Perception is Reality: Assessing Your Safety Culture

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A Little Bit About Me

Academics
business and statistics

Focus on
Performance Measurement

Measurement Areas

Diversity & Inclusion

Training & Development

Safety Culture

Leadership

Employee Engagement

Organizational Culture

Clients
Fortune 1000 Companies

Manufacturing
Insurance

Oil & Gas
Utilities

Technology
Pharma

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“Your organizational culture is by far your most effective safety sustainability mechanism.”

---Shawn M. Galloway, President, ProAct Safety
What Are Common Practices at Your Facility?

- Do you have a **systematic** method to **regularly** assess your culture?
- What methods do you use?
  - Audits by an external entity
  - Location walks
  - Safety statistics
  - Focus groups
  - Plant-wide safety survey
Be Honest, How Do You Feel About Surveys?

- I love them!
- I like them.
- They are OK.
- I don’t care for them.
- I really don’t like them!

If everyone CAN create a survey, then at some point, everyone DOES
What Can We Learn From A Safety Survey?

- Where are we succeeding; where can we improve?
- Do our perceptions match those of our employees?
- What factors most affect our safety culture?
- What attitudes are we unaware of?
What could trigger a safety survey?

I’m starting a new process. I need to take a baseline of where we are. We have improved our safety culture. Are we sustaining new behaviors?

We’ve uncovered issues in our organization, but we don’t have any data to support our gut feel.
Implementing a Safety Survey
What To Consider; Watch Outs

- Considerations
  - Survey design expertise
  - Structured process
  - Focus
  - Employee involvement before and after

- Watch outs
  - Cycle of mistrust
  - Results you may not like or believe
  - Lack coordinated follow-up
The Catch-22 of Safety Culture Surveys

Unhealthy safety culture

Leaders take no action

Employees afraid to be honest

Leaders think everything is fine

Employees ignore survey; alter answers
First, Break The Mistrust Cycle

Before
- Acknowledge concerns
- Commit to privacy
- Create reporting rules

During
- Show you are serious
- Don’t get too personal

After
- Protect confidentiality
- Don’t get defensive
- Celebrate success
- Communicate
- Act on findings
Then Follow a Structured Design Process

- What you want to learn?
- What are your assumptions about behaviors you want to evaluate?
- Who’s perspective is important?
- How do you want to slice and dice the data?
- What qualitative information and insight is important to gather?
Insights from Safety Surveys
Four Important Areas of Learning

1. Differences in manager vs employee viewpoints
2. Desire for manager interaction
3. Involvement in safety improvement projects
4. Trust in the immediate supervisor
1. Managers Opinions About Their Behaviors

- Managers have a high opinion of their own behaviors compared to their employees’ perspectives

  - **Perception:** I’m doing a great job
  
  - **Reality:** your people don’t think you are quite as great as you do

- Gap 25-40% higher manager scores
Two Big Disconnects

Applies Consistent Standards

- Manager: 92%
- Non-Manager: 59%

Treats Employees Fairly / Equitably

- Manager: 98%
- Non-Manager: 69%

So What?
2. Spend More Time On The Floor Observing Work

On the floor at least 3 hours/week

>50% of managers say they do this

20% of employees say their managers do this

So What?
3. Not Engaged in Safety Improvement Activities

17% of employees who indicate they are currently engaged in a volunteer safety activity at their site

So What?

Employees involved in Safety Improvement Projects report:

- 36% more alignment with organizational goals
- 31% greater engagement
4. The Impact of Trust on Safety Perceptions

- “I trust my immediate supervisor to make the right decisions about my health and safety.”
- Employees who scored supervisor trust as 4 or 5 were deemed to have ‘High’ trust in their immediate supervisor.
- Employees who scored supervisor trust as 1, 2 or 3 were deemed to have low trust.
- Employees were segmented into High and Low Trust groups.
Low Supervisor Trust Affects Other Safety Factors

Communications

- High Trust: 71%
- Low Trust: 29%

Compliance

- High Trust: 64%
- Low Trust: 45%

So What?
What Have Leaders Done With These Insights?

- Communicated survey results and committed to actions
- Engaged more employees in safety initiatives
  - Created new programs that addressed critical issues
  - Obsoleted programs that weren’t working
  - Ensured a broad representation of the workforce
- Drove accountability deeper into the organization (action over words)
- Moved ineffective managers into non-managerial roles or provided focused coaching for those who has promise
Call to Action: Two Leadership Discussions

“Do we have a robust method to gather meaningful and honest feedback from our employees about safety?”

“How can survey data help inform our efforts to improve our safety culture?”