

Driving a Positive Safety Culture

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ABSTRACT

Improved business outcomes can be achieved by creating a positive safety culture that is driven by shared helpful attitudes and behaviours that support safe production. In organisations with a positive safety culture, people genuinely buy in to safety. They see safety as a personal value and choose to actively follow safety procedures—not because they have to, but because they want to. Relationships are characterised by high trust, mutual respect and a common understanding that safety is a precondition of doing business. This fosters a willingness to go beyond minimum compliance to help others and contribute to organisational safety goals.

But where should organisations begin to create a positive safety culture? This study provides insights into the state of safety culture across industry and highlights learning from organisations with positive safety cultures, as well as the consistent themes identified in organisations with negative safety cultures.

The study contains insights from 21,711 people from 73 organisational sites across nine countries. More than just survey data, the study includes rigorously analysed qualitative data from 597 hours of interviews, 562 hours of focus groups and 155 observations made on the ground.

Within positive safety cultures, we found significantly better performance in safety mission and vision, management safety commitment, within-team safety communication, safety responsibility, and team support for safety. However, when unpacking the data from the 86% of sites operating in a negative safety culture, the key opportunity areas were quality of safety procedures, management safety commitment, internal context, willingness to report incidents and errors, and employee safety performance.

Transforming a safety culture is a big job. But knowing the key drivers of positive and negative safety cultures can help leaders identify opportunity areas within their own business and provide them with an understanding of where to start their journey towards safety citizenship.