

EHS Alliance

HSE Leadership



Organizational psychology to enhance Health Safety & Environment Performance

HSE professionals are charged with reducing employee injuries and promoting a strong safety culture within their organizations. To achieve this, they must gather and apply information from many sources, including psychology. In fact, much information has been gleaned from one of the most powerful and proven subdisciplines in psychology, applied behavior analysis. Little existing research in the safety field draws from organizational psychology (OP), however. This is unfortunate because OP has been extensively used in other organizational improvement efforts, such as employee selection, job placement, team building, performance management, executive assessment, leadership, and training (Cascio; Saal and Knight 1995).

To become optimal HSE leaders, HSE professionals should look to OP as a supplement to behavior analysis. This article explains what OP is and examines its impact on safety leadership. The styles and behaviors of optimal HSE leaders are reviewed, as are motivational styles that predict good safety leadership. In addition, specific guidelines to motivate employee safety and guidance on increasing employees' organizational commitment are offered, along with tips for improving organizational HSE culture.



Optimizing Safety Leadership

Despite current trends that encourage managers and executives to stress worker participation and teamwork to tap into human creativity and ingenuity (Saal and Knight 1995); heavy-handed, fear-driven management styles still pervade much of the organizational landscape. The result is low employee morale, high turnover, apathy, low job satisfaction and cynicism. For safety professionals, this can impede implementation and maintenance of sound safety initiatives. Improving leadership skills among safety professionals increases the likelihood of successful implementation of safety improvement efforts, improved safety culture and reduced injuries (Geller and Williams).

Leadership Styles		Legitimate power.	Reward power.	Coercive power.	Expert power.	Referent power.
Consideration. The leader regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers.	Initiation of structure. The leader clearly defines his/her own role and lets followers know what is expected.	Representation. The leader speaks and acts as a representative of the group.	Demand reconciliation. The leader reconciles conflicting organizational demands and reduces disorder in the system.	<p>The following 12 items represent general behavioral categories from more than 1,800 specific leader behaviors originally used in development of the LBDQ. By demonstrating these behaviors, safety professionals can improve organizational safety culture and reduce injuries.</p>		
Tolerance of uncertainty. The leader can tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset.	Persuasiveness. The leader uses persuasion and argument effectively; s/he exhibits strong convictions.	Tolerance of freedom. The leader allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action.	Role retention. The leader actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering leadership to others.			
Predictive accuracy. The leader exhibits foresight and the ability to predict outcomes accurately.	Production emphasis. The leader applies pressure for productive output.	Integration. The leader maintains a closely knit organization; s/he resolves intermember conflict as they arise.	Influence with superiors. The leader maintains cordial relations with superiors, has influence them.			



Gauging Safety Culture

Effective safety leaders strive to improve and track safety culture. One way to do this is to survey employees' perceptions of management and peer support for safety, as well as personal responsibility for safety. By answering these questions, employees provide insight regarding what needs to be addressed.

Management Support for Safety

- Site management is more concerned about keeping injury statistics low than with truly keeping people safe.
- Site management is willing to invest money and effort to improve our safety performance.

Employee Support for Safety

- Employees in my work area caution each other about unsafe behaviors.
- Besides working safely myself, I am willing to do other things to help improve workplace safety.

Personal Responsibility for Safety

- When I see a safety hazard, I am willing to correct it myself if possible.
- I am willing to put forth a little extra effort to improve workplace safety.

Safety Management Systems

- The site uses a consistent procedure for dealing with employees who violate safety rules.
- When asked to perform a new job, I receive enough training to be able to do so safely.

Celebrate Diwali in Eco-Friendly Way.....

Diwali, the festival of lights, is a celebration that marks the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali is celebrated across all communities of India, creating a homogenous environment of goodwill and happiness. It is a time for both gratitude and gaiety. Avoid crackers this Diwali, spend the evening with music, dance, games, and dinner.



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Contact Us
TRAINING
Auditing
Consulting

www.ehsall.in

9643920140

EHS Alliance Services

Plot No A 72

Surya Vihar

Gurugram 122001

