



# Question No. 3 to develop your safety excellence strategy

**W**hat's your rationale? Why is it important now to take a more strategic look at how to transform safety performance and culture? Don't you have other things to do, of greater importance than improving safety? A tongue-in-cheek question, of course, but the rationale needs to be more focused than "Because it is the right thing to do," or, as one oil and gas client stated, "It is our right to operate," and a service-based client said, "It provides a competitive advantage."

In the first question of this framework, you were challenged to determine, with the information currently available, who the customer is right now, whom best you need to serve, and what you currently know about their wants and needs. You had to establish what data you might need to gather to determine how and where to focus your efforts. In question No. 2, an Olympics analogy was shared to prompt you to determine what success would look like in performance (observations of common practice that would explain why the results were received) to ensure confidence in sustainability and forecasting the future.

While your vision should better explain what success looks like, your rationale tests it and explains how and where you can win. Question No. 4, the next article in this series, leverages your rationale to create a story to persuade and align individuals at all levels to buy in, emotionally and logically, and support and act in accordance with the strategy.

One client, as we worked together to map out a timeline of contributing factors that led to their state of performance and culture, realized they had outgrown their strategy. After a billion-dollar investment to bring a new chemical plant on line at the complex, the client came to the realization that the strong culture that existed previously was overtaken by a headcount that had now doubled. Personnel were promoted at a fast rate, and hazard awareness training couldn't keep up with the changing reality and tenure levels. A primary rationale expressed during the workshop was, "We relied on our culture to carry us through. However, we didn't recognize the changes around us, which didn't allow us to keep the safety culture. As a result, our cul-

ture changed, but our methods didn't. We were pretty comfortable for so long, but as changes happened, we didn't recognize what had happened around us."

Your rationale will determine the data you look for. That data will support or sink your initial value-adding hypothesis (the vision), or it may lead you to consider a new and better vision. These additional questions will help you establish your rationale:

- Why is your vision relevant?
- Which data is informing you?
- Is your rationale based on a business case alone?
- How will you engage hearts and minds?
- What might change to make your vision irrelevant?
- How will your vision get buy-in?
- Will your vision make sense within your culture?
- How does your vision minimize resistance to change?

The rationale is likely to be different depending on the identity and role of your customer. For example, investors want to know why they should invest here and

not there. An executive may need to make a case for allocating millions of dollars. Line employees want to know the reasons for redesigning the workplace and expected new behaviors. All stakeholders need explanations. What's your rationale?

Upcoming articles will continue to focus on the remaining questions that must be asked and answered to create your safety excellence strategy.

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