

25 Signs You Have An Awesome Safety Culture

According to OSHA, “Safety cultures consist of shared beliefs, practices, and attitudes that exist at an establishment. Culture is the atmosphere created by those beliefs, attitudes, etc., which shape our behavior.”

By definition, workplace safety culture is difficult to measure. How do you measure values, attitudes and beliefs?

Following are 25 ways to tell whether or not you have an awesome safety culture. If you can answer yes to most of these, you’re doing great. Keep it up!

If not, you have some work to do. Don’t be discouraged – culture change takes time and perseverance. Partner with an expert safety consultant from OECS for guidance.

1. There is visible leadership commitment at all levels of the organization.

Leadership commitment (or lack thereof) to workplace safety will always show. What your organization’s leaders value is typically what gets done. In great safety cultures, leadership proves their commitment to occupational safety through their actions and how they empower others throughout the organization to win with their safety initiatives.

2. All employees throughout the organization exhibit a working knowledge of occupational safety and health topics.

When you value something, it’s worth the time and energy it takes you to excel at it. In great safety cultures, all employees throughout the organization have invested in a working knowledge of health and safety topics. In other words, they’re competent in safety. They know their roles and responsibilities. They know their stuff.

3. There is a clear definition of the desired culture the organization wishes to achieve.

How do you create movement toward the safety culture your organization wishes to achieve? You set a goal. You write it down. You measure where you’re at. You develop a plan to make it happen. It’s a simple strategy, yes, but not simplistic. Make sure you develop a plan that includes a clear definition of what your desired safety culture looks and feels like.

4. There is a lack of competing priorities – safety at work comes in first every time!

Who wins the showdown between production and safety at your organization? Does safety win every time or only when it’s the easy and convenient option? Safety needs to win every time or you’ve developed a toxic culture. It’s that simple.

5. There is visible evidence of a financial investment in health and safety procedures.

Safety slogans are great, but creating a winning safety culture requires resources. Improvements need to be made. Problems need to be solved. If funding a safety project

is a constant battle and there is no evidence of a financial investment in safety, you may have a safety culture issue.

6. Opportunities for improvement are identified and resolved before a problem occurs.

Proactive organizations identify issues before they become costly problems and injuries. Are you passively reacting to every injury? Or are you proactively finding risk factors and putting control measures in place? Workplace safety leaders that are ahead of the curve identify and resolve issues before a more serious problem occurs down the road.

7. There is regular, facility-wide communication on health and safety topics.

Communication, communication, communication. An internal safety communication process increases awareness of safety topics and transfers knowledge to empower your people to be successful.

8. A fair and just discipline system is in place for all employees.

We live in a sowing and reaping world. There are your actions and there are the consequences. Instituting a fair and just discipline system for safety behaviors is a necessary step to follow through on your claim that safety is important to you.

9. There is meaningful involvement in health and safety programs from everyone in the organization.

Safety is everyone's job, and everyone needs to do their job well. From the facility manager to the safety manager to the supervisor to the worker on the floor, it takes a team effort to win at safety. Everyone needs to play a meaningful role in the workplace safety programs.

10. Managers spend an adequate amount of time out on the shop floor, where the people are.

Great safety leaders spend time out where the people are. It's where the real work gets done — the shop floor. It's where you can find problems. It's where you can talk to operators and get their feedback. It's where you'll be seen (and respected) as the safety leader. You have administrative duties, yes. But the great ones get out there and get their hands dirty.

11. Participation rates are at an all-time high, indicating that employees are highly motivated and your marketing of health and safety procedures is effective.

Safety success tends to breed more success. Safety culture is the vehicle that drives this phenomenon. When participation rates are at an all-time high, you've been able to build buzz and positive momentum for your future efforts. *Keep it going.*

12. Employees are actively engaged in health and safety initiatives, producing tangible results for your company.

Are your employees engaged in health and safety programs? Or are they dismissive, leaving you wondering if you're getting through at all? Engaged employees are more productive, giving you tangible results and feedback.

13. Your employees report high job satisfaction due to the company's commitment to their health and well-being.

Employee retention and engagement is a focus point for organizations around the world, and rightfully so. With the skills and talent gap growing wider and wider as Baby Boomers retire, engaging your workforce through excellence in health and safety builds culture. Do this right and you'll find yourself with highly satisfied employees and the safety culture you were striving toward.

14. Occupational safety is the first item on the agenda of every meeting.

Is safety at the top of your agenda sheet? It should be! Either put safety first or send a loud and clear message to everyone at the meeting that you don't truly care.

15. Employees feel comfortable reporting safety issues to their supervisors.

Do your employees feel comfortable reporting a safety issue to supervisors? Or do they feel like they will be ignored or (even worse) punished for coming forward? This is a huge indication of the culture you're molding. Employees should feel encouraged and met with praise when they report safety issues.

16. Regular, detailed safety audits of the company's health and safety programs are conducted by an external auditor.

Great safety leaders are confident enough to be audited by an external auditor. It's one thing to do an internal audit (and pat yourself on the back). It's another thing to bring in an outsider to do an external audit (and meet the challenge head on).

17. Rewards and recognition of good behaviors are regularly given and serve to motivate continued health and safety performance.

Positive behaviors that support safety in the workplace should be awarded, and these awards should motivate continued health and safety performance. You know what employees value but don't get nearly enough? *Recognition of a job well done.* Recognize and reward positive behaviors. The word will get out.

18. Safety is a condition of employment.

Can you really afford an employee who thinks they are above the rules when it comes to workplace safety? Lives are on the line! Safety should be a condition of employment. If your organization values safety above all else, you make safety a fundamental value. Any employee who doesn't share this value should be asked to leave and go work somewhere else.

19. Managers and supervisors respond positively to safety issues that are raised.

Good managers and supervisors understand that when employees raise a safety issue, it's another opportunity for improvement. This opportunity mindset allows them to respond positively to the employee that raised the issue and escalate the issue far enough to get a solution put in place.

20. Occupational safety and health is viewed as an investment, not a cost.

Companies that perform well in safety also perform well in business. Knowing the true value of safety, organizations with a great safety culture view safety as an investment, not a costly and dreaded expenditure. They often bring in safety consulting firms to enhance and strengthen the safety culture.

21. A high standard exists for accurate and detailed reporting of injuries and illnesses – nothing is swept under the rug!

This is a big one. Nothing should be swept under the rug. In great safety cultures, transparency and integrity is the only way to conduct business. This is about living in reality and confronting the challenges that exist in your workplace.

22. There is a concrete definition of what success looks like for your health and safety programs.

How will you know when you've achieved your goals? You'll know because you have set measurable goals and you know exactly what success looks like.

23. The organization has the willpower to make major changes when necessary.

Quick fixes and easy solutions are great. But your organization's willpower will be tested when you need to make a major move. In great safety cultures, good intentions are backed by the willpower to endure major changes, expensive investments, and hard decisions.

24. Safety issues are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner.

Functioning safety programs deal with issues in a timely and efficient manner. Hazards are identified and controls are put in place within a reasonable time period. Knowing injury risks exist and not doing anything about them is a sure sign the organization has become complacent and culture is rapidly deteriorating.

25. All employees throughout the organization are empowered with the necessary resources and authority to find and fix problems as they see them.

Your safety process should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. In order for the people throughout your organization to successfully accomplish their role in the process, they will need resources and authority to make decisions.

Need help with your safety culture? Our safety consultants can perform health and safety risk assessments, create custom workplace safety plans, run employee training, and more. Call us today at 763-417-9599.