



Cultures of safety excellence don't come in a program

Focusing on safety culture appears to be the next battle to win. It is not. It is the reason you are in the fight in the first place. It took years to create the culture you have today, and change doesn't happen overnight, nor can it be outsourced to an external entity.

Culture is what is common among a

group of people. Unless you are starting a company on day one — bringing a group of peers together for the first time — common elements are, well, already common. As individuals begin to work together, unwritten rules of how things are accomplished and how to get ahead become apparent based on direct experiences and

stories shared by co-workers. Excellent, good or bad, a safety culture has formed.

A new hire into an established organization, regardless of expressed consequences, cannot be expected to immediately understand, appreciate and comply with all the written rules, policies and procedures. This is reality. During onboarding, training and education should occur, coupled with reinforcement of these expectations by their colleagues. As a reinforcer, there should be a timely and consistent balance of consequences for desired and undesired behaviors that, over time, normalize these individuals into “the way we do things around here.” Cultures are a powerful force.

Cultures are also organic. They grow on their own. Although they tend to resist forced change, they do accept and change on their own all the time. The evolution of culture eventually occurs with every corporation, influenced externally and internally as new ways of thinking transform what is valued and how beliefs are acted upon. Though the term “safety culture” is a relatively new concept, its impact on corporations, their strategies and results has always been present.

Culture will always be an important consideration, whether for a brand new company with only a goal to make sure “no one gets hurt” or a corporation long on the journey to safety excellence, with mature safety management systems and a comprehensive multiyear strategic framework. Whether your current focus is meeting basic compliance or becoming the best in your industry in safety performance, you have to align your injury and incident prevention tactics with a culture that will reinforce the efforts in the absence of leaders and sustain gains without formal prompting.

To accomplish this alignment, don't start by assessing your current culture. Rather, begin by crafting a desired future

state. If you had a culture of safety excellence, what would it look like? What would the common beliefs, knowledge, expectations, behaviors, experiences and stories be? What would your results be and why? Only then can you effectively assess the current state. Otherwise, it won't be apparent which gaps to fill or desired commonalities to reinforce.

Achieving a culture of safety excellence occurs when desired beliefs are reinforced at or near the point of decision almost automatically. An employee will expect a certain outcome for taking a desired safety action or putting themselves at risk. When that experience occurs, it will influence the storytelling throughout the workforce that affects future decisions. Programs, speakers and other interventions can certainly challenge the status quo, add new ideas and contribute to the direction of change. True sustainable improvement, however, comes from leaders at all levels purposefully leading.

If you want a culture of safety excellence, don't start your search for a program. Begin first by answering these questions: What would be common when I have a culture of safety excellence in my work area? What am I doing to get us closer to this, and what am I doing to hinder our progress? Everyone is part of the culture and everyone is responsible for improving it.

Shawn M. Galloway is the president of ProAct Safety and co-author of several bestselling books. As a consultant, adviser and keynote speaker, he has helped hundreds of organizations within every major industry internationally achieve and sustain excellence in performance and culture. He is also the host of the highly acclaimed weekly podcast series Safety Culture Excellence®.

For more information, email info@ProActSafety.com or call (936) 273-8700.

WWW.ATECSTEEL.COM

the ATEC

ADVANTAGE

At ATEC Steel, we build precision in the shop and excellence in the field:

- Unmatched API Tank Construction
- Pressure Vessels, Columns & Stacks
- Specialty Steel Fabrication
- Liquid Storage Terminals
- Tank Field Construction
- Tank Inspection, Maintenance & Repair
- Tank Foundations & Painting

1 IN STEEL TANK FABRICATION & CONSTRUCTION

**GET CONNECTED WITH THE UNMATCHED PERFORMANCE OF ATEC STEEL...
THE INDUSTRY LEADERS IN FIELD-WELD TANK & SPECIALTY STEEL CONSTRUCTION!**

At ATEC Steel, it all starts with the right support team. All of our employees have extensive backgrounds in storage tank fabrication, specialty steel fabrication and field construction services.

IN THE SHOP
ATEC manufacturing processes set the benchmark for the highest quality steel fabrication available. With over 100,000 square feet of fabrication space, state-of-the-art fabrication equipment, documented quality control procedures, economies of scale processes and precision manufacturing standards, ATEC Steel stands alone as a premier fabricator in the industry.

IN THE FIELD
ATEC construction services remain unmatched in jobsite safety and quality assurance. Our professional project managers and field supervisors ensure that we respond quickly and precisely to customer requests. Our experience level allows us to expedite project changes and maintain project schedules without delays.

We are a “golden rule” customer service company.

ATEC Steel
1000 W 5th St, Baxter Springs, KS 66713 • 877.457.5352 • www.atecsteel.com • sales@atecsteel.com

**THE #1 SOURCE FOR PORTABLE MACHINING TOOLS
IN THE GULF AND AROUND THE WORLD!**

Houston, TX +1 713 333 0260 & Gonzales, LA +1 225 450 9950

CLIMAX
ESTD 1966
climaxportable.com

**H&S
TOOL**
- ESTD 1975 -
hstool.com