

SAFETY LEADERSHIP

The most important quality people look for and admire in a leader is personal credibility. Credibility is the foundation of leadership. If we do not believe in the messenger we will not believe the message. And what is credibility behaviourally?. The most frequent response is “Do what you say you will do.”, or “DWYSYWD” for short.

Leaders must be clear about their beliefs. They must know what they stand for. Then they must put what they say into practice, they must act on their beliefs.

Quotable Quote

“The people are fashioned according to the example of their king and edicts are less powerful than the life (example) of the king” *Claudian, c. 365, Egyptian epic poet*

Leaders must build trust

Introducing OHS change inevitably upsets the established order in organizations and forces people to question their existing role in the organization. Often people will be asked to do something that is different from the norm and to do that which they do not agree with. Persons introducing and leading OHS change must ensure they are trusted by those they are seeking to join them in the OHS change journey.

The above is adapted from Johnson D. W. “Reaching Out” (1990) . This text is recommended reading for those involved in safety change and leadership.

<u>Employer gives</u>	<u>Workers give</u>
Pride in Company	Trust
Loyalty	Support
Unity	Development
Company Growth	Sense of Self-worth

It therefore follows that if the employer gives X then employees give Y

<u>Employer gives</u>	<u>Workers give</u>
Trust	Loyalty
Support	Unity
Development	Growth
Sense of self-worth	Pride

Health and Safety Leadership Specifically

International researchers have argued that leadership is one of the most critical determinants of workplace safety performance. Supported by over two decades of research, their findings indicate that leadership plays an integral role in developing and maintaining the safety climate in an organization.

Benchmark Study on Safety Leadership

Over a 14 month period in 1994 – 1995 BHP Minerals carried out an extensive international safety benchmarking exercise with “best in safety class” companies throughout the world.

25 locations throughout the world participated in the study. An approximate 100 page report on findings is available should anyone wish to refer to it.

The following were recurring themes in the world’s best safety performers.

* = Key factors

1. * Executive management provides the impetus for safety performance. This means that senior management is not only committed to and supports safety, but that it insists on safety performance in a manner that is clearly understood and echoed at all levels.
2. * Management focus is a key to quality safety performance.
3. Existence of a company-wide framework or systematic, standardized approach to safety. The approach has performance standards that receive regular internal and external audits
4. Objectives are set and organizations work towards set targets for implementation of the objectives.
5. Safety personnel report in at the highest level in the organizations. They have mainly an advisory function. Management and supervision drives the safety program not the safety personnel.
6. Effective safety training targeted to identified needs at all levels. Induction training and detailed safety training for supervisors and managers was high on the priority list.

Regular safety meetings were seen as important.
7. Active personal involvement of senior management personnel in the safety program

8. Safety is considered in performance evaluations of all staff
9. Regular, detailed audits of the safety management system
10. Formal approaches to hazard identification and risk analysis, employees were fully involved in this
11. Formal emergency response procedures that were practiced and audited
12. The best in class addressed contractor safety before contractors were allowed on site, they pre-qualified them based on safety and made safety performance a contract condition. Contractors were expected to perform at the same safety level as permanent employees
13. High on the list of the ways the best in class built safety awareness were management participation and leadership, dissemination of information, safety meetings and rewards or recognition of performance
14. Safety is a condition of employment and dismissals occur for non-performance
15. Well-managed rehabilitation programs are in place
16. The best in class use medical examinations and testing to ensure fitness for duty
17. There were Employee Assistance Programs in place
18. There were off the job safety programs
19. There was an emphasis on vehicle / plant maintenance and driver / operator training programs.

20. There were extensive personal protective equipment training, maintenance and audit programs
21. Lock-out procedures were used instead of tag-out
22. Best in class managers and supervisors respond positively to safety issues that are raised
23. Best in class supervisors are responsible for safety auditing, investigating accidents, planned job observations and training
24. All levels in the organization make decisions that reflect the philosophy "Safety first-Production will follow"

It is suggested Safety Management Systems be designed around these benchmarking findings.

Superior leadership, the key to safety

"But in the midst of this turnaround, although we were much improved on safety, we were still having a few lost time accidents. I wanted zero so I decided to give the order that any person could stop any job at any time for safety and that the job would not be re-started until that person was satisfied with the fix. This gave the union personnel the power to make it safe and then they would have no excuse for accidents. Well, the results were nothing short of fantastic.

In a period of 8 months we had stopped all lost time accidents and rarely thereafter even had minor ones. Success and everybody loved it. Convince people that you are serious about safety and they will respond.

Leadership strategy was a very important key to safety, productivity et al. Superior leadership is a strategy to inspire people to do more, dream more and learn more.

Values are the centerpiece of this strategy because employees respect actions which reflect high standards of all good values like industry, fairness, forthrightness, compassion, honesty etc while they disrespect actions reflecting low or negative standards. Actions reflecting high

standards strongly influence employees towards emulating those standards, but the same emulation occurs for actions reflecting low standards.

Listening is the most important leadership skill of this strategy because people cannot be motivated or committed to something if they cannot “put in their 2 cents worth”, when they want and how they want, or if they cannot understand and be in on the decision process which affects them. Of such things is TRUST built”

Tips on how to be a Safety Leader

1. Walk the Talk

Visibly demonstrate safety by your actions, practice what you preach, wear proper protective equipment, employees look to you for example

2. Give Recognition

When you see an employee doing a job safely praise them for it, reward safety every change you get

3. Report All Incidents

Report all incidents no matter how slight, emphasise it is vital to be on the look-out for near-misses, minor mishaps and close calls instead of waiting for an actual injury to occur

4. Follow-Up

If a safety concern has been raised, always perform follow-up and provide feed-back to the employee

5. Ask Questions

Are employees using equipment that has been inspected (hand tools, forklifts, motor vehicles etc.)

Krause (2004) describes what excellent safety leadership looks like

1. Vision

The most senior executive must “see” what safety excellence looks like. The leader must convey his vision in a compelling manner through action.

2. Credibility

When an excellent safety leader says something others believe it and do not question his motives.

3. Collaboration

Collaboration encompasses working well with others encouraging input, helping others, expressing confidence in others support others decisions and gaining commitment.

4. Feedback and Recognition

An excellent safety leader provides effective feedback and recognizes people for their accomplishments.

5. Accountability

An excellent safety leader gives workers a fair appraisal of safety efforts and results, clearly communicates peoples roles in safety and fosters the sense that people are responsible for the level of safety in their organizational unit.

6. Communication

As a great communicator the leader encourages people to deliver honest, complete information about safety (even if unfavourable) keeps people informed and communicates frequently and effectively up, down and across the organization.

7. Values safety

An excellent safety leader acts to support safety values and principles. He leads by example and clearly communicates that safe behaviour is expected.

8. Action-oriented

An excellent safety leader is proactive rather than reactive in addressing safety issues. He gives timely, considered responses to safety concerns, demonstrates a sense of personal energy and urgency to achieve safety results and demonstrates a performance driven focus by delivering results with speed and excellence.

Emerging challenges in safety leadership

Having an individual who is a great safety leader is one thing, maintaining that leadership after that individual leaves the organization is another thing. Someone much smarter than me said good leaders lead and great leaders develop other leaders.

Much is spoken about developing leadership, an equal amount of effort must be expended on developing "followership".

Readers may please note that D. L. Shah Trust brings out two e-journals on a fortnightly basis. These are mailed to those persons or institutions who are desirous of receiving them:

These two e-journals are:

1. Safety Info
2. Quality Info

If you or your friends or colleagues wish to receive these journals, you may send us an email requesting for the same. There is no charge for these journals. Our e-mail address is:

dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in or haritaneja@hotmail.com or dlshahtrust@gmail.com

You can also access these journals on our website: www.dlshahtrust.org

Published by : D. L. Shah Trust,
Bell Building, 2nd Floor,
Sir P. M. Road
Mumbai 400001
email: dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in
Ph: 022-2283 8890
Subscription: Free on request
(soft copy only)

Edited by : Hari K Taneja, Trustee,
D. L. Shah Trust
email: dlshahtrust@gmail.com
TeleFax:022-230 9609
Phone: 022-2309 6529
Subscription: Free on request
(soft copy only)