site observations, CS Energy uncovered additional opportunity areas not dissimilar to the key opportunity areas outlined in this study. These included:

- hazard awareness and control;
- quality of safety systems/procedures;
- willingness to report incidents and errors;
- management safety commitment.

CS Energy was benchmarked against the Sentis Safety Culture Maturity Model at an overall rating of *Public Compliance.*

CODE: Culture, Ownership, Drive, Energy
Using the diagnostic and benchmark as a foundation, Sentis and CS Energy partnered to create *CODE: Culture, Ownership, Drive, Energy*—a psychology-based safety culture program aimed at shifting individual attitudes towards safety and culture. CODE included a two-day, interactive training program for all employees and an additional two-day, safety leadership program for leaders at all levels.

To ensure the program wasn't seen as "just another safety program", core concepts were aligned with the organisation's values and integrated into day-to-day operations (e.g. risk assessment tools). Initial training was also followed up with a self-paced learning application, multimedia toolkit campaigns and leadership challenge projects.

Rolled out over two years, 746 employees and long-term contractors (including 141 leaders) participated in the CODE program.

Results
Since implementing CODE, CS Energy has seen significant improvements in both safety perceptions and performance, as well as broader business outcomes, including:

20% ⬆ approach to incident investigations;

18% ⬆ organisational accountability for safety;

16% ⬆ management commitment to safety;

66% ⬆ recover at work rate;

20% ⬇ Workcover premiums.

In terms of willingness to report incidents and errors, CS Energy saw a shift in the reasons for non-reporting. In 2017, the key reason for not reporting was, "I felt uncomfortable or afraid to make a report," a typical characteristic of a fear-driven *Public Compliance* culture. In 2019, the key reason had shifted to, "I took care of the problem myself." While still an opportunity area, it is significant from a cultural perspective that fear is no longer in the top three reasons for choosing not to report.

As an investment in its safety culture, CS Energy made CODE a priority for the business by including the program as one of four strategic focuses in their business plan. This gave the program the organisational profile, executive focus and support it needed to succeed.

"CODE provided a common language for us to re-engage with our workforce. It is a simple, engaging and useful way to start safety conversations."

Andrew Cashin,
Health & Safety Business Partner

"Three years on, CODE remains a key strategic cultural driver for the business. We continue to observe tangible and non-tangible benefits. External benchmarking analysis indicates that we have improved to levels at, or above, relative industry on the majority of Safety Climate Survey dimensions, particularly with regard to incident investigations and safety leadership. In addition, we hear CODE concepts being articulated at our sites. Phrases such as "gorillas", "what's important now" and "my PB5" are all present in conversations and pre-shift discussions. Along with the survey results, the CODE language we hear at sites remains the strongest indicator that CODE continues to play a part in our journey to build a safe, constructive culture."

Ngaire Moran,
Head of Health and Safety

94%
of participants found CODE "useful" or "extremely useful" to their work.

89%
of participants learned something they could immediately apply back in the workplace.

88%
of participants would recommend CODE to a colleague.

Finalist

2019 Workplace Excellence Awards
Presented by:
APS

Safety culture improvement is a journey. Sentis and CS Energy continue to partner to extend and embed the CODE program throughout the business to realise further improvements across safety and the broader business.

In 2019, CODE was nominated as a finalist in the Australian Psychological Society's Workplace Excellence Awards in the Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing category.

3. WITHIN-TEAM SAFETY COMMUNICATION

Within-team safety communication refers to the frequency and quality of safety messaging and discussion within teams. It also includes the assignment of safety communication responsibilities. Our study found that this was a strength for 50% of sites operating at *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* levels of maturity.

At these sites, workers held positive perceptions of safety briefings such as prestarts, toolbox talks, meetings, workshops etc. They talked about safety briefings occurring frequently, high attendance rates, engaging communication and both permanent and contract workers contributing to discussions. The most positive sites found safety briefings to be both useful and relevant, with a strong emphasis on ensuring workers were adequately briefed prior to starting jobs.

Critical to this—and a key difference when compared to more negative cultures—is the encouragement of two-way communication and workers' participation in this. Rather than a "lecture" or "tick and flick" activity, supervisors actively encourage open discussion about safety hazards and controls, as well as improvements and lessons learned. To further encourage active participation, leaders use strategies such as asking helpful questions, empowering the team members to lead and drive the discussions themselves, sharing relevant videos, using activities or using current events at site or in the news to make safety discussions relevant and interesting.

Some workers also mentioned informal communication as an important contributor to workplace safety. This type of communication is where teams choose to talk about safety even when it isn't formalised or required of them. The use of radios to keep in touch and update progress throughout the shift also allowed teams to keep safety messages front of mind beyond the prestart meeting.

The more often our brains hear information, the more likely it will "stick". Consider the supervisor who asks his team to look out for an upcoming change to the traffic management plan during prestart one morning. Instead of leaving it there, he asks his team to communicate with one another throughout the day of any changes or updates to keep everyone in the loop. As the day goes on, different workers share information regarding the development. Due to the small but regular reminders, every worker keeps the upcoming change front of mind.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS

☐ 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.

"

In all pre-shift meetings, safety is mentioned and reinforced.

Everyone attends a session focused on safety; these are very engaging and easy to understand.

We talk about safety every morning in the toolbox meetings and share our learnings.

People were willing to contribute and add to the safety share.

There is a lot of engagement across the board; most people participate.

At morning safety meetings, we share safety observations with the group to discuss improvements.

We discover lots of things; people start talking. Staff highlight challenges as well as improvements and we adapt. It's a chance for staff to speak up about concerns.

Everyone has permission and encouragement to share.

Teams communicate well among themselves.

The company has made the time for us to have conversations.

The crew talks to each other and their supervisor about safety-related work.

Everyone talks safety; sometimes we can't shut them up!

"

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

4. SAFETY RESPONSIBILITY

Safety responsibility refers to the discretionary effort workers display in relation to safety activities, their acceptance and ownership of their safety duties, and the relationship that they have with the health and safety team and other workgroups.

It's perhaps unsurprising that safety responsibility ranks as a top strength for *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* cultures in 50% of cases. After all, one of the defining factors of a positive safety culture is that individuals take personal ownership and accountability for safety. In this way, safety responsibility is perhaps the most critical lever for driving a positive safety culture.

When safety responsibility was a strength for *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* sites, it was because:

- employees took safety practices seriously;

- employees were open to feedback regarding safety;

- safety was considered a core part of each person's job;

- employees understood the importance of safety and accepted safety as their own responsibility;

- employees felt empowered to stop unsafe work;

- the health and safety teams were seen to support safe work.

These workers saw safety responsibilities as a core part of every person's role and took personal responsibility for their own safety and that of others. Teams and crews at all levels showed belief in the importance of sustained vigilance to both detect and control hazards. Additionally, they were open to feedback regarding their safety and when coached on how to make safer choices, received this positively, genuinely appreciating the concern for their safety.

They also always chose to take safety practices seriously—such as wearing PPE, following procedures and stopping unsafe work—without being supervised or told to. This willingness was driven by an internal and personal motivation to make a choice for safety and, furthermore, to speak up for safety. At these sites, workers felt empowered to not only identify and address hazards in their own work and others', but to also stop work for safety. In these organisations, safety really is a non-negotiable and workers were more willing to participate in safety activities

and initiatives driven by the health and safety team who were highly respected due to their responsiveness and visibility. Importantly, the health and safety teams were seen as a source of support rather than a source of fear (i.e. the "safety police"), as was more commonly the case in *Counterproductive* and *Public Compliance* cultures.

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SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS

☐ 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.

</div>

> "
>
> It is in my interest to keep people safe.
>
> Crews are thinking about safety more readily and supervisors feel more confident prompting conversation around safety with the crew.
>
> Safety values flow down the line; all levels have a positive safety attitude.
>
> I asked someone on the deck if I could walk across a short distance and he said, "No, you need to put PPE on."
>
> Guys will say, "No, I'm not doing that," and the team will support it.
>
> The safety team is really well respected.
>
> Even if the HSE team changes, the culture is stable enough to survive.
>
> Anyone can pipe up and say, "Stop."
>
> "

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

5. TEAM SUPPORT FOR SAFETY

Team support for safety refers to the quality of relationships between team members, the level of care and concern for each other and the willingness to confront a co-worker who violates safety standards. Our study found that 40% of *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* sites had team support for safety as a strength.

At these sites, workers felt their co-workers genuinely cared for and supported each other. Specifically, they reported looking out for each other, encouraging each other and being willing to help out. They saw safety as a team effort where they work together to keep each other safe. Beyond this, they were comfortable to confront their co-workers if they saw them engaging in a potentially risky or unsafe behaviour—something that does not occur in more negative safety cultures.

Furthermore, individuals at these sites reported being thankful to others who have pulled them up on unsafe behaviours. They also operated under the notion that if something or someone is not acting safely, work should be stopped immediately until it is safe to resume. This behaviour to speak up for safety regardless of the circumstance is a hallmark of a positive safety culture and something that must be encouraged and fostered should organisations wish to break through their safety plateau.

Finally, it is worth noting that at these more positive sites, high team support for safety often led to informal buddy or mentoring systems for new employees and workers assisting each other to complete tasks in a safe way. This positive behaviour helps to set the standard and protect the culture from slipping backwards. This concern and support also extended beyond formal tasks, with workers looking out for each other when they felt they might be struggling either mentally or physically.

A note about psychological safety

As humans, we're generally a socially conscious species. We try to avoid negative and uncomfortable situations wherever possible. Our willingness to have a potentially confronting conversation is linked to our degree of psychological safety. Psychological safety is a term that refers to a worker's belief that they can freely express their ideas, opinions and concerns without fear of negative repercussions. Psychological safety greatly depends on high-quality social relationships that are characterised by mutual trust and respect. At *Private Compliance* and *Mateship* sites there was a high level of care and support within teams, indicating a high degree of psychological safety.

Learn more about how to empower workers to speak up for safety at sentis.com.au/psychological-safety

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS

- [ ] 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.

> There is a great sense of camaraderie both within teams and between teams—it's like a tight knit family here.
>
> People look out for each other's stress, wellbeing and fatigue.
>
> We'll spend time with new employees for a few days before letting them go solo.
>
> There is a genuine care for each other's safety.
>
> If we see someone doing something that can get them injured through a shortcut, we pull them up.
>
> We care about each other, look after each other and make sure we do the job safely.
>
> I believe that everyone gets along and watches out for one another's safety with a good process to follow.
>
> People are comfortable challenging new people if they are working unsafely.
>
> I've had someone talk to me about something I shouldn't have been doing and I was really thankful; it was received well.
>
> If someone is doing something wrong, it's everyone else's responsibility to pull each other up, not just the individual.
>
> We have a huge level of active care in our team. We always check in where we are, how we are travelling, and we try to care for each other especially when we are stretched; see if we can help out for a deadline.
>
> We all care about each other because tomorrow it might be my turn when I need help.
>
> Guys are always looking out for their mates, making sure they go home at the end of the day.
>
> I see people pulling other people up for risky behaviour and respectfully challenging it.
>
> We are comfortable having challenging conversations to ensure people get home safely.
>
> Everyone has the right to stop work or stop anyone from doing an unsafe act immediately. We do that to save them and their family.

Quotes from the workforce, transcribed from interviews and focus groups.

A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

BEGIN THE SHIFT TOWARDS A MORE POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURE

Now that we've identified where the biggest opportunity areas are and what we can learn from those performing well, we can start to plan our next step towards safety culture improvement and the ultimate goal—*Citizenship*.

The previous sections have identified a series of recommendations for leaders to address specific areas of safety culture. But for change to be sustained and successful, it's important to consider the long-term strategy.

Transforming your safety culture is a big job. Cultures can take years to turn around and only do so with targeted investment by leaders. So, where do you start?

Initiatives such as safety training or an incentive plan won't fix a culture—they're an important tool but are just one piece of a much bigger puzzle.

For cultural change to be successful, executive alignment and commitment both in principle and in practice are required. This means a commitment of more than just budget. It means committing time and effort to contribute to setting a safety culture goal, creating a plan, managing the process and accepting accountability for delivering on actions.

In this final section, we explore some key steps to consider before kicking off your safety culture improvement process.

SETTING YOUR CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT UP FOR SUCCESS

STEP 01

COLLECT DATA

PURPOSE:

1. To create a sense of urgency, or gain acceptance from stakeholders and workers that there is a real need to change.

2. Identify your starting point so you can measure future success and also ensure your initiatives are targeting the most important areas of opportunity.

HOW:

- Run a safety climate survey.
- Conduct focus groups or interviews.
- Engage a third-party expert to run a safety culture diagnostic.
- Launch a communication strategy to share the results of your diagnostic with the business.

STEP 02

FORM A STEERING COMMITTEE

Form a steering committee of key stakeholders who will have personal KPIs and accountabilities for improving the safety culture (typically senior leaders).

PURPOSE:

1. Gain buy-in from senior leaders.

2. Set the expectation that improving safety culture is not something that can be accomplished by the safety manager or safety department alone.

3. Ensure all senior leaders in the business are pulling in the same direction and are aligned to a common goal.

HOW:

- Allow leaders to self-nominate to the group.
- Select leaders whose support is critical to achieve success and invite them to join.
- Create a communication plan to update the business regularly on quarterly objectives and achievements.

STEP 03

CREATE A STRATEGY

PURPOSE:

1. Align leaders on the safety vision and the plan to achieve progress.

2. Build a simple, concise document that captures the overarching safety goals and actions required to achieve progress.

3. Create confidence within the business that a plan is in place, leaders are committed and change will occur.

HOW:

- Create a safety vision, remembering to focus on the "why".
- Set long-term (3-5 year) safety culture goals, cascade this to develop medium term (1- year) goals, and then set short (quarterly) actions that will support the overarching goals.
- Document the plan. Keep it simple like a one-page document that can be updated each quarter.
- Allocate responsibilities to steering committee members, setting clear actions and deadlines.
- Plan how you will communicate the strategy to the business.
- Decide how the group will meet to review and revise the strategy and how members will hold one another to account if actions are not completed.

STEP 04

IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

PURPOSE:

1. Ensure the safety strategy remains important and is discussed and referenced regularly.

2. Hold leaders accountable to actions they have committed to which will set the expectation that safety is a priority within the business.

HOW:

- Set regular meetings with the steering committee to check in on actions and deadlines of strategic actions and priorities.

- Review the strategy quarterly to assess the previous quarter and plan for the next quarter.

STEP 05

KEEP YOUR FINGER ON THE PULSE

Test. Re-test. Pivot.

PURPOSE:

1. Determine where improvement projects have been successful.

2. Identify any ongoing areas of concern or opportunity.

3. Ensure your strategy is still valid and driving you towards your safety culture goals.

HOW:

- Gather data regularly from your workers using surveys, focus groups, interviews or other methods.

- Compare new data with previous baseline data to identify areas of change.

- Adjust the strategy based on current feedback.

- Continually update the business on progress towards the overarching safety culture goal. Share and celebrate the small wins that indicate your change process is on track.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Despite the safety plateau that industry finds itself in and as evidenced by the results of this study, all is not lost. It took society concerted effort over the years to build practices and environmental factors to improve workplace safety and we have made massive inroads in these areas. Organisations all over are trying to monitor their people to make sure that processes are followed and people use safety systems to improve safety. The thinking behind this approach isn't inherently bad, but it's outdated and isn't going to propel us forward to a place of safety citizenship.

The same effort and resources that have improved safety to the point we are at now, now need to be focused on shifting the way people engage with safety. Are they complying so they don't get into trouble? Or are they engaging with safety because they see value in the systems and procedures as something that will help them stay safe and get home to the people and things they care about?

Remember, shifting the overall safety culture of your organisation or site won't change overnight, especially if your culture is deeply embedded in long-term beliefs and habits. However, with high-quality resources, time and effort and a direct strategy put in place, organisations can achieve a positive change and another step towards safety citizenship.

ABOUT SENTIS

Offering safety culture assessments, training, coaching and consulting, Sentis helps organisations to break through the safety plateau and achieve positive safety culture change. As experts in applied psychology and neuroscience, we make safety personal and equip employees with the knowledge, skills and motivation to make safer choices, each and every day. This leads to safer, more engaged workplaces, as well as increased productivity, leadership capability and transformational, sustainable safety culture change. Since the introduction of our pioneering ZIP program in 2003, Sentis has empowered more than 350 companies and 160,000 individuals to think differently about safety.

If you would like to learn more about Sentis diagnostic tools and how we can help you to create safety culture change in your organisation, contact us at **sentis.com.au** or by calling **1300 653 042**.

Insights-to-Action Roadmap
What gets measured gets done

Shifting safety culture is a challenge. That's why it's so important to invest in the early planning stages.

The Sentis *Insights-to-Action Roadmap* helps you to gain a clear picture of your current safety culture, create a strategy for change and embed it effectively.
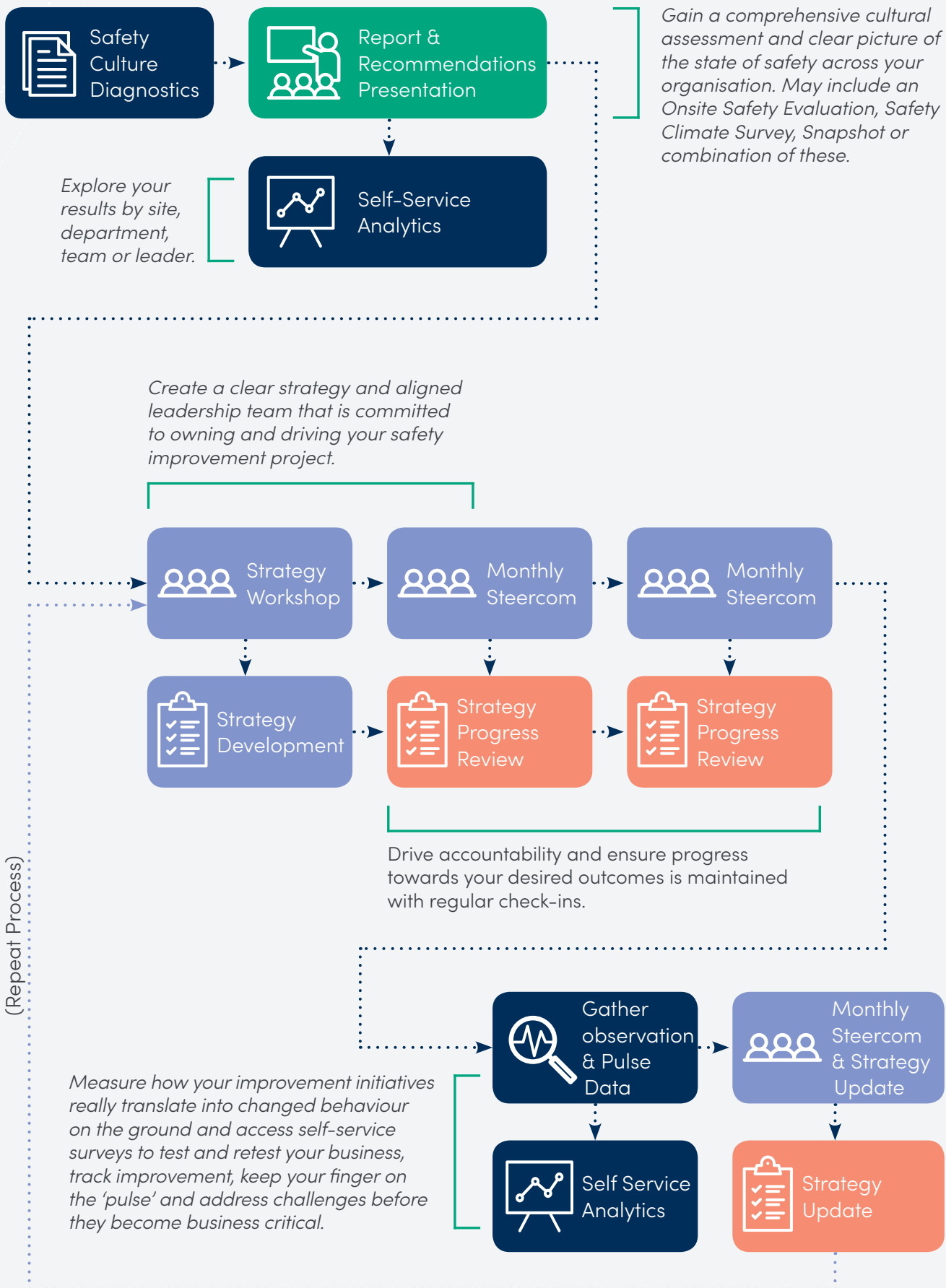
Ready to receive a holistic view of your safety culture and a roadmap to take you to a new level of safety excellence?

Get in touch with one of our expert consultants today
sentis.com.au   **1300 653 042**

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Safety Culture Diagnostics → **Report & Recommendations Presentation** → **Self-Service Analytics**

Gain a comprehensive cultural assessment and clear picture of the state of safety across your organisation. May include an Onsite Safety Evaluation, Safety Climate Survey, Snapshot or combination of these.

Explore your results by site, department, team or leader.

Create a clear strategy and aligned leadership team that is committed to owning and driving your safety improvement project.

Strategy Workshop → **Monthly Steercom** → **Monthly Steercom**

Strategy Development → **Strategy Progress Review** → **Strategy Progress Review**

Drive accountability and ensure progress towards your desired outcomes is maintained with regular check-ins.

(Repeat Process)

Measure how your improvement initiatives really translate into changed behaviour on the ground and access self-service surveys to test and retest your business, track improvement, keep your finger on the 'pulse' and address challenges before they become business critical.

Gather observation & Pulse Data → **Monthly Steercom & Strategy Update**

Self Service Analytics → **Strategy Update**

Safety isn't about protecting you from something, but **for something**.

Empowering more than **350** companies and **160,000** people to think differently about safety since **2003**.

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