Building a Culture of Safety:

How cultural values impact attitudes about risk and safety and what you need to consider to ensure safety in your workplace.
Causes of Workplace Accidents

1. Carelessness
2. Unsafe acts
3. Complacency (having done x so many times before without injury)
4. Being upset/emotional/angry
5. Distractions
6. Recklessness
7. Being afraid to ask questions
8. Etc…
1. Accidents cost money
   • 80% of injuries in the workplace are caused by unsafe acts
   • 20% of injuries in the workplace are caused by unsafe conditions*
   • 64% of US Americans do not think workplace injuries will happen to them*
   • In 2001, (not counting 9/11) 3.9 million US Americans had workplace injuries*

*SOURCE: Missouri Employees Mutual Insurance (MEM)

2. Behavior-based safety is underpinned by cultural values and attitudes
Behavior-based Safety (Cultural Value Name)

Avoiding accidents is improved by:

1. Knowing the job well  (Need for Certainty Orientation)
2. Knowing management’s expectations  (Need for Certainty Orientation)
3. Willingness to speak up/ask questions  (Participative Orientation)
4. Thinking about others  (Group Orientation)
5. Taking time to do it right  (Long Term Orientation)
Consider this...

**POWER DISTANCE:**
A measure of inequality (distance between boss and subordinates)

- Results have shown that craft workers may feel less free to discuss problems/raise issues with their superiors (Hierarchical Orientation)

**TIME ORIENTATION:**
Ability to adapt to new situations...

- The research suggests that the workers who tend toward Long-Term Orientation - and are therefore more safety conscious - are most aware of the inherent tension between completing a task on time and also completing a task safely

**INDIVIDUALISM:**
Degree of integration into groups

- Results have shown that craft workers score with a Group Orientation – which indicates a higher level of care for the safety of those in their group
For Example…

1. If employees’ tendency towards a Hierarchical Orientation is strong:
   - They may respond to their supervisors’ need for timeliness at the expense of safety
   - They may feel too uncomfortable to bring safety issues to the attention of their supervisors

2. If the employees’ are more Group-oriented:
   - They may show concern for the safety of their group members more than employees with an Individual orientation might
Culture: How can we measure differences? What framework can we use?

A look at cultural dimensions...

1. A framework for understanding...
2. Dimensions that help us measure relative differences... and quantify those differences
...is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups.

**INDIVIDUAL ORIENTATION**

*Ties between individuals are loose. People expected to look after themselves and his/her immediate family.*

**GROUP ORIENTATION**

*From birth people are integrated into strong cohesive groups, typically including extended families. They are protected in exchange for loyalty to the group.*
Overview of Demographics

247 surveys included in the research

Gender

- Male: 37%
- Female: 1%
- No response: 6%

Age Group

- 20-24: 10%
- 25-29: 3%
- 30-34: 11%
- 35-39: 13%
- 40-49: 21%
- 50-59: 24%
- 60-64: 9%
- 65 or over: 8%
- Under 20: 1%
Sample Question: The pursuit of individual goals is more important than maintaining harmony and consensus in the workplace.
Culture – Power Distance

...is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.

HIERARCHICAL ORIENTATION

Even better than respect is obedience.
The highest duty is to respect authority.

PARTICIPATIVE ORIENTATION

Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.

The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority.
Sample Question: Employees should tell managers their views even if those views challenge those of the manager.
...is the extent to which members of a culture feel either comfortable or uncomfortable in unstructured situations (such as novel, unknown, surprising, different from the usual situations).

**NEED FOR CERTAINTY**

Certainty is achieved through strict laws, rules, safety and security measures, and beliefs in “absolute Truths.”

**TOLERANCE FOR AMBIGUITY**

Tolerant of differing opinions, try to minimize rules and are philosophical and religious relativists.
Sample Question: One can be a good manager without having precise answers to most of the questions that subordinates may raise about their work.
...distribution of emotional roles between the genders

**ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION**

*Competitive, ambitious, striving to win.*

**QUALITY OF LIFE ORIENTATION**

*Modest, caring, considerate, harmonious behaviors*
Sample Question: Competition between employees makes for a better organization.
Culture – Time Orientation

...deals with society’s ability to adapt to new situations.

**LONG TERM ORIENTATION**

*Truth depends on the situation, context and time. There is a strong propensity to learn from others, save and invest, and have perseverance in achieving results.*

**SHORT TERM ORIENTATION**

*Stresses absolute truths and transfer these to the next generation. Less of a propensity to save for the future. Focus on quick results.*
TIME ORIENTATION
Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Orientation

Sample Question: Tomorrow’s profits are more important than today’s profits.
Research in the energy industry indicates there are two SAFETY dimensions:

1. **CONCERN FOR PERSONAL SAFETY** – Risk Perception

2. **PERCEIVED CONFLICT BETWEEN SAFETY AND RESULTS** - Risk Tolerance
How Different are Other Industries?

- Hospitals/Health Care
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Chemical/Pharmaceutical/Biotech
- Other…?
1. What YOU need to know…
   - Do the attitudes of vendors towards safety (risk perception and risk tolerance) differ from the attitudes of employees?
   - Do the attitudes of craft workers towards safety differ from the attitudes of staff or supervisors?
   - Do the attitudes towards safety differ:
     - From location to location?
     - Across ethnic populations (people from different countries)?
     - Across genders?
     - Across various craft populations?
     - Across educational levels?
     - Across groups with varying longevity with the organization?

2. What do you need to do differently to assure a behavior-based safe work environment?
1. Assess employees’ cultural attitudes
   - Individual/Group Orientation
   - Hierarchical/Participative Orientation
   - Need for Certainty/Tolerance for Ambiguity Orientation
   - Achievement/Quality of Life Orientation
   - Long/Short term orientation
   - Attitudes towards Safety - Risk Perception and Risk Tolerance

2. Conduct “Culture Audits”
   - Review of the existing safety programs
   - Review of performance systems and behavioral competencies
   - Report on implications for
     - Learning and development
     - Managing workers/vendors
     - Focus on behavior-based safety
What’s In It For Organizations?

1. ITAP - identifies alignment between the results/needs of the worker population and
   - Existing safety programs
   - Performance/management approaches
   - Employee communication/messaging (including management behavior as message)
   - Behavioral competencies

2. ITAP - Reports on implications and makes recommendations for improvements to
   - Learning and development
   - Managing workers/vendors
   - Focus on safety