

Improving the Safety Culture by Strengthening Leadership Skills – 16563

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ABSTRACT

As a primary contractor for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company (CH2M) is managing a team of approximately 1,400 employees at the Hanford Site in Southeast Washington. The work on this 10-year, \$5.7 billion contract ranges from design and construction to decommissioning and cleanup. In 2013, CH2M began the second half of its contract and expanded its leadership development program to focus on succession planning and strengthening the leadership skills of its employees. The goal is to create and sustain qualified leaders to lead the Hanford cleanup mission today and into the future.

CH2M launched the Leadership Impact Initiative, a training program modeled from best practices used at other CH2M projects, including the Idaho Cleanup Project. Based on the results of a CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company site-wide safety culture survey, the company developed an improvement strategy focused on leadership development with emphasis on the front-line leadership. The strategy stresses core leadership principles and skill development to help managers more effectively engage the workforce. The two-day workshop gives employees the opportunity to build leadership on the job in an audience of their peers. CH2M expanded the workshops to include employees from all levels of the organization, including bargaining unit employees. The workshops are reinforced at quarterly all-manager meetings, communications among team members and regular sharing of lessons learned and experiences in the field.

The Leadership Impact Initiative advances CH2M's vision of quality leadership and project delivery anchored by health and safety performance excellence. Since 2013, CH2M hosted more than 25 Leadership Impact Initiative workshops, reaching approximately 500 participants. Meanwhile, the company achieved the best safety record since the start of its contract, and results from its 2015 safety culture survey show improvements in the safety climate. A DOE assessment of the CH2M worker health and safety culture for the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) found the workshop was a contributing factor to the contractor achieving VPP Star and VPP Star of Excellence Status.

This paper summarizes the strategy behind the leadership development program, the outcomes and its relevance for other companies, particularly those on DOE Environmental Management decommissioning projects.

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, CH2M introduced an organizational development program, referred to as the People Legacy Program, to respond to several business needs:

- To strengthen the leadership skills of its managers and supervisors – a safety culture improvement opportunity identified in the 2012 Safety Conscious Work Environment Survey. The CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company Safety Culture Sustainment Plan developed in response to the survey results stated:

"A review of the data provided insight into developing an overarching improvement strategy with a focus on Leadership Development Framework across our management team, including a particular emphasis on Front Line Leadership. The framework will focus on core leadership principles and skill development designed to enhance managers' skills to more effectively engage with the work force. CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company is developing a Front Line Leadership Training course modeled from best practices used at another CH2M project that will be provided to first line supervisors and other managers as time progresses. CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company is committed to instilling best practices at every point of interface with the workforce and focusing on leadership development of supervisors and managers will be a significant investment in our people."
- To mitigate mounting risks from increased attrition, including:
 - Addressing the issue of a large percentage of the workforce nearing retirement;
 - Attracting and retaining the unique skills and experience needed to safely and compliantly complete its mission; and
 - Ensuring a trained workforce is in place to take on unique challenges of future cleanup across Hanford and the DOE complex

The People Legacy Program has three primary purposes:

1. **Empower the workforce** – provide employees with the skills, tools, and knowledge to pursue personal career/life goals, advancing cleanup at Hanford and across the DOE complex.
2. **Encourage purposeful growth** – plan for continuous and accelerated development of leaders and employees to fill critical positions that will facilitate succession and growth.
3. **Trusted leadership** – focus on developing leaders who earn the trust of our workforce through their actions and values.

The Leadership Impact Initiative program addresses each People Legacy purpose by ensuring a common understanding of CH2M's beliefs, expectations, and values and the ways we expect those values and behaviors to be modeled by our leaders, from

first-line supervisors to the president's office. The workshop then provides participants with varying perspectives and tools to broaden their understanding and capability for dealing with day-to-day issues to align with the corporate beliefs, expectations and values. By taking this approach and instilling these skills and values in our leaders, the culture within CH2M can be one with the critical attributes necessary to allow for a healthy safety culture to exist and thrive.

DESCRIPTION

The Leadership Impact Initiative workshop is a two-day workshop that begins with an inspirational leadership video followed by CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company's chief executive officer sharing his expectations and goals for leaders and employees. The first day of the workshop focuses on leading and managing change, inviting participants to discuss some of challenges and stressors they may face day to day. Participants explore the importance of leadership trustworthiness, communicating effectively and resolving conflicts.

The second day of the workshop covers the characteristics of a high performance team and purposeful leadership – making a positive difference in the lives of employees. A common thread throughout the workshop is "you don't have a title to be a leader" which is intended to send the message that everyone is a leader at some point and having effective leadership skills is crucial to helping an organization to successfully achieve its goals.

Table 1 depicts the modules of the Leadership Impact Workshops and how specific attributes of Safety Conscious Work Environment (SCWE) are incorporated and addressed in the modules. Three of the four primary attributes for continuous improvement of safety culture are reflected in the overall strategy for the workshop.

Table 1. Leadership Impact Workshop Modules: Day 1 and Day 2

CHPRC's ORGANIZATIONAL and SAFETY CLIMATE FACTORS RESPONSE STRATEGY								
CHPRC 2-DAY LEADERSHIP IMPACT INITIATIVE	Climate Survey - Very High Impact Factors							
	1. Open Communication and Environment Free of Retaliation	2. Credibility, Trust, and Reporting Error and Problems	3. Demonstrated Safety Leadership	4. Performance Monitoring Through Multiple Means	5. Management Support (Encouragement to Raise Safety Concerns)	6. Effective Resolution of Reported Problems	7. Staff Recruitment, Selection, Retention, and Development	8. Management Engagement and Time in Field
DAY 1								
Expectations and Goals	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
PLI-Personal Leadership	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Organizational Change			X	X		X	X	X
Leadership Trustworthiness	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Leadership Behaviors	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Communicating Effectively	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Practical Coaching	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Art of Listening	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Conflict Resolution Model	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Thomas Kilman Styles Survey	X	X	X		X	X		X
Tough Day At Work	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Leadership Critical Reflections						X		
DAY 2								
High Performance Teamwork	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
High Performance Scenarios	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Toxic Waste Removal Exercise	X	X		X	X	X		X
Team Challenge/Simulation	X	X	X		X	X		
Mentoring Future Leaders		X	X	X		X	X	
Growing and Developing People	X	X	X	X			X	X
Your Leadership Initiative								
Fulton Back-brief								

DISCUSSION

In response to the 2012 survey results, CH2M established a Safety Culture Sustainment Plan that included commitment to expand leadership development. This includes quarterly executive manager retreats, quarterly all-manager meetings, bench strength monitoring of managers and supervisors, team development and training skills, leadership training for managers and additional supervisory training tools. Key elements of the Sustainment Plan include:

- Leadership Impact Initiative training module, targeting leaders at all levels, including leaders without titles
- Fieldwork Supervisors Initiative, established to continuously improve safety and performance and remove obstacles supervisors often face; and
- Training/workshops built on a model recognizing that SCWE principles are embedded in an organization's safety culture and their organizational culture.

Safety culture improvements help advance the completion of safe, compliant cleanup, ultimately allowing cleanup dollars to be used to accomplish additional cleanup.

Greater leadership and career development training result in better morale, increased skill levels and the development of innovative techniques. In the end, by

maximizing the effectiveness of employees, the entire workforce will benefit in several ways:

- Improved morale –Being trained in leadership techniques leads to positive outcomes that can have an immediate impact on the work environment.
- Motivated employees – Company-sponsored training with direct management involvement shows an interest in the employee and promotes interpersonal relationships which can build loyalty and reduce the chances of employee turnover. The concepts covered in the Leadership Impact Initiative Program are reinforced by senior-level managers demonstrating their commitment to leadership development throughout the two days. The chief executive officer attends the kick-off and participates in discussions at the end of the two days. The executive staff hosts a reception to meet the program participants and observe graduation.
- Increased productivity – Empowering individuals to succeed with new tools results in improved output/throughput. For example, the specific focus of increasing the effectiveness of a first-line supervisor's role is influencing the overall productivity of the entire work team.
- Sharing new ideas – Leadership Impact training is helping the organization become more dynamic with increased levels of teamwork and commitment. The Program provides participants a common vocabulary to express issues with an understanding that there are going to be problems and how those problems can be discussed.

CONCLUSION

While studies show that programs of this nature can take five years or longer to show results, participant feedback and the 2015 Safety Survey results indicate the Leadership Impact Initiative is already successful in improving the safety culture. Scores in all categories (Leadership, Employee Engagement/Involvement and Learning Organization) increased, showing an increase in the overall Safety Climate score. A detailed survey results report is still in development.

The Leadership Impact Initiative in concert with the other programs under the People Legacy Program are expected to show greater employee retention and productivity over the next few years. Improvements realized after that will continue to benefit DOE-RL and, ultimately, the taxpayer.