

CREATING A CULTURE OF

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Culture. Selection. Training. Accountability. Buy-In. If any one of these are missing from an organization, maintaining a successful safety program becomes impossible. Yet, too often, organizations become so caught up in the development of programs or services that safety becomes nothing more than an after-thought. These critical characteristics are viewed as insignificant in the hierarchy of organizational goals. Employees are our most vital resource. Without them, productivity halts and profitability is zero! So, why would we not do everything possible to create a culture that supports a safer environment for them to flourish? You can! It's accomplished through *Culture, Employee Selection, Training and Accountability*.

Culture: At this point, you might be thinking, "Our organization already has a safety program in force." Most organizations typically develop some form of written policies and procedures. However, those policies and procedures are only words on paper. They are ineffective and meaningless without the support and resources dedicated by upper management. Safety "programs" are a great start, but creating a safety "culture" takes time. It's an investment with a rewarding payout over the long run. Merriam-Webster defines "culture" as "beliefs; ways

of life; a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization." This kind of shift has to start from management down. Only then will safety become organically engrained into the everyday work processes and mindset. Without management commitment to this shift, it is certain to fail!

Employee Selection: Does your organization take the "warm body" approach or do you appropriately match each candidate to the position? Many times, organizations are so eager to fill a position, they overlook potential red flags during the selection process. Carefully screen your candidates to make sure they fit your organization's culture. Don't get me wrong: Having the right skills is essential! I get it! But, selecting a candidate who doesn't share your company's mission, ethics or culture can turn out to be a huge FAILURE! Instead, try asking them about the atmospheres of previous workplaces and what they liked or did not like. Be creative with your interview questions and make it a team interview process.

Training: Proper training begins on the first day for new employees and should continue throughout their careers. Training encompasses not only how to perform a job, but also how to perform a job safely. Provide employees with a list of people

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(e.g., safety committee members, management, human resources) they can speak to about safety-related questions and concerns. Consider improving communication through the development of an e-mail inbox specifically for safety issues.

Accountability: Accountability is often equated with punishment, but it doesn't need to be. If we take a positive approach to accountability, we can view it as promoting success. In this type of environment, management leads by example through promoting safe work practices, providing the resources necessary for employees to safely perform their jobs and offering feedback and training.

Buy-In: It's possible to have a well-developed safety "program" that has ZERO buy-in from employees. Without buy-in from your employees, a safety culture is impossible to develop. Engage your employees in the process by forming a safety committee, involving them in the development of safety procedures and asking them for ideas to improve the safety culture. Positive reinforcement

rewards employees for their efforts and commitment to safety. A simple verbal praise or acknowledgement at a staff meeting goes a long way!

With this complete approach to building a culture of safety, an organization can expect improvements in overall productivity, profitability, performance and employee morale. Eventually, safety simply becomes a way of being!



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