

WM2014 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 006: Establishing a Robust Safety Culture through Human Performance Improvement

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Panelists

- **Jim Schildknecht**, *Manager, Lucas Engineering and Management Services, Panel Co-Chair*
- **Tony Umek**, *Vice President, Fluor Government Group, Panel Co-Chair*
- **Mike Williams**, *COO/Chief Fossil Officer, Luminant Power*
- **Grover Hettel**, *Vice President Operations, Energy-Northwest*
- **John McDonald**, *Senior Manager, ESH&Q, Washington River Protection Solutions*

This session focused on the Panelists' personal experiences implementing Human Performance Improvement (HPI) attributes and tools within their respective organizations.

Jim Schildknecht opened the session with an overview of the various definitions of safety culture (derived from INPO, NRC, DOE, INSAG, etc.) and the attributes that are critical to operational excellence. The important factors, which application of HPI can directly support, include alignment of what people say and what they actually do, improving worker behaviors (e.g., situational awareness, acknowledgement of error precursors), establishing a Just Culture, and committing to continuous improvement. He then showed a short video in which a politician demonstrated a lack of accountability for a maritime oil spill, asserting that the event did not reflect a broader condition in the industry.

Tony Umek also summarized the attributes of a strong safety culture, drawing on the various governmental and standards organizations that have published on the subject. He characterized the three aspects of culture that need to be addressed: Artifacts, Values, and Assumptions. He put forward a model for building a strong safety culture from the center ("Ours" – managers, employees, unions) out, since that strong central core of understanding and trust is essential for there to be credibility in the outer circles (e.g., customer and community, Federal government and other regulators, and competitors/third parties/interveners). Tony reviewed the "costs" and "benefits" of using HPI, making a strong case that human error can be a major contributor to those events that can be devastating to an organization or industry (e.g., BP's Deep Water Horizon).

In closing, Tony summarized his personal lessons learned in the implementation of HPI to strengthen operational culture, including the need to consider all inter-relationships in a culture, to understand the "current norms" (that may differ from communicated expectations), and to avoid making critical assumptions – that the inspector found everything, that people will know what to do during an abnormal event, and that people will follow directions. He also recommended approaches to deploying HPI within an organization to increase the likelihood of success: 1) mandatory HPI training for all employees, 2) conduct a Safety Culture Baseline (e.g.,

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National Safety Council), 3) target specific elements of HPI (don't shotgun everything), 4) integrate elements of HPI with what is already working at your site, 5) regularly recognize and publish successes along the journey, and 6) continuously monitor, proactively intervene, and then repeat as necessary.

Mike Williams next discussed the Luminant Power journey in implementing HPI, which has been ongoing for approximately 3 12 years. He characterized the organization as being good, but not as good as they could be, when he began the HPI initiative. Mike established "The Luminant Way" initiative, which focused on zero injuries, more consistent operations (e.g., elimination of errors, learning from events), standardizing best practices, nurturing the continuous improvement culture, and increasing employee engagement. The goal was not an immediate step change – but to continue to get better on a daily basis.

Mike's approach involved (and trained) everyone, but there was specific focus on the role of leadership in implementing HPI; in setting objectives, defining deliverables, and directly engaging the skeptics in the organization in developing and implementing the HPI Plan. Luminant incentivized the implementation of HPI via a calculated performance metric that was heavy on leading indicators (e.g., training participation, management observations conducted), coupled with the lagging indicator related to safety incidents. During implementation, they used subject matter experts as coaches and mentors and institutionalized opportunities (e.g., event fact findings, safety incident calls) for Luminant leaders to model and display HPI/Just Culture attributes and behaviors. The results to date have been impressive; including a 50% decrease in their OSHA/MSHA incident rate. Mike emphasized that making HPI a way of life in an organization's safety culture takes time, leadership commitment, and investment.

Grover Hettel highlighted the reasons behind pursuing the HPI model for the Columbia Generating Station, including that their leaders had not previously been effective at changing employee behaviors or implementing a strong accountability model. After research, Grover's organization took elements from HPI, Steven Covey ("*Principle Centered Leadership*"), and John Kotter ("*Leading Change*") to establish their Operational Excellence Model. Deployment of this model included a 4-hour training model for all personnel, assurance of alignment of the organizational "forcing functions" (e.g., management and planning meetings) with the Model's objectives, and recognition that the desired changes would occur in phases.

The first phase focused on changing behaviors, which required the commitment of both the individuals who made up the workforce and their leaders. The second phase was focused on demonstrating results. Grover noted that, while the organization moved on to the next phase when an acceptable level of performance was achieved, all the phases were considered to be "ongoing." Columbia Station is currently in the third phase of implementation, which is focused on achieving operational excellence. The final phase, when reached, will be focused on sustaining excellence.

John McDonald provided an overview of the HPI Program at WRPS. He outlined the origin of the program from a variety of (evolving) drivers, including DOE G 450.4-1C, Attachment 10. This program focused on institutionalizing HPI attributes into the management and accountability programs of the site, in the hopes that support for the program and its principles

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would not waver with changes to either leadership or corporate governance (e.g., contractor change). They have promulgated a Safety Culture Charter, Facility Behavioral Expectations, and various procedures, including those for Discipline, Event Investigations, Corrective Action Development, and Management Observations.

John highlighted the obstacles to sustaining a focus on HPI within an organization. For example, there is a perception that VPP, ISMS, HPI, BBS, SCWE are all separate and competing initiatives. Implementation can be impacted if there is considerable turnover of contractors, senior leaders, or the subject matter experts they use to implement the HPI program. Early failure to institutionalize HPI into the organization's processes and procedures can lead to false starts if the champions change. It is critical to also embed HPI principles into various aspects of the site's training program. Bottom line, unless senior leadership has the right level of knowledge and appreciation for the benefits of HPI implementation, perceived higher priorities will always prevail and the initiatives may stall.

Summary Conclusions: All of the Panelists emphasized that implementing HPI is a journey, not a destination. They stated that it was critical to avoid the perception among the workforce and leadership that HPI is the "flavor of the month." This is best accomplished by integrating HPI attributes, principles, and tools throughout existing programs (e.g., event fact findings, corrective action development, disciplinary programs). It was noted that the way leaders respond when things go wrong (e.g., looking for latent organizational weakness rather than apportioning blame) is one of the most powerful ways their commitment to HPI is demonstrated to the workforce. Finally, consistent and highly visible top leadership support for the incorporation of HPI principles and tools into the organization's culture (demonstrated by investment of personal time as well as organizational resources) is essential for the workforce to take the concept seriously and begin to embrace it themselves.