

Safety Leadership Behaviour Handbook

Introduction

Purpose

This document provides the organisations managers and employees with an understanding of the importance of positive safety leadership. It introduce a set of safety behaviours that all employees, especially those in leadership positions, should exhibit to support development of a strong safety culture and the development of a psychological safe environment.

The organisation is committed to identifying and developing strong leaders. This handbook supports that commitment.

Scope

The document provides advice and information on the following topics:

1. Leadership Commitment and the Core elements of a Safety Culture
2. Leadership Behaviours that you should apply including example scenarios.
3. How leadership behaviours are assessed within the organisation.

Leadership Commitment

Effective safety management starts with the managers at the top providing leadership and commitment to safety. There are of course broader benefits to just safety performance. Strong safety leadership positively influences the organisations business performance as those companies with good safety performance are known to have better economic performance.

Safety leaders consistently demonstrate behaviours that help others achieve the organisation's safety objectives. This is often referred to as ethical leadership. The way that managers behave also influences the culture of the organisation which in turn influences how safe the organisation is. This is because their attitudes and beliefs about safety directly influences how seriously the organisations employees treat safety. Inspiring and motivating employees, mentoring and building trust through demonstrable commitment, will ensure that the safety culture in the organisation supports the effective implementation of safety management.

This ethical approach to leadership is what sets it apart from more straight forward management techniques. Ethical leaders do this also by coaching, showing respect and "living" the values that the organisation promotes. Ethical leaders understand the importance of communication skills and interpersonal relationships and generate trust and respect within the organization.

Safety Culture

The existence of a positive safety culture relies on the present of an atmosphere of trust. The formal documentation of safety and just culture policies within your management system provide the basis for the positive of safety culture but it is how we behave that determines whether an atmosphere of trust exists. An atmosphere of trust also refers to an organisational environment that is psychologically safe. Psychological safety is being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career (Kahn 1990, p. 708). In a psychologically safe environment, employee are encouraged to actively contribute to the delivery of the organisations objectives by speaking up, sharing concerns, questions or ideas.

Safety Culture is formed of different values. The table below represents 5 core values of culture (Ref: Jim Reason, 2000). For there to be an effective safety culture it is recognised these values must be visible within the organisation. The extent to which these values are visible are directly linked to the behaviours of all staff but importantly the leaders in the organisation. All leaders should be aware of these culture values. The safety leadership behaviour framework within this document provides guidance on the type of behaviours that will positively foster an effective safety culture.

Table 1 – Safety Culture Values.

Culture Element	Summary
Informed	Those who manage and operate the system have current knowledge about the human, technical, organisational and environmental factors that determine the safety of the system as a whole.
Flexible	A culture in which an organisation is able to reconfigure themselves in the face of high tempo operations or certain kinds of danger – often shifting from the conventional hierarchical mode to a flatter mode.
Learning	An organisation must possess the willingness and the competence to draw the right conclusions from its safety information system and the will to implement major reforms.
Just	An atmosphere of trust in which people are encouraged (even rewarded) for providing essential information, but in which they are also clear about where the line must be draw between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
Reporting	An organisational climate in which people are prepared to report their errors and near-misses.

Power of Trust

The presence of an atmosphere of trust within any relationship is a key factor in creating a positive safety culture. Trust is the foundation that is required to ensure that all staff feel empowered to contribute to the delivery of safety within the organisation. Within a safety culture based on trust you will see the following benefits;

1. Employees admitting mistakes
2. Increased reporting of events
3. Adherence to procedures
4. Employees challenging behaviours
5. Active participation of subject matter experts

Leadership Behaviour Framework

Attributes of a Safety Leader

Behavioural safety leadership is primarily concerned with what managers do in regard to safety, rather than what is said. Effective leaders encourage all staff at all levels to show their commitment to a safe workplace through their actions as well as their words.

This means that managers are:

1. Keeping their finger on the pulse of safety in their area of responsibility.
2. Observing and having safety conversations with all staff in both formal (e.g. site inspections) and informal (e.g. lunch breaks) settings about their safety experiences.
3. Supporting staff in their roles and achieving their objectives.
4. Ensuring that safety information is communicated effectively within the organisation.
5. Actively participating in safety training activities and chairing safety meetings,
6. Promoting safe working practices within the safety management system.

Leadership Behaviour

The organisation has defined the following leadership behaviours that are promoted in developing and maintaining a positive safety culture. There are many practical ways that managers can demonstrate their safety leadership.

Safety Leadership Behaviour	Description	Example Scenario
Making Safety a focus area.	Actively demonstrate that safety is a high priority alongside other company objectives.	<p>Whilst communicating to staff managers frequently use language that prioritises safety along with other company objectives. "Safety is a priority to me".</p> <p>Safety is last on the agenda at key meetings and is often not discussed because time runs out. "We will get to safety if we have time".</p>
Showing clear and credible commitment to safety	The organisations values are articulated including how these values are important to the organisation and the leaders demonstrate these values on a daily basis and all relationships.	<p>Manager proactively engages with his direct reports and wider team to ask for concerns about safety. "Thank you for that information. I will ensure it is resolved".</p> <p>Manager fails to challenge unsafe behaviours resulting in these behaviours being normal accepted practice. "Nothing went wrong so its fine".</p>
Recognising staff contributions to safety	Always recognise the achievements of staff who improve safety in the business, especially those who voluntarily contribute to safety improvement.	<p>Manager identifies an individual who volunteered in a difficult situation to improve safety. "I would like to give personal thanks to John for his commitment to safety".</p> <p>Manager recognises contribution but does not communicate it to individual or to open forums. "Everyone knows John does a good job so I don't need to say anything".</p>

Safety Leadership Behaviour	Description	Example Scenario
Promote an open culture	Employees should feel that they are able to report issues or concerns without fear of reprisal.	<p>Manager always demonstrate care and concern towards employees and has an open door policy in place where all staff can report issues. "I am available every Thursday at 0930. Please come to my office." Or "I would like to speak with you and your team about your working practices to see where we can improve".</p> <p>Managers provide written opportunity to raise issues. "Please send me an email if you have any concerns". In this situation it is uncommon for staff to respond to this request.</p>
Transparent and open communications	<p>Effective two-way communication is vital for the success of safety leadership. Openly discussing the organisations objectives, why they are important, and the approach to achieving them is vital. This includes candidly discussing the challenges and concerns the organisation faces.</p> <p>Communication is most effective when leaders seek out situations where employee communication occurs for example, during meal times, the car park, in the corridor. Communication should also be regular and using different means in addition to face to face e.g. memos, newsletters, video blogs, distribution of performance reports, or external incident study reports.</p>	<p>Managers tailor their communication to the different communities within the organisation. They use the language of the SMS to reinforce their commitment. "Our approach to safety is based on systems-thinking – where we look to understand the behaviour of the overall system when events occur".</p> <p>Managers use only written communication and it is not a personal message. "Please send an email out to the team and include the investigation report into that recent event."</p>
Actively respond to concerns and improvement opportunities.	Effective leaders should ensure that all concerns and improvements opportunities are responded to in a positive way. This does not mean all items need implementing; a response as to your intention and why is the important factor.	<p>Manager is engaged in the reporting and investigation process and ensures that feedback is always provided to the original reportee. "It's really important to me that we provide feedback to the reporter on the action that we are taking for this concern."</p> <p>Manager is interested in gathering the data but is unsure what to do with the information. "Please ensure that the reportee is notified that we have received his report. There are too many reports to respond so don't worry."</p>

Safety Leadership Behaviour	Description	Example Scenario
Provide opportunity for staff contribution.	Active staff participation in all safety matters is really important to create personal ownership of safety.	<p>Manages promote the involvement of all staff in learning by contributing ideas so improvements can be made. "I am really interesting in hearing from our staff to understand what they believe we need to do to manage safety as it will help us learn and change unsafe acts or unsafe conditions and negative behaviours."</p> <p>Managers are unaware of the importance of staff involvement in safety processes. "I think this is the best course of action, please go ahead and implement this into the operation".</p>
Promote use of documented working practices	Employees should recognise that the most appropriate way to achieve a successful outcome is to follow the published processes and procedure.	<p>Manager discusses importance of following published procedures as part of normal practice. "Did you follow the process?".</p> <p>Manager says that in this case it is ok to not follow the process. "The process is not required right now, we will do the paper work later".</p>

Assessment of Leadership Behaviours in Action

The assessment of how leadership behaviours are demonstrated by the organisations managers is incorporated into standard leadership performance reviews. Organisation managers will be asked to demonstrate how they have contributed to the development of the organisations safety culture through clear examples of behaviour and action.