

Managing Safety Culture

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Most managers are aware of their problem zones in Safety Culture however; most of them don't know how to improve them.

The higher the level on which a manager is involved in the hierarchy, the more optimistic is his perception of the safety culture of his company. With increasing closeness to production level, this perception gets more and more critical. Senior managers believe that their employees feel as if they were always treated "justly". The lower management doesn't share this view.

Managing safety culture cannot be "remote-controlled" or "engineered". If managers want to influence their safety culture, they must be patient, persistent and continuously working with their people in the shop floor. Only familiarity creates that sort of trust between managers and staff that allows a slow change of culture to evolve.

La mayoría de los directivos son conscientes de las zonas problemáticas en su Cultura de Seguridad, sin embargo la mayoría no sabe como mejorarlas.

Cuanto más alto el nivel de un directivo en la jerarquía, más optimista será su percepción de la cultura de seguridad en su compañía. Al aproximarse al nivel de producción, esta percepción se vuelve cada vez más crítica. La alta dirección cree que sus empleados piensan que siempre han sido tratados "justamente". La dirección inferior no comparte este punto de vista.

La gestión de la cultura de seguridad no se puede realizar mediante el "control remoto" o la "ingeniería". Si los directivos quieren influir en su cultura de seguridad, deben ser pacientes y perseverantes y trabajar continuamente con su personal a nivel de taller. Solo la familiaridad puede crear ese tipo de confianza entre directivos y personal que permite un gradual cambio de la cultura.

INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTION OF THE "SAFETY CULTURE" IN AN ORGANISATION

Safety Culture became one of the big buzz-words in the Nuclear Industry. Improving Safety Culture is often requested after reviews, events or just as a management initiative. Substandard Safety Culture is neither tolerated by the international nuclear community nor by the regulators. But what does that mean? Improving Safety Culture means changing "something" to a better one than it was before. The question is then – how to change safety culture? Confronted with this request management goes out and asks the staff: "Change" or "Love the

Change"; "Be a Change Manager". Wave after wave of change roll over the organisations, more and more Management-Methods shall accelerate the change.

A little truth is in all of these initiatives. But rarely the effort is effecting the way how the work is done in the field. Mostly the change is not sustainable. It simply does not work like that. The corporate central-locking system happily shock-absorbs one initiative after the other one and puts it aside. In an organisation new values are not born from new words. Helpless managers transform the lament into an accusation: "Change would be very easy without all the damned people".

Safety Culture cannot be engineered. Nothing sustainable comes fast. If a change request is not in line with people's values, it will fail independent of how important, timely and clever it is. People will not refuse to agree but the existing culture will creep into every detail of the execution of the new action making it ineffective. Change is something very personal. It determines our well-being, our status, our fun at work. People have there very individual points of view, of what Safety Culture is, of what part of it will work for them and what will not.

In order to study the subjective perceptions of their own culture, more than 200 managers in European risk