SAFETY THAT GETS MEASURED, GETS MANAGED - SO WHAT ARE YOU MEASURING?

If leadership guru Peter Drucker was correct when he stated: "What gets measured, gets managed" then it is critical we assess what the measures we have in place are attempting to manage.

Is the point of a Lost Time Injury not to have a LTI, or is it to manage the severity of an injury and classification to ensure it does not become an LTI?

Before you scoff, ask yourself: if this is so clear, then why do Safety Professionals spend so much of their time managing classification, rather than addressing the actual cause of the harm?

For those who consider Covey's 7 "Habits of Highly Effective People" to be a simple and effective way to improve performance, you will likely agree with the principles: "*Seek first to understand and then you will be understood*" and "*Start with the end in mind*". So let's apply these principles to the industrial and organisational approach to measuring safety.

Consider the following and ask yourself: "What is the END or point of this measure, and what do we truly learn, understand or do differently as a result of this measure?"

Fatality? Lost time Injury? Medical Treated Injury? Severity rating? Near miss/hits? Safety observations completed?

I often wonder what it would be like if a CEO or Industry Leader changed the approach to measuring safety to consider these proactive principles. A Covey approach may look like the following:

1. All organisations are to report monthly on: the level of safe, positive behaviours encouraged, the investment made, the key actions taken and the capability improvement developed across the organisation relating to safety.

2. Once the means to an END questions have been asked and reported we move to the questions geared at UNDERSTANDING. These measures may sound like the following:

   • How engaged are our employees this month in safety?
   • What did our employees tell us are the biggest risks this month?
   • Has the quality of pre-starts and process safety improved?

3. Then finally measure how well the 'END in mind' was UNDERSTOOD by all.

   • How clear are employees on what is required of them regarding safety this month?
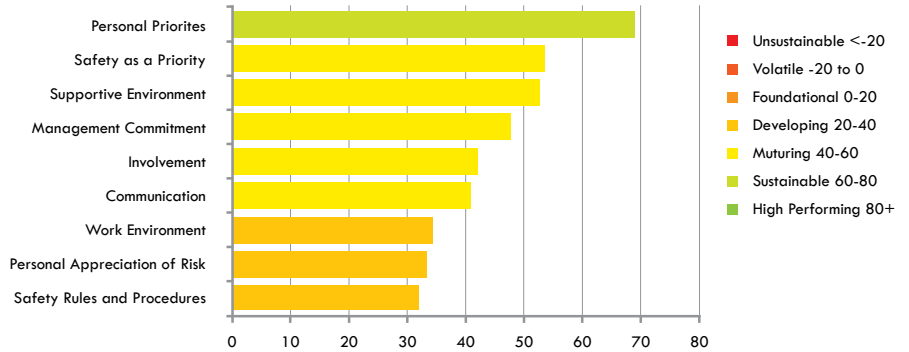
SAFETY CULTURE INDEX DIMENSIONS

• How many solutions or ideas did we receive to reduce or eliminate hazards and risks?
• How many leaders went above and beyond to ensure the safety of themselves and their workmates?

I appreciate such a shift in focus and measures might be difficult, but the question remains: would we learn more from these than we do from current measures?

If you consider feedback from over 14,000 survey responses to the GSI Safety Culture Index compiled in 2014, we see that the lowest performing element of workplace safety culture is the understanding and effectiveness of "Safety Rules and Procedures".

Applying the "seek first to understand and then you will be understood" approach, makes you question how well Australian organisations have checked for understanding on a repeat basis with employees and contractors concerning the meaning, expectation and comprehension of safety rules and procedures. If we don't check for understanding then surely we are reducing the opportunity to be understood!

Put simply, if we are not taking the time to *ask* how our organisations are engaged in safety, and how comfortable they are in meeting the expectations, then we will surely underperform time and time again. Here we may have missed the very risk that delivered an unsafe outcome and only recognised it after the event.

The average Safety Culture Index in Australia now sits at 44.45 (of a possible 100). There is a significant opportunity for every organisation to improve its safety performance through simply engaging with employees and gaining feedback

concerning where the organisation needs to focus on improving safety performance.

The concern is most, if not all, business leaders in Australia could likely tell you the reactive safety performance results. However, ask the same leader if they can tell you how the culture that delivered that result is performing relative to the past/other parts of the business/other organisations and they most likely would not be able to clarify.

The point being, our business leaders are aware of the result but not the cause. They have little visibility or opportunity to seek first to understand, thus missing an opportunity to be understood. Global Safety Index is challenging industry and organisations to begin measuring safety culture and benchmark results at a minimum, to begin to reverse the level of understanding, engagement and delivered safety results.

Over 28 of Australia's leading organisations have adopted this integrated approach to measuring safety culture and safety performance simultaneously, representing the innovators and early adopters. However until we see movement from the silent majority we are likely to continue to see little if any significant shift in workplace safety culture and performance in 2014.
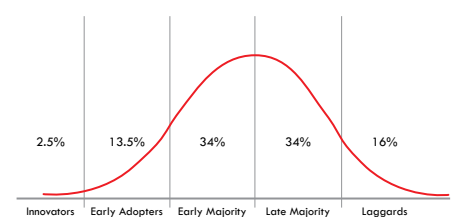
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