

April 2016 – who are your safety leaders?



Ensuring health and safety is a core value in any business is a critical success factor in determining not only the culture of the organisation but its safety performance. The right people with the right attitude are essential in delivering the behaviours that will deliver a positive health and safety culture and great outputs. How do you recruit new people or identify those already within the organisation to develop and nurture the safety leaders that will deliver culture change and great safety performance?

The first thing is to recognise the values and attributes of a great safety leader and more importantly the differences between those of an inspirational safety leader and a good manager:

Managers (transactional leader):

- Exist as part of the organisation hierarchy
- Get things done
- Focus on things and objects
- Directs and coordinates
- Influences through the power of the position in the organisation

Leaders (transformational leader):

- Exerts influence through actions and behaviours
- Creates a vision
- Focuses on people
- People follow willingly (volunteer discretionary effort)
- Builds trust
- Empowers people

There are two key messages from the above:

1. You cannot choose between being a leader or a manager; you need to be both – there needs to be a conscious decision to switch between the two roles in the appropriate circumstance(s)
2. Anyone can be a safety leader. You do not become a safety leader because of the position in the organisation or through gaining promotion!

What does a great safety leader need to do on a daily basis (consistency is critical to driving change)?

- Support your team to be safe (relationships)
- Demonstrating through your behaviour that safety is a core value (passion)
- Demonstrating that your safety values match your actions (high standards delivered consistently)
- Setting clear safety vision and expectations (vision)

The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.

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