

Improving health and safety in the construction industry through cultural transformation

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Abstract

The construction industry require a different approach to their management of health and safety in the workplace from the functional hierarchical line management approaches adopted to connecting with employees on floor level who are executing projects. The study suggests a cultural transformation approach in creating safety as a value, rather than a priority. Organisations that successfully create high performing committed employees who share the same culture and values that aligned to improving safety performance and reducing potential workplace disasters. Although no universal definition of corporate culture exists, it appears to reflect shared behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, values, organisational goals, functions and procedures. Organisational or corporate culture seems to be the only glue that holds together common values of improving the health and safety performance. Leaders think about the future all the time, they are also responsible constructing a culture in the workplace that promotes safer workplaces and influencing employees to work safer. These principles and characteristics of effective leadership reflect contemporary beliefs and behaviors based on the fact that today's leaders recognise the need to define a vision and mission for success, build trust, share power in effective ways, develop positive relationships, lead by serving first, and build a sense of community within the organisations they support. The ultimate benefit for the employee is that they are actively engaged, engerised, confident about their organisation's health and safety strategy, changes that are occurring, rather than confused and resigned. Employees know what they are supposed to be doing and how that relates to the tasks to that of their colleagues.

Keywords:

Safety culture, cultural transformation, leadership behaviour, and safety performance

Biography

Natalie Skeepers is a seasoned risk, compliance and governance specialist, an independent consultant and motivational speaker and has a wide range of industry experience that stretches across the public and private sector. Natalie has held various senior and executive positions over the last decade. Natalie has also presented safety leadership seminars and conferences locally and abroad, in her field of expertise including at institutions like GIBS, University of Johannesburg, University of Pretoria and Henley Business School. She has two Masters degrees in Health and Safety and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Johannesburg. Natalie serves as a Non Executive Director on the following boards: Rail Safety Regulator, Johannesburg Water, Film and Publication Board and the Construction Industry Development Board's respectively. She holds professional memberships with the American Society for Safety Engineers (ASSE) in the USA and the Institute of Occupational Safety (IOSH) in the UK.