HOGAN

Safety Report

How to Improve the
Safety Climate
in Your Organization

Safety training can help employees become safer, but if an organization doesn't have insight into how individuals contribute to the safety climate, even the most extensive safety program will deliver limited success. Similarly, when leaders lack a good understanding of the company's level of safety, employees at every level are at risk.

Only organizations that gain a comprehensive view of the safety environment will be able to achieve long-term, sustainable improvement. How does one assess the current safety climate and employees' safety awareness? The first step is to examine the entire enterprise, then administer individual and team safety assessments as well as safety coaching to improve results and engagement.

Personality affects behavior. Is a worker panicky or strong? Defiant or compliant? By focusing on people and not systems, a company can achieve actionable results centered around individual accountability.

A stable safety climate starts with the individual

Traditionally, safety solutions have focused on equipment, videos, and checklists — everything but the actual people who operate the equipment, watch the Occupational Safety and Health Administration videos, and take the safety tests. Workers in high-risk occupations appreciate the role an individual plays in creating a safe environment, says Christopher Duffy, Hogan partner and director of global solutions. "In my work in manufacturing, I've heard workers say, 'I just won't work with that person, because he/she is unsafe' and I've been told by police and firefighters about peers who may be great co-workers, but not the kind of person you'd want for backup." Creating a climate of safety requires organizations to focus on people, not systems.

Individual personality drives behavior, but this is often the forgotten component in safety programs. Fortunately, this crucial component is both measurable and actionable. Rather than purchasing a new safety program or different equipment, organizations will benefit more from working to understand and modify employee behavior and creating an environment in which safety is paramount.

Progress around workplace safety and organizational health will advance more quickly if we divide the topic into three components:

Worker personality - "Most managers have a mental list of the employees who they believe are most likely to cause an accident," says Duffy, who has extensive experience working with chemical refineries and is an expert on the implementation of personality assessments. Research shows that the factors that cause managers to label some workers safe and others high risk can be quantified using a highly reliable personality assessment tool. Insight into predicted attitudes toward safety is invaluable during the hiring process.

A culture of worker engagement - Organizations that involve workers in the process of creating a safety-conscious environment will have much greater success. Craig Pourciau, a partner with SSA Consultants, recalls an accident at an industrial worksite in which a worker fell and was injured because his rope wasn't tied off properly. What concerned and mystified the manager even more than the employee's error was the fact that numerous co-workers saw that the man wasn't tied properly but felt no sense of urgency. "The company's program was working well," Pourciau said. "But the problem is that many safety programs are stuck at 95% efficiency. What they need is a process to address the final 5%." Workers want leaders to be aware of the safety concerns that surround them throughout the workday, and they need to see that everyone, regardless of rank, is an active member of a companywide safety team.

Organizational leadership - Creating and maintaining a holistic safety climate requires leaders to understand perceptions of safety from workers at all levels of the organization. Additionally, management must ensure that safety initiatives are consistent throughout the company. Integrating a safety mindset into the culture extends to the supervision and coaching that management provides with regard to regular work duties, so that safety is a key component of worker development.

Reaching every level of the organization

The far-reaching effects that one employee can have on co-workers, the overall climate, and an entire organization are staggering. Numerous workplace accidents have occurred as the result of individual behavior, but here are a few well-known examples:

A Metrolink commuter train crashed head-on into a Union Pacific freight train in Los Angeles on September 12, 2008. The crash killed 25 people, and wrongful death lawsuits are expected to cost Metrolink $500 million. The cause: The conductor was busy texting.

The Exxon Valdez oil tanker crashed into a reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound on March 24, 1989, spilling 10.8 million gallons of oil, costing Exxon $2.5 billion. The cause: The ship's master left the controls.

A large crane collapsed in Manhattan on March 15, 2008, killing seven and putting several others in critical condition as it smashed into nearby buildings. The rigging contractor and his company have been charged with manslaughter. The cause: Workers are believed to have used inadequate rigging.[1]

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Case Study | Manufacturing

At a small Midwestern manufacturing company, Hogan gathered safety data from 32 assembly-line workers with at least one year of tenure. The workers assembled small appliances, inserting and tightening screws and bolts, aligning appliance components, connecting electrical wires, and inspecting final products for proper use and potential malfunctions. Hogan looked at workers' compensation claims filed over two years.

Hogan compared data for 15 employees who had filed workers' compensation claims with data for 17 employees who had not filed such claims. Based on the assembly-line workers' assessments, Hogan calculated safety scores and compared those in the low-safety group to those in the moderate- and high-safety categories.

Predictor Outcome	Safety Outcome		
	Citation	No Citation	% With Citation
Low Safety Group	10	3	76.92
Moderate + High Safety Group	14	8	63.63

Results, illustrated in the above table, show that 69.23% of individuals in the low-safety group filed workers' compensation claims, compared with only 28.57% of those in the moderate- and high-safety groups. Using the Safety Report to hire only people who scored in the moderate- and high-safety categories would have resulted in a 53.81% decrease in workers' compensation claims.

[1] Baranauckas, C. (2008, March 15). Crane topples in Manhattan, killing at least 4 people. *The New York Times*.
https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/15/nyregion/15cnd-crane.html

Hogan Assessments

Creating a culture of safety

Creating a culture of safety requires a comprehensive approach. Employees need to understand how personality influences behavior and how behavior influences risk. Armed with this knowledge, it's possible for organizations to accurately predict and influence safety behavior. Safety climate awareness should exist at every level of the organization.

Leadership must be dedicated to improving safety beyond simply ensuring compliance. Leadership must also ensure that employees receive feedback about the level of safety within the company. Furthermore, the company must reco nize the importance of regular communication with employees about expectations related to safety issues. Maintaining regular communication concerning company safety also helps to reduce mental stress typically experienced by employees in high-risk work environments.[2]

Managers need to be able to recognize risk-prone employees and should have the necessary tools to coach them. Frontline supervisors can be taught how to give workers performance feedback about risky behavior arising from personality.

Workers who recognize and understand the personality traits that spur their behavior have a much greater ability to control their actions. If workers are aware, for example, that they tend to overestimate their abilities, they know they have to keep the related behaviors in check, which allows for increased vigilance regarding safety concerns. Workers also need to be able to trust that co-workers are safety conscious and aware of their own behavior and potential risks.

The importance of knowing where workers fall on the spectrum of defiant versus compliant — and how to coach them — is no better illustrated than in the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The April 26, 1986, meltdown is considered the deadliest accident in history, and it happened because the power plant's operators defied procedure. Low scorers typically defy authority; high scorers tend to follow rules and guidelines.

Case Study | Freight Transportation

Hogan obtained assessments from 58 truck drivers either prior to or during employment. Hogan used the assessment results compared to reports of at-fault accidents to assign a safety score to each driver. The base rate of accidents for 10 employees in the sample was 17.24%. The remaining 48 employees in the sample had no recorded accidents.

Predictor Outcome	Safety Outcome		
	Accident	No Accident	% With Accident
Low Safety Group	7	12	36.84
Moderate + High Safety Group	3	36	7.69

As the table shows, 36.84% of individuals in the low-safety group had a recorded at-fault accident, compared with only 7.69% of those falling in the moderate- and high-safety categories. If this organization had used the Safety Report to hire only those in the moderate- and high-safety groups, accidents would have been reduced by 79.13%.

[2] Barling, J., Iverson, R., & Kelloway, E. (2003). Accidental outcomes: Attitudinal consequences of workplace injuries. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *8*(1), 74–85.

Hogan's approach

Hogan Assessments created a safety solution in response to requests from clients who wanted to add a safety component to their assessment process.

Hogan Safety Report components are based on the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI), considered the industry standard for measuring personality in relation to job performance. Based on more than 30 years of research and validation, the HPI is the cornerstone of thousands of active selection and development programs across the globe.

A 15-minute assessment scores each participant's personality across the following six safety competencies:

Compliant - High scorers will adhere to organizational guidelines and will be less likely to defy organizational authorities or ignore company rules.

Strong - High scorers will exhibit confidence in their work and will be less likely to make mistakes by panicking under pressure.

Poised - High scorers will display emotional control while working and will be less likely to make mistakes by losing their tempers.

Vigilant - High scorers will remain attentive while performing repetitive tasks and will be less likely to make mistakes because of boredom.

Cautious - High scorers will perform work carefully, avoiding unnecessary risk, and will be less likely to make mistakes by taking excessive risks.

Trainable - High scorers will remain open to new training and development and will be less likely to overestimate their own competence due to arrogance.

Only Hogan's Safety Report enables organizations to understand safety-related competencies. Using Hogan's individual assessments, based on hundreds of client research projects conducted over 30 years, workers and organizations are able to predict and modify unsafe behavior. The Safety Report is made up of three components to build and maintain a culture of safety:

Safety Climate Survey - Provides critical feedback regarding the existing perceptions of safety at all levels of an organization via a companywide safety score.

Hogan Safety Assessment - Examines individual participant scores against the six safety-related personality competencies and provides valuable information for hiring and developing candidates with safe work behaviors.

Safety Coaching Process - Identifies safety-related tendencies within an organizational context, providing leadership with the necessary feedback to build and maintain a culture of safety.

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Conclusion

Companywide awareness of the impact individual behavior can have on overall safety in the workplace is a great foundation to begin building a climate of safety.

In the example of the worker falling because he wasn't tied off correctly, the safety manager felt strongly that the organization's safety program wasn't to blame, but he admitted he was at a loss when it came to individual behavior, according to Pourciau. Organizations don't need another safety program, but they do need a tool to address the missing link in safety programs — worker personality. Hogan's Safety Report fills that gap, taking organizational safety to the next level by giving companies actionable, highly reliable insight into this crucial piece of the safety puzzle.

"We're about looking at culture and climate in an organization and helping them see where we can make immediate improvement, whether it be up-front selecting people who are less likely to have accidents in the future and/or remediating, coaching, and developing current staff," said Duffy. "It's all about strategic self-awareness."

Hogan Assessment Systems is a global personality assessment provider that helps companies select employees, develop leaders, and identify talent. Hogan specializes in identifying high-potential candidates for targeted positions, providing leadership development tools to help emerging leaders realize their full potential, and determining relationships between individual personality characteristics and safety performance. Hogan's assessments can be administered in more than 40 languages and are available on a state-of-the-art platform, giving customers accurate feedback within seconds of completion.

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To learn more about Hogan's Safety solutions, visit peterberry.com.au or email info@peterberry.com.au

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Hogan Assessments

About Peter Berry Consultancy (PBC)

PBC is a multidisciplinary global consulting firm with over 30 years' experience in the delivery of solutions aimed at maximising the potential of individuals, teams, leaders and organisations. We undertake research to support our evidence-based solutions and have a network of partners and distributors globally.

PBC is the Australian and New Zealand distributor of Hogan Assessments and the authors of a range of diagnostics including the Hogan 360 suite, Agile suite, High Performing Team Assessment (HPTA), and co-authored the Hogan Safety Climate Survey.

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