



International
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Shaping safety culture through safety leadership

OGP Report No. 452





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Overview

The objective of this report is to raise awareness among leaders in the oil and gas industry of the way their leadership shapes Safety Culture. It explains what *Safety Culture* and *Safety Leadership* mean, and specifically describes the leadership characteristics that can influence Safety Culture.

// A commitment to safety should not be a priority, but a value that shapes decision-making all the time, at every level. //

Every company desires safe operations, but the challenge is to translate this desire into action. Written rules, standards and procedures while important and necessary, are not enough. Companies must develop a culture in which the value of safety is embedded in every level of the workforce.

We define culture as the unwritten standards and norms that shape mind-sets, attitudes and behaviours.

A culture of safety starts with leadership, because leadership drives culture and culture drives behaviour. Leaders influence culture by setting expectations, building structure, teaching others and demonstrating stewardship.

A commitment to safety and operational integrity begins with management. But management alone cannot drive the entire culture.

For a culture of safety to flourish, it must be embedded throughout the organisation.

(Tillerson, R., 2010)

1. Case for action

Cultural factors influence behaviour at all times and in every setting, whether at home, in society at large or in a workplace. An organisation's culture is passed on to newcomers and has strong effects on peoples' conduct even when they are alone, free from the scrutiny of managers or colleagues. This encompassing feature of culture gives important leverage to managers seeking to influence employees' motivation and behaviour. It is also why a poor Safety Culture is so obvious when things go wrong.

A major incident is generally the result of a number of factors interacting in unanticipated ways. Many of these factors will be psychological or behavioural, and are in turn influenced by the prevailing Safety Culture. A strong Safety Culture is not in itself an absolute guarantee against incidents, but it is a barrier against the complacency, omissions and violations which are so commonly listed in incident reports as causal factors. A Management System that is not backed-up by a positive Safety Culture might not give the desired outcomes.

Many oil and gas companies can be proud of their Safety Culture and the results of their effort to reduce the number of incidents and injuries. But a Safety Culture is often not uniform throughout an organisation, and all companies have the potential to improve. Achieving and sustaining a positive Safety Culture is not a discreet event, but a journey.

A manager's style of leadership and visible demonstration of their commitment to safety through actions is important in shaping the organisation's culture. Improving Safety Culture requires determination and stamina. Long-term focus, commitment, and a willingness to 'walk the talk' are more influential than campaigns and posters.

It is OGP's intention that this report will give oil and gas industry managers a better understanding of how to strengthen their organisation's Safety Culture through their own leadership.

"The accident can be said to have flowed from deficient safety culture, not only at the Chernobyl plant, but throughout the Soviet design, operating and regulatory organisations for nuclear power that existed at the time. Safety culture... requires total dedication, which at nuclear power plants is primarily generated by the attitudes of managers of organisations involved in their development and operation (p. 23)."

(IAEA, 1992)

"NASA safety culture has become reactive, complacent, and dominated by unjustified optimism. Over time, slowly and unintentionally, independent checks and balances intended to increase safety have been eroded in favour of detailed processes that produce massive amounts of data and unwarranted consensus, but little effective communication (p.180)."

(Columbia Accident Investigation Board, 2003)

"Government oversight must be accompanied by the oil and gas industry's internal reinvention: sweeping reforms that accomplish no less than a fundamental transformation of its safety culture (p.217)..."

"Underscoring the sincerity and depth of their commitment to embracing a new safety culture, company leaders will need to lead the effort to guarantee that risk management improves throughout the industry to ensure that the mistakes made at the Macondo well are not repeated (p. 247)."

(National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011)

2. What is Safety Culture?

Deal and Kennedy provide a succinct and simple definition of culture as “the way things get done around here” (1982). A company’s culture can be displayed through clear high-profile documents, that is, those designed to create an external image such as a mission statement, HSE policy, or annual report showing improvements in HSE performance. However, an organisational culture is really demonstrated by what actually goes on inside an organisation to get the work done. “The way things get done around here” means shared practices and communications, things we can actually see. Underneath lie more abstract characteristics of culture: values, beliefs, ideologies and assumptions, both questioned and unquestioned, conscious and unconscious. These shared internal characteristics of how an organisation gets things done can often be difficult for those inside it to name or recognise.

A positive Safety Culture is a culture in which safety plays a very important role and is a core value for those who work for the organisation. This contrasts with organisations in which safety concerns are treated as marginal or an irritating diversion from the real business. Building a Safety Culture is a complex process, which is influenced by a number of factors, for example:

- leadership commitment to safety;
- employee involvement and motivation;
- employee values, beliefs, assumptions (affected by the national or geographical culture of the workforce);
- employee perceptions of safety at their workplace (safety climate);
- myths and stories;
- policies and procedures;
- supervisor priorities;

- responsibilities and accountability;
- production and bottom line pressures versus quality issues; and
- actions, or lack of action, to correct unsafe behaviours and unsafe conditions.

In a strong positive Safety Culture everyone feels responsible for safety and pursues it on a daily basis; employees go beyond “the call of duty” to identify unsafe conditions and behaviours, and are comfortable intervening to correct them. For instance, in a strong Safety Culture any worker would feel comfortable walking up to the plant manager or CEO and talking about safety concerns. This type of behaviour would not be viewed as over-zealous but would be valued by the organisation and rewarded. Likewise, co-workers would routinely look out for one another and point out unsafe behaviours to each other without any fear of retribution.

Advantages often associated with a strong Safety Culture include: few at-risk behaviours, low incident rates, low turn-over of personnel, low absenteeism rates, and high productivity. Such organisations usually excel in all aspects of their business.

Creating a strong and sustainable Safety Culture takes time and effort; it is typically a multi-year process. A series of continuous process improvement steps can be followed to create a culture where leadership and employee commitment to safety are valued as an integral part of daily operations (see for example OGP, 2010).

Safety Culture is, however, fragile. Many years of effort can be negated by a wrong message.

3. Elements of a Safety Culture

This section provides guidance on five elements that contribute to the development of a strong Safety Culture. These elements, which help to describe what a Safety Culture looks like, are discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

A strong Safety Culture is:

- **An informed culture** – the organisation collects and analyses relevant data to stay informed of its safety performance.
- **A reporting culture** – people are confident they can report safety concerns without fear of blame.
- **A learning culture** – the organisation learns from its mistakes and makes changes to unsafe conditions.
- **A flexible culture** – the organisation is able to reconfigure the chain of command if faced by a dynamic and demanding task environment.
- **A just culture** – people understand the boundary between behaviours considered acceptable and unacceptable. Unacceptable behaviours are dealt with in a consistent, just and fair manner.

(adapted from Reason, 1998)



3.1 Elements of a Safety Culture: Staying Informed

Staying informed helps to prevent complacency in the absence of incidents. Safe organisations are constantly aware that something could go wrong. Indeed, safety is frequently defined as the lack of bad events. It is often invisible in the sense that safe outcomes do not deviate from the expected, and so there is nothing to 'capture the attention'. If people see nothing, they presume that nothing is happening, and that nothing will continue to happen should they continue to act as before. This is misleading, as effort is required to create consistently safe outcomes.

Therefore, in the absence of frequent bad events, and in an effort to promote and sustain awareness and a sense of *chronic unease*, an organisation should create an information system that collects, analyses and shares information about the human, technical, organisational and environmental factors that determine the safety of the system as a whole. This is not simply a matter of reporting injuries and near misses.

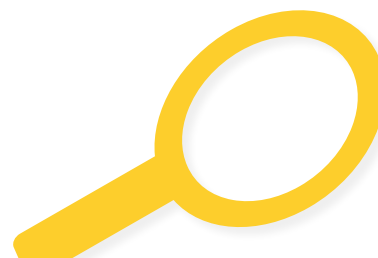
The issue is more complex:

"studies of accidents, both major and minor, routinely show that there was information available prior to the incident which, had it been reported and analysed, would have enabled the incident to be averted. In short, there are always warning signs, weak signals. The organisations which are most committed to incident prevention recognise this fact and put a great deal of energy into collecting this information. Employees in such cultures are also encouraged to report unsafe conditions, hazards, ineffective procedures, process upsets, certain kinds of alarms and so on, in short, anything that could potentially lead to an unwanted outcome" (Hopkins, 2006, p. 4).

It is also important to exercise caution when simplifying the collected data for processing and making decisions, "simplification means discarding some information as unimportant or irrelevant. But this is inherently dangerous, for the discarded information may be the very information necessary to avert disaster" (Hopkins, 2002, p. 9).

-
- Organisations with a strong safety culture are reluctant to discard information and are attentive to weak signals that something may go wrong.
 - The leaders in organisations with a strong safety culture step away from focusing on a strategic "helicopter view" only and want to know more details about the operations. The workforce is encouraged to observe and to report weak symptoms of a potential for a bad event.
 - Organisations with a strong safety culture employ more people "whose job is to explore complexity and to double check on claims of competency and of success".
 - Cost cutting organisations regard such people as redundant and work on the assumption that redundancy is the enemy of efficiency.
 - Mindful organisations treat redundancy as vital for the collection and interpretation of information, which is necessary to avert disaster.

Adapted from Hopkins (2002)



3.2 Elements of a Safety Culture: Reporting

Organisations in high-risk industries are increasingly embracing the potential to learn through incident reporting and investigation. Reluctance to acknowledge and discuss incidents is likely to result in missed opportunities to avert future disasters, and may be interpreted as a sign that production is valued over safety.

A proactive approach to managing safety recognises the value of knowing what is going on inside the organisation. The continuous flow of incident reports, near misses and observations of unsafe conditions can provide indispensable information in understanding the boundaries of safe performance and implementing corrective actions for safety critical deficiencies. But to be effective, a reporting system must be easily accessible and easy to use.

Under-reporting can occur when the means of reporting are too cumbersome and time consuming or there is a lack of trust between different layers in the organisation. While the building of trust should be pursued, it may be necessary to break this negative cycle by introducing confidential reporting systems where the identity of the reporter is only known by a trusted body, usually in the HSE department.

Furthermore, the value of reporting must be visible through improvement actions, dissemination of lessons learned across the organisation and direct feedback to the reporter. This requires sufficient and competent resources readily available to effectively investigate reported incidents.

As it is not practical to investigate all reported events to the same depth, it may be necessary to prioritise.

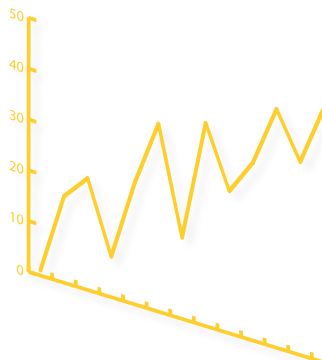
The following parameters should be considered:

- **Risk** – assess the potential severity or frequency of the event.
- **Improvement** – identify high potential for improvement.
- **Theme** – are incident types or situations recurring in reported data?

Improving reporting, once appropriate systems are in place, relies on constantly engaging frontline employees to ensure their contribution to the learning and improvement process; it also requires the organisation to build and maintain an atmosphere of mutual trust.

To learn the most from reporting systems and to develop effective remedial actions two aspects must be recognised—these are also an indication of the maturity of the safety culture:

- Ensuring **maximum independence** of the investigation, even though this can be felt as a loss of control by line management.
- **Actively involving line management** in transforming recommendations into actions, and thereby strengthening their 'buy in'. This will also help them realise their role in ensuring safety in the future.



3.3 Elements of a Safety Culture: Learning

A learning culture is a natural extension of a reporting culture, because reports are only effective if an organisation learns from them.

An organisation with a strong learning culture collects information from various sources, distils and applies useful lessons, shares knowledge and follows up on lessons learned by improving processes. A true *learning organisation* seeks opposing views for effective learning opportunities; it is open to bad news, and so information is not simplified or watered down before it is passed to managers. Reports are credible because relationships and reporting systems are based on trust and honesty. Because the organisation visibly responds to reports, employees feel encouraged to report, resulting in an effective reporting culture.

Learning organisations are sensitive to lessons from various sources. One source of information is provided by internal reporting systems and systematic root cause analyses. Another critical source of information is to study incidents external to the organisation. This is particularly important for the prevention of low-frequency high-consequence events, which may never have occurred within the organisation but have occurred within the industry.

True learning organisations employ professional staff whose job it is to analyse information and take advantage of new insights, they:

- Identify problems and lessons;
- Develop plans with local managers to rectify the problems; and
- Implement lessons learned across the entire organisation.

In this way the knowledge is shared and becomes common organisational property, and the lessons are effectively embedded.

Learning organisations also avoid losing critical knowledge when key people leave because they make time to analyse, save, disseminate and build essential knowledge into their improved practices.



3.4 Elements of a Safety Culture: **Flexibility**

As Safety Culture relates to individuals *and* organisations it is both attitudinal and structural. Flexibility in Safety Culture allows an organisation to maintain effective levels of co-ordination and situational awareness in the sense that decision-making processes may vary depending on the urgency of the decision and the expertise of the people involved.

A flexible culture is typified by the ability to change the organisational structure from the conventional hierarchical approach to a flatter operational structure, without losing quality of decision making or drifting from company core values and beliefs. A flexible culture is responsive, it involves and adapts, and focuses on whether people have the right capabilities to be involved in the issues at hand rather than their level within the organisation.

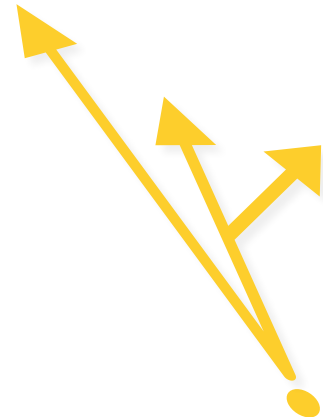
Not only does a flexible culture improve the ability to perceive safety issues and recognise risks earlier, it enables these identified risks to be matched with appropriate actions. A flexible culture is one where the organisation and the people in it are able, encouraged, and recognise the need to adapt quickly and effectively to changing demands. This allows each individual, regardless of their position, to assume an active role in error prevention and incident management, as they know they will be supported by the organisation.

It is crucial that a company recognises the range of skills its employees have and how to use those skills when required. Many people value the opportunity to show their skills to the organisation, which in turn facilitates the organisation's flexible culture.

Organisations seeking to be culturally flexible need to practice their skills, and review actions taken in response to threats and events, to ensure appropriate and effective structural flexibility was used.

A flexible culture is a culture in which an organisation:

- is able to reconfigure themselves in the face of high tempo operations or certain kinds of danger;
- has the ability to rapidly alter its structure, typified by moving from the conventional hierarchical mode to a flatter mode; and
- has the right level of expertise to make assessments and decisions.



3.5 Elements of a Safety Culture: Just

A just culture is a strong enabler for other elements of Safety Culture. Clear expectations, consistent implementation of these rules, and fair and balanced investigative processes and responses to rule breaking and/or errors provides all employees with a strong message about their rights and responsibilities.

Human behaviour can range from gross negligence on one side of the spectrum to voluntary intent to damage on the other; within this range organisational policy-making applies. Outside these boundaries intervention by the judicial system is called for.

It is important to realise that these boundaries can be unclear. Apart from specific issues, such as violence or alcohol abuse, the boundaries are constantly moving as acceptance criteria are continuously re-negotiated. Even for seemingly obvious issues such as substance abuse, the action taken may vary substantially depending on the organisation's view on boundaries between individual and organisational responsibilities. The organisation may choose to discipline and punish substance abuse as an individual shortcoming or see this as an organisational responsibility and choose to rehabilitate and support an employee in difficult circumstances.

However, it is important that the boundaries established are within an organisation are created and communicated with all employees, and are consistently applied.

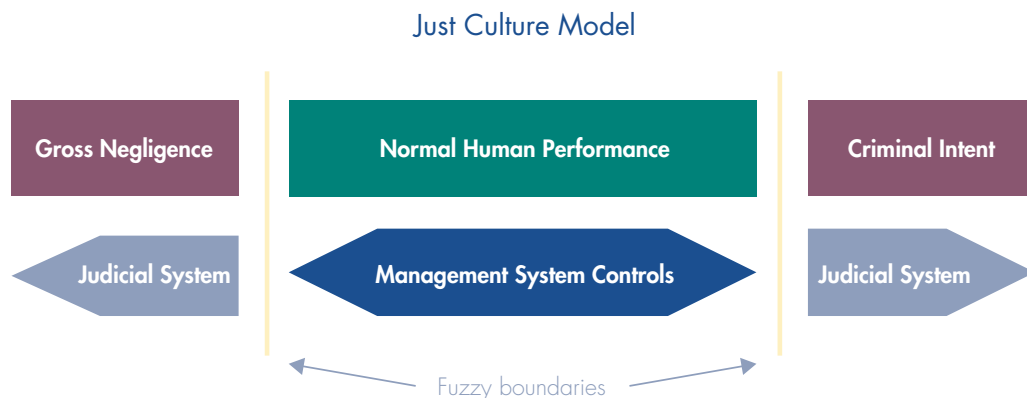


Fig. 1 – Just culture model, adapted from Reason (1997).



4. What is leadership?

A Safety Culture starts with leadership; leadership drives culture, which in turn drives behaviour.

Senior management support of a Safety Culture often starts with providing resources, dedicated safety personnel, safety training and incident investigations. As more time and commitment are devoted, a company may establish safety management systems, set safety objectives and introduce site-level mechanisms (e.g. hazard analysis, behaviour observation and feedback, incentive schemes, action item tracking systems, and safety committees). Further progress toward a strong Safety Culture would be the use of accountability systems, which encourage the recognition that safety is everyone's responsibility and not just the responsibility of the safety department.

Over time the values and beliefs of the organisation will shift focus, from eliminating physical hazards to eliminating work situations prone to human error by building systems that proactively improve workplace conditions to the point where safety becomes a core value of the organisation and an integral part of operations.

An additional ingredient is necessary for this to happen: the Safety Leader. Managers at all levels need to act as Safety Leaders.

Some people naturally demonstrate some of the personality traits we usually associate with a leader. However, this does not mean that everyone else cannot be a Safety Leader. What makes a person recognisable as a leader has more to do with behaviour, than personality.

Leadership that values both production and people has been shown to achieve the best results (Blake & Mouton, 1964) in getting people to perform. In addition to this, to build a strong culture of safety leaders need to apply the following leadership styles:

- **Transactional versus transformational:** To put it simply transactional leaders are managers; they set objectives, monitor performance, and make corrections as needed. Transformational leaders have a vision, and inspire people to go above and beyond their mere self-interest to achieve it (Nanus, 1992). While Safety Leaders need transactional skills, without any transformational skills they cannot generate employee engagement.
- **Situational and contextual** (Hersey & Blanchard, 2001): Good leaders adapt their style to the situation at the time, and to the context the organisation is operating in (branch of industry, country and so on). This is also true for a Safety Leader.

5. Safety Leadership Characteristics

According to T.R. Krause (2005), there are seven key safety leadership characteristics and associated behaviours that can influence Safety Culture:

- **Credibility** – what leaders say is consistent with what they do.
- **Action orientation** – leaders act to address unsafe conditions.
- **Vision** – leaders paint a picture for safety excellence within the organisation.
- **Accountability** – leaders ensure employees take accountability for safety-critical activities.
- **Communication** – the way leaders communicate about safety creates and maintains the Safety Culture of the organisation.
- **Collaboration** – leaders who encourage active employee participation in resolving safety issues promote employee ownership of those issues.
- **Feedback and recognition** – recognition that is *soon*, *certain* and *positive* encourages safe behaviour.

5.1 Leadership characteristics: Credibility

Credibility can be viewed as a quality a person might attribute to another after observing their behaviour. Leaders begin developing trust by acting in ways that provide benefits to their employees. A leader's competence alone, while necessary to enabling the development of trust, does not result in trustworthiness. Trust is extremely difficult to gain and very fragile; once lost it can be hard to recover.

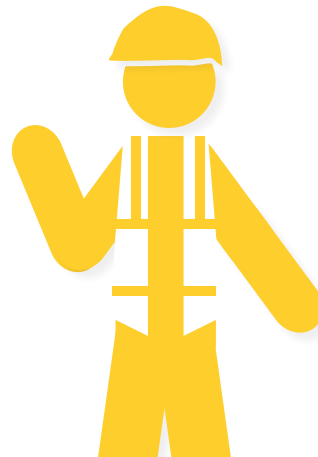
Leadership characteristics that influence the perception of trustworthiness include:

- consistency
- integrity
- sharing of control
- open communication
- ability to admit mistakes

Strong Safety Leaders have a high level of credibility, people believe what they say and trust them to tell the truth, even if it is unpopular or unlikely to be well received. Their actions are seen and perceived by others to be consistent with what they say.

Some behaviours related to trustworthiness:

- Admitting mistakes to self and others.
- Treating others with respect and dignity.
- Representing and supporting the interests of the group.
- Giving honest information about safety performance, even if it is not well received.
- Asking for ideas on how to improve performance.
- Following through on commitments.
- Acting consistently in any setting and applying safety standards.
- Being willing to make safety related decisions that are unpopular.
- Demonstrating personal concern for well-being of employees, contractors, neighbours etc.

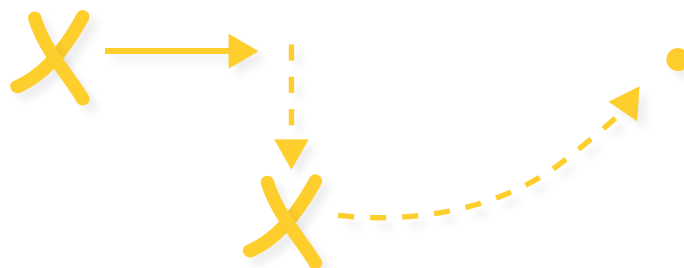


5.2 Leadership characteristics: **Action Orientation**

Some behaviours related to action-orientation:

- Integrating safety into business planning and decision making, and challenging business decisions that may negatively impact upon risks now or in the future.
- Intervening during day-to-day activities whenever safety requirements may not be met.
- Knowing the significant operational hazards and how they are being managed.
- Leading or actively participating in safety meetings, audits, incident investigations and incident investigation reviews, programs and campaigns.
- Acting as a role model for reporting safety issues and near-misses.
- Actively sharing lessons learned, following up on closing actions, and verifying effective implementation.
- Creating opportunities to talk to employees and contractors about safety rules and their concerns.
- Making visible worksite visits to stay informed about the reality at the worksite level.
- Supporting employees and contractors in their obligation to stop work when safety risk is considered unacceptable.

A leader's role is not only to direct work and monitor compliance with rules and regulations. A leader encourages suggestions, motivates their staff and engages with the workforce to solve safety issues. Leaders must be proactive rather than reactive in addressing issues and give timely meaningful responses to safety concerns, demonstrating a sense of personal urgency and energy to achieve results.



5.3 Leadership characteristics: Vision

To create a strong Safety Culture in the organisation, management need to be able to “visualise” what excellent safety performance looks like and communicate this vision in a compelling way.

The very essence of leadership is having a vision:

- The vision is the **foundation** on which an organisational strategy is built.
- A vision focuses on an organisational purpose:
What are we here to do?

The vision also reflects the values and the beliefs about how these purposes should be achieved.

Words are used to build a shared vision and to get the message across to other members of the organisation but actions are most important. This includes demonstrating a willingness to consider and accept new ideas, encouraging people to consider the impact of their actions on others, and using the safety vision and values to challenge and inspire people.

Some behaviours related to vision:

- Recognising the gap between the present situation and the vision.
- Taking accountability for the vision through actions.
- Engaging others to relate their daily activities to the vision.
- Articulating the vision clearly and forcefully on every appropriate occasion.



5.4 Leadership characteristics: Accountability

Some behaviours related to accountability:

- Defining and communicating clear safety roles and responsibilities as well as goals & objectives for their employees against established standards of performance.
- Providing adequate resources and tools to support safety performance (physical resources and tools—equipment, materials, workstations, facilities; as well as psychosocial resources—workload, schedules, training, relationships, and leadership).
- Holding employees accountable for safety results, measuring and evaluating performance:
 - Maintaining a strong focus on performance management.
 - Regular reviewing of employees' performance against set goals and follow up on actions.
 - Using informal and formal observation when measuring behaviours at the worksite.
 - Detecting and correcting undesirable behaviours and poor performance early.
- Reinforcing desired performance:
 - Providing constructive feedback to employees on their behaviours and performance. To be effective and increase the frequency of desired behaviours, feedback must happen soon, be certain, significant and sincere.
 - Including behaviours and performance in decisions about performance rewards, recruitment and promotions.
 - Celebrating and rewarding successful safety performance.

The strong Safety Leader establishes an effective accountability system covering every position in the organisation.

The accountable person:

- is the one who assigns the work to the responsible person.
- is the one who is ultimately answerable for the completion of the task by the responsible person.
- must measure and evaluate performance of the responsible person's assigned duties against standards.

Accountability links responsibility to consequences:

Accountability = Responsibility + Evaluation

↓
Consequences

Consequence management should be consistent throughout the organisation, based on facts and careful analysis, rather than personal opinion or feelings.

"...most supervisors today know that they are responsible for safety, and they know what they should be doing, yet they do not do it. Why? Because they usually are not held accountable. That is, they are not measured in safety" (Dan Petersen, 1995).



5.5 Leadership characteristics: Communication

The way leaders communicate helps to create and maintain the Safety Culture of the organisation, and has a noticeable impact on performance. In simple terms, leaders influence the behaviour of their teams by communicating their expectations for safety and then explaining how they and their teams will be held accountable for their behaviour.

Effective communication is a two-way process that involves sending a clear, unambiguous message and obtaining feedback that that message was received and understood.

Most communication in the workplace is operational; a dialogue about daily tasks and whether they have been completed. This type of communication is vital to enable teams and individuals to do their jobs safely.

Leaders also need to communicate the bigger picture, that is, how the team contributes to the overall goals of the organisation.

In order to be effective the leader needs to understand what their team wants from safety communication.



Some behaviours related to communication:

- Clearly explaining what is expected of each individual and how that relates to the wider safety vision and objectives of the organisation. Safety should be communicated as a value, not as a priority to be traded off against cost and schedule.
- Giving regular feedback and coaching on individuals' performance. A leader's timely, honest and constructive feedback enables individuals to improve. The leader can set the boundaries of what is and what is not acceptable risk.
- Recognising individuals and showing appreciation for a job done safely, in order to ensure that the positive behaviour is repeated. Leaders should ask to hear about any concerns or challenges that the individual sees as preventing their safe working, and commit to helping them address those challenges. The leader needs to follow up on that commitment or they risk losing trust.
- Giving feedback to the team on how they are performing against expectations, recognising success, but also addressing areas that are in need of improvement.
- Communicating effectively to help the team understand the safety objectives and the strategy of the organisation, and why it is important that they play their part and work safely.
- Providing opportunities for the team to get involved and gain real ownership of safety challenges and solutions.

Adapted from D'Apris (1999)

5.6 Leadership characteristics: Collaboration

Some behaviours related to collaboration:

- Asking for, listening to, and showing that one values others' views.
- Being open and honest about performance.
- Showing a genuine concern for others' well-being.
- Encouraging the team to discuss safety concerns amongst themselves.



Collaboration simply means working together. Leaders who encourage teamwork, and who ask for, and act upon, others' input in resolving safety issues, create a greater sense of ownership.

A strong Safety Culture is one where people feel naturally motivated to work safely; they do the right thing even when no-one is looking. By encouraging collaboration leaders can help to create a culture that encourages real motivation.

To work safely people need to:

- be capable and competent; they need to know how to do the job and understand the hazards and risks, and the controls in place to prevent harm.
- have clear direction and support, and work in an atmosphere where they feel trusted to take ownership of the task.
- have a sense of community and feel part of a team that looks out for one another.

Collaboration should also operate across departments, for example closer co-operation between maintenance and operations ensures a shared understanding of problems and their solutions. Many incidents have occurred because responsibilities have not been clear on job handover, or where it had not been defined who owned a task or was responsible for implementing controls. Leaders have a role in encouraging cross-departmental collaboration, bringing teams together and encouraging discussion.

5.7 Leadership characteristics: Feedback & recognition

Providing feedback and recognition for individuals and teams is a powerful tool for encouraging safe behaviour (and discouraging unsafe behaviour) and building a stronger Safety Culture. People need regular feedback and coaching on their performance. Timely, honest and constructive feedback enables individuals to improve. Giving feedback is not simply telling people what you think of them, this can end up feeling like personal criticism and is very negative; feedback should be based on indisputable facts.

Whilst feedback is best given on a one-to-one basis, recognition can also be public. The individual needs to be able to link the positive aspects of the recognition to the behaviour they have demonstrated, and this works best when it is close to the event (*soon*), and the individual believes that recognition is consistently applied (*certain*). In this context recognition does not mean financial reward schemes, it means leaders being prepared to identify individuals who have demonstrated safe behaviour (e.g. they stopped the job when they thought it unsafe) and to recognise them in front of their peers. Leaders should also recognise team behaviour as this encourages collaboration and team ownership of safety issues (*positive*).

Some behaviours related to feedback and recognition:

- Focusing on the behaviour, simply describing what the person is doing and what has been observed, not faults in the individual.
- Describing the impact that the behaviour has, or could have, on others, and the possible consequence for them, their colleagues or the wider organisation.
- Congratulating people for their safe behaviour.
- Involving people in new and exciting projects.



6. Leadership in operations

Many major incident investigations in recent years have referred to management's lack of focus on and understanding of asset integrity and operating practices as a root cause of the catastrophic personal, environmental and economic losses that ensued.

Operations carried out in the oil and gas industry present many potential risks to people and to the environment, some of which are inherent to the industry. Therefore, it is essential that management is committed to excellence in safety, operational performance and asset integrity as essential tools in preventing incidents.

The best way for leaders to deliver that commitment is through the utilisation of a capable, competent and motivated workforce that consistently executes operational activities built upon sound engineering and technical practices designed to enable safe, secure and environmentally responsible outcomes.

With strong leadership, companies can successfully maintain high standards in asset integrity and operational control.

6.1 Principles for leadership in operations

The primary goal of leadership should be the implementation of a system that ensures both plant and equipment are correctly maintained and operated. Equipment should not fail or be operated in such a way as to cause or substantially contribute to a major incident. The principles that support such a system are that leaders should:

- understand the risks associated with assets under their control.
- understand and validate how work is controlled and performed within those assets.
- learn from incidents, both internal and external to the company, and act appropriately.
- understand which indicators must be measured to ensure they have a full, clear operational picture consistent with the lifecycle of the asset.
- have mechanisms in place that allow operations to be adjusted in response to internal feedback and information from external sources.

6.2 The role of leadership in assessment and improvement

Operations integrity assessments should provide a range and depth of information about asset operability and maintenance. They should also investigate how work is being performed throughout the organisation, from senior leadership through the entire workforce. The process should be carefully assessed to determine if any risk, individual or cumulative, is being correctly and effectively managed in a timely manner.

Measurement should be consistent with unambiguous standards of performance or condition. To assure themselves that any assessment programme is providing the requisite output, leaders should check that the following principles are being clearly demonstrated:

- Operations should be assessed at predetermined frequencies to establish the degree to which operation integrity expectations are met.
- The frequency and scope of assessments should reflect the complexity of the operation, level of risk and performance history.
- Assessments should be conducted by multidisciplinary teams including expertise from outside the business unit.
- Findings from the assessments should be documented, prioritised and resolved in a clear timeframe.
- The effectiveness of the assessment process should be evaluated periodically and findings used to make improvements.

7. The way forward...

The extent of information available on Safety Culture and leadership behaviour can be overwhelming. It is important for each organisation to identify in simple terms, the actions and behaviours that can positively shape an organisation's Safety Culture. This is not an action to be passed on to the HSE department, this is everyone's shared responsibility.

One way to proceed is to consider the following questions with a view to taking the next step towards continual improvement in your own leadership behaviour and shaping the Safety Culture within your organisation.



7.1 How strong is your organisation's Safety Culture?

Having read the information provided in the Safety Culture section of this report, consider the following:

- For each of the five elements, which points most struck you as being key to nurturing a Safety Culture?
- What feedback do you get when you raise these issues with colleagues?
- What factors, actions or established process demonstrate your organisation's (unit/department) Safety Culture?
- How satisfied are you with your organisation's level of maturity and consistent behaviour on those factors you have identified?
- Which factors would be most important to address in an effort to enhance Safety Culture?
- Do you need a formal and objective assessment of the Safety Culture?

This can be done as a survey or interview study. In many cases, however, the information is already available (e.g. in reporting databases, absenteeism and turnover statistics, culture surveys, performance reviews, behavioural safety observations, etc.).



7.2 Know yourself – see yourself as others see you

Having read the information provided in the Leadership section of this report, consider the following:

- Which leadership characteristics do you consider to be particularly important in developing a strong Safety Culture?
- How satisfied are you with your own leadership behaviour?
- What opportunities do you have to visibly show your safety leadership?
- Do you use these opportunities in a consistent manner?
- How can you do more?



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9. Additional resources

OGP report No. 435, *A guide to selecting appropriate tools to improve HSE culture* (2010) provides further information about tools that can be used to improve Health, Safety & Environmental (HSE) performance.

It identifies circumstances where certain tools are unlikely to be effective and may even be counter-productive within a given organisational culture. The identified tools have been analysed relative to the organisational cultures described in the OGP HSE culture ladder. The HSE tools most applicable for an organisation at a particular cultural level are identified and evaluated.

OGP Report 435 is available from:
<http://www.ogp.org.uk/pubs/435.pdf>

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