Organizational Behavior and Workplace Safety: Changing Safety Culture

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Learning Objectives

• Discuss organizational behavior and its influence on workplace safety

• Define organizational culture and distinguish between safety culture and safety climate

• Describe organizational change including resistance to change and techniques for reducing resistance to change

• Review guidelines for executing a successful organizational culture change

• Participate in case-study exercise examining safety culture change
What is Organizational Behavior?
The Study of Organizational Behavior

- Psychology
- Sociology
- Social Psychology
- Anthropology
- Political Science
Major Goals of Organizational Behavior

- Prediction
- Explanation
- Control
Why is Organizational Behavior Important?
The Hawthorne Studies

- Study of the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company
- Conducted with researchers from Harvard University
- Examined relationship between lighting and productivity
Intervention

- Experimental Group - light was systematically altered

- Control Group
Experimental Group (Actual)
Control Group (Actual)
Experimental Group (Expected)
Control Group (Expected)

Actual Versus Expected Results
for the Experiment and Control Groups

Productivity

High

Low

Amount of Light

High

Low
Hawthorne Effect

- **Hawthorne Effect**: performance improved regardless of working conditions

- Why did the results occur?

- Why is this important to the study of behavior in the workplace (e.g., safety behavior)?

- [www.library.hbs.edu/hc/hawthorne/](http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/hawthorne/)
Reciprocal Model of Safety

Person
Knowledge, skills, abilities,
Motives, Perceptions, Attitudes

Environment
Equipment, Tools,
Machines, Heat/Cold,
Engineering

Behavior
Complying, Coaching, Recognizing,
Communicating, Donning PPE

Context
What is Organizational Culture?
Organizational Culture

- a cognitive framework consisting of attitudes, values, behavioral norms and expectations shared by organizational members
- a system of shared meaning
- relatively stable and exerts strong influence
Learning About Organizational Culture

- Stories
- Rituals
- Language
- Material Symbols
Why is Organizational Culture Important?
Culture’s Role in Organizations

- Sense of Identity
- Commitment to the Mission
- Standards of Behavior
Effects of Organizational Culture

- Organizational Performance
- Length of Employment
- Person/Organization Fit
Culture versus Climate
Organizational Climate versus Organizational Culture

**Climate**: shared perceptions of objective characteristics by organizational members
- tell us **what** happens in an organization

**Culture**: values, customs, and beliefs of an organization
- tells us **why** things happen in a certain way in an organization
Culture, Climate, and Behavior

**Culture** → **Climate** → **Behavioral Connection**

- Assumptions about human nature
- Assumptions about how the world works
- Assumptions about the role of work in life

**Climate**

- Practices
- Procedures
- Rewarded Behaviors

**Behavioral Connection**

- Safe Behavior
Safety Climate

*Perceived relevance of safety to job behavior*

- Safety training programs: taken seriously by employees and are viewed as important prerequisites for successful job performance
- Safety and work pace: higher work pace is viewed as potentially hazardous
- Level of risk: risk perception at the workplace
Safety Climate

*Perceived management attitude toward safety behavior*

- Safety committee: accorded high status
- Safety officer: accorded high status
- Safety behavior: used in promotional decisions and has a positive impact on social status
Positive Safety Culture

- Internally not externally driven
- Proactive rather than Reactive
- Integration of safety into all workplace practices
- Employee’s well-being is given priority over production
- Openness in communication (i.e. responsible learning)
- Causes for incidents and opportunities for improvements sought as interaction of many causal factors
Can Organizational Culture be Changed?
Changing Organizational Culture

Dramatic Crisis

Leadership Turnover

Mergers and Acquisitions

Planned Organizational Change
Change Models
Organizational Change

Lewin’s Three-Step Process

Unfreezing

Changing

Refreezing
Resistance to Change

Individual Level

- Habits
- Fear of the Unknown
- Security
- Economic Factors
- Selective Information Processing
Resistance to Change

Group/Organizational Level

- Group inertia
- Structural inertia
- Threat to existing relationships
- Threat to existing allocations
- Threat to expertise
- Prior unsuccessful change efforts
How do we Reduce Resistance?
Self-initiated (+) vs. Imposed (-) change

Evolutionary (+) vs. Revolutionary (-) change

Additive (+) vs. Subtractive (-) change

Techniques for Reducing Resistance

• Education and Communication
• Participation and Involvement
• Building Support and Commitment
• Reward Constructive Behaviors
• Selecting People who Accept Change
• Manipulation and Coercion
What are the Steps to Creating a Winning Culture?
Creating and Sustaining a Winning Culture

1. Perform a culture audit and set up new expectations
2. Align the team
3. Focus on results and build accountability
4. Manage the drivers of culture
5. Communicate and celebrate
Elements of Successful Organizational Culture Change

• Strong Leader
• Clear Vision of What Needs to be Done
• Communicate the Vision
• Development of New Work Practices
• Organization that is Open to Learn
• Consistency in Practices, Procedures and Reward Behaviors: institutionalize new approaches
Guidelines for Creating Positive Safety Culture

Make employees believe in safety: Start at the top
- Strong leader
- Commitment from management
- Feedback to employees

Communicate safety clearly and effectively: Send signals that safety matters
- Avoid “routine” safety violations
- Get employees involved
Guidelines for Creating Positive Safety Culture (cont.)

Encourage discussion and documentation

- **Good information flow** (open discussions of safety-related issues)
- **Reporting systems**

Search for solutions

- **Examine safety at all levels**
- **Promote different methods**
- **Establish cross-level safety committee**
Prepare through training

- Promote safe behaviors and attitudes
- Endorse importance of safety for effective on-the-job behavior

Visibly reward safety acts and positive changes

- Behavior-based evaluation and reward system
- Establish budget for safety
Workplace Safety at ALCOA: A Case Study
Questions