Organizational Culture and Safety Culture: Are they one and the same?
"There Ain't No Such Thing as a Safety Culture"

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Mr. Gaden is Deputy Director, Performance Assurance at the Transuranic Waste Processing Center in Oak Ridge, responsible for improving project performance by changing organizational culture and promoting continuous improvement. He has 38 years of experience in the nuclear industry.

Mike has 15 years' experience in commercial nuclear power, having performed technical and human performance tasks for the James A. Fitzpatrick, Dresden, LaSalle, South Texas Project, Comanche Peak, River Bend, and Rancho Seco nuclear power plants. He was the manager for the out-of-core nuclear fuel procurement and planning group for CAPCO, a group of nuclear utilities consisting of Ohio Edison, Toledo Edison, Duquesne Light, the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, and Ohio Power.

Mike has 18 years of experience in the DOE weapons complex at Rocky Flats, Hanford, and Oak Ridge, assessing and improving organizational performance, using ISMS, HPI, SCWE, and VPP processes to improve performance. This experience includes working-level to management-level Operations, Engineering, Maintenance, Nuclear Safety, and Health and Safety. Mr. Gaden has successfully coached and mentored workers, supervisors, managers, and senior managers of organizations ranging in size from ten to fifteen people to several thousand people. He developed the first ISMS program for the Rocky Flats facility (1996-1997) and performed ISMS training for all levels in the organization.

He started his career in nuclear power in the nuclear Navy, serving as an Electronics Technician , as a watch officer, qualified as engineer (*USS Long Beach*, CGN-9), and as a radiological controls officer (*USS Puget Sound*, AD-38).

Mike has a BS in Nuclear Engineering from the University of Oklahoma and an MBA from the University of Houston, with a concentration in organizational behavior.

Organizational Culture? Safety Culture?

An organization's culture has attributes that support good safety attributes, or it doesn't.

Examples:

– If good safety practices require information flow both up and down the chain of command – and if flow up is not a cultural norm in <u>all</u> aspects of the organization – upward information flow won't exist in the safety aspect for very long.

– If employee involvement in planning is not a norm for the organizational culture – employee involvement in safety planning won't last long.

– If employee responsibility for employee actions is not a norm in the organizational culture – then employee responsibility for safety won't last long.

– If clear and agreed-upon expectations for performance are not a norm for the organization – clear and agreed-upon expectations for safety performance won't be a lasting norm, either.

So What?

If the attributes/norms for the organizational culture are not the ones needed for the safety culture, as soon as attention on the safety culture diminishes in the slightest, the safety culture will regress to the organizational culture.

Therefore, changing to a safety culture requires changing the organizational culture. Focusing on just the safety culture does not work. The task is broader, and it takes more effort and focus on the part of the organization, from top to bottom.

That Sounds Harder

- **Changing an organizational culture <u>is</u> hard.**
  - It's like telling proud parents that their baby is ugly
  - The most frequent remark heard from management is:

  "We're pretty good as we are. We're not broken, but you're telling me we have to change."

- **The truth is that to get better, to improve, change is necessary.**
  - Behavior-based change management incorporates changes in behavior, processes, and systems.
  - These changes, if coordinated and designed thoughtfully, can reinforce changes and minimize the time required to change organizational culture.

Behavior-based Change?

- **People in the change business frequently say that behavior is very difficult, if not impossible, to change.**
    - **If that were true, many of us would not have survived beyond our teens!**
- **Behavior <u>can</u> change. To change, adults need to know why (motivation), in what way (<u>from</u> what behavior, <u>to</u> what behavior), and how much (to what degree).**
- **All of these can be taught and explained through the following mechanisms:**
    - Clear expectations about the behaviors and the desired outcomes caused by the behaviors
    - Clear, concise, non-blaming feedback and mentoring about observed behavior, and how the outcomes for undesirable behavior differs from the desired outcomes
    - Experiential training in the desired behaviors and models of the desired behavior, preferably by respected leaders
    - Reward systems aligned for desired behaviors and outcomes
    - Systems and processes that influence behaviors towards those desired, and away from undesirable behaviors

EnergX

That Sounds Easier, But….

- **Culture change is still hard.**

- **Most organizations have systems and processes in place that engage the work force (work planning, pre- and post- job briefs/critiques, *etc*.), but they do not usually have the behavior required to make these systems work well ─ or the rewards systems for reinforcement ─ or the modeling by leaders.**

- **It takes all of these to succeed, plus one more…..**

Clear Expectations for Behavior

Clear Expectations?

- **"But we have clear expectations. We evaluate people on them every year."**

- **Most organizations have expectations, but not for behavior and not very clear. They are usually worded ambiguously, using terminology that means different things to different people.**

  – Example: The word "Communication" means so many different things that it doesn't mean anything specific.

- **How do we develop these behavior-based expectations, then?**

Is this where it gets boring?

- **Maybe.**

- **A sociologist named Rensis Likert set out in the 1940s to understand what factors made companies successful. He succeeded, and after 30 years of research, he published _New Ways of Managing Conflict,_ meaning conflict between workers and managers.**

- **His results form the basis for behavioral expectations.**

- **Likert developed a survey used to determine the developmental stage of an organization's culture. From this can be derived behaviorally-based expectations for a culture capable of sustaining safe practices.**

- **That is, we can use the survey to determine where the organization is culturally, then change what we need to change.**

There's that "change" word again.

- **Yep. Remember we said that to improve, change is necessary. The trick is to change the right things in the right way to accomplish what you want.**

- **The good news is that DOE has some extremely effective methods for changing systems, processes, and culture: Human Performance Improvement (HPI), Voluntary Protection Program (VPP), Safety Conscious Work Environment (SCWE), and ISO 14001.**

- **Using these in conjunction with behavior-based change concepts provides focus on the things that matter most.**

Are we going to learn how?

- **Absolutely.**

- **First, we give the survey that Likert developed to find out where we are culturally.**

- **Then we evaluate <u>where</u> we need to change, in <u>what way</u>, and by <u>how much.</u> We use existing processes (HPI, VPP, SCWE, *etc*.).**

- *The earliest stage of development and sophistication that can support and sustain an inherently safe work environment is the Consultive stage.*

Consultive – what does that mean?

- **Likert's model had four stages of cultural development he called stage 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

- **Through 25-plus years of experience, observation and study, I have concluded that stage three is the first stage capable of supporting an inherently safe work environment. I call it the Consultive stage, to better describe the behavior required.**

- **Here's an example question from the survey to demonstrate what I mean. It's in a category called "Character of communication processes"**
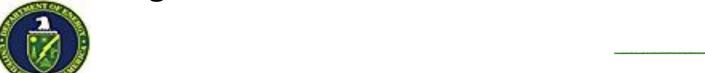
Organizational variables	Item No.	Coercive		Rules & Roles		Consultive		Principled	
Subordinates' feeling of responsibility for initiating accurate upward communication	19	Virtually none		Relatively little, usually communicates "filtered" information and only when requested; may "yes" the boss		Some to moderate degree of responsibility to initiate accurate upward communication		Considerable responsibility felt and much initiative; group communicates all relevant information	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Forces leading to accurate or distorted upward information	20	Powerful forces to distort information and deceive supervisors		Many forces to distort; also forces for honest communication		Occasional forces to distort along with many forces to communicate accurately		Virtually no forces to distort and powerful forces to communicate accurately	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

How many questions are there?

- **Likert developed 49 survey questions distributed through 7 categories:**
  - Leadership processes (5 variables)
  - Character of motivational forces (7 variables)
  - Character of communication processes (14 variables)
  - Character of interaction-influence processes (6 variables)
  - Character of decision-making processes (8 variables)
  - Character of goal-setting or ordering (3 variables)
  - Character of control processes (6 variables)
- **These categories are key to understanding how to change culture**

So how do we proceed?

- **Interestingly, when you ask the survey questions of most or all members of an organization, just asking the questions changes expectations.**

- **The behaviors for the Consultive style are those the organization should set as the standards of behavior.**

- **The Consultive stage(or style) also shows how systems, processes, and policies should be changed in any given organization, after some study and understanding.**

- **By asking the questions, the organization has set itself up to take action about categories that aren't up to the Consultive stage.**

What if we don't know how to take that action?

- **Whatever you do, don't ignore it. If you can't immediately figure out what to do, get help, or give it some time and thought on your own. It is important to be seen to take <u>some</u> action and to keep the organization informed about what you <u>are</u> doing**

- **Engage as much of the organization in finding and implementing solutions as you can. Engaging the workforce, and building teams around solutions to hard issues is a very consultive way to behave.**

- **Learning organizations, continuous improvement organizations, and high reliability organizations all learn and grow from information, even information they don't particularly want to hear –maybe even <u>most usefully</u> from information they don't want to hear. Modeling this behavior is desirable and helpful.**

Now what – what's next?

- **Realistically and honestly evaluate what the results of the survey tell you. Try not to interpret or spin what you get – just deal with it.**

- **Act on things you can act on and study the things you can't act on to figure out what you <u>can</u> do. Some things you learn are too tough to take on at first.**

- **Most people in organizations give management a lot of credit for understanding and <u>trying</u> to improve. Sometimes that's the biggest step you can take.**

- **Ask for help – from outside, from people in the organization, anywhere you can get it! Don't let pride get in the way – after all, improvement is what you're after, whatever it takes.**

Recommendations to EFCOG

- **Change the organizational culture (not just the safety culture) needed to build and sustain the capability to be inherently safe, so that safety is a component of how the organization thinks and behaves.**

- **Integrate HPI, VPP, SCWE, and behavior-based culture change using the Likert model.**

- **Perform pilot surveys in different organizations to gather data on problems encountered and solutions tried.**

- **Develop specific support groups/think tanks for the ideas proffered here.**

Summary – Your moment of Zen

Change is inevitable.
Growth is up to you.