

A culture of safety or a culture of training in safety?

Safety is at the core of many industries. Significant budgets are allocated to safety training in major corporations in the oil and gas industry, mining, transport etc. One death is too many. Accidents can be avoided. The cost of time lost due to incidents considerable.

Safety training is needed, but it does not necessarily create a culture of safety. Cultures are created by behaviours becoming the norm. A culture of safety is not one of well trained (on safety) people but one where safety behaviours are the norm. These two things are not the same.

Safety communication and training usually follows a top-down approach where facts are presented, guidelines and procedures exposed, tasks explained and threats of non compliance declared. It is rational and emotional appeal cascaded down across all information channels of the organisation. It suits 'information' but it does not suit 'behaviours'. Behaviours can't be taught in the same way as a three step process can be explained.

Behaviours spread via imitation of others. Behaviours don't like PowerPoint. Behaviours travel via social copying and emulation, sometimes unconsciously. Training and communications on safety are needed – and major corporations usually have very good educational programmes. But cultures are created outside the classroom and the auditorium, in the day to day life of individuals 'doing things'. Cultures develop – sometimes very fast – by the power of person-to-person influence. The most powerful influence in the organisation is not hierarchical, it is peer-to-peer; it is the conscious or unconscious emulation of 'people like us'. The Health and Safety personnel teach the rules of safety, inspection, safety implementation and improve processes and systems. However, the day to day social copying of good safety behaviours in the work place, plus conversations in the canteen (that is, informal conversations with people one trusts) is what creates a culture of safety in real life.

Viral Change™ is a way to create a fast and sustainable culture of safety which does not rely on the rational understanding of hundreds of people attending safety training workshops. In Viral Change™ we identify a relatively small set of 'non negotiable behaviours' which, when spread

across the organisation, have the power to create a behavioural fabric, a DNA of safety. We also identify a relatively small number of individuals who have high level of influence with peers, who are well connected, and whose behaviours are likely to have an impact on others in a multiplying mode. These people may or may not be in specific layers of management but occupy a variety of jobs across the organisation. We organise both and put together these two components, behaviours and influence, in a well designed format. We let the spread and social infection go, and we back-stage the management of it. We literally engineer an internal social epidemic of safety behaviours which can be observable and measured.

We do not ask to stop the 'push' of the training and development! We do however orchestrate the 'pull' of connected and influent individuals and their role-modelling behaviours who engage with peers in conversations and real life 'doing' and engage others in a viral manner.

Viral Change™ is the only way to shape a culture of safety and maximise the potential and the investment of training and communications.

Viral Change™ LLP is currently leading programmes focused on the creation of a safety culture in the way described above. Using these principles and

methodology, a global Oil and Gas company – which has state of the art, award winning top-down training systems- has engaged us to create a culture of safety virally reaching and engaging 50000 people across the world.

us for more information.

ukoffice@thechalfontproject.com

+44 1494 730999

Visit

www.viralchange.com, www.viralchange.net,

www.thechalfontproject.com



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