

Learning Principles Workshop

WELCOME

It was a pleasure to be invited to the two day safety workshop at a leading Beverage Manufacturer, to explore more about the organisation's next chapter in their safety journey.

This two-day workshop focused on the learning principles and the transition to a new view of safety; focusing on working together and coming from a position of trust to better understand the blue line.

This was an enjoyable, interactive learning session for delegates with the Group Safety Director sharing some eye opening examples designed to challenge our thought processes, putting the theory into practice including how to set up successful learning teams.

This concept is moving away from traditional safety views, evolving mindsets, focusing on system failures not human ones, not who failed but what failed.

The workshop host shared that we must stop seeing workers as problems to be solved but solutions to be harnessed. Evolving people's mindsets, *"safety is not the absence of accidents but the presence of capacity"*; where the workforce becomes more empowered. They are the problem solvers, operating at the sharp end of production. Therefore, it's imperative to ask the workers what they need, to enable the transfer of knowledge up the chain and implement the right changes and improvements that work for them.

"Safety is not the absence of accidents. Safety is the presence of learning"
-Conklin, 2019

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The first session was focused on the 5 Learning principles highlighted below:

- **People make mistakes**

To destigmatise failure, and focus on being more innovative.

"Mistakes arise directly from the way the mind handles information, not through stupidity or carelessness"

– Edward De Bono

The assumption is that error is a choice, and a lot that goes wrong is due to people not following procedures. The organisation are shifting the paradigm focusing more on the belief that people do not intend to injure themselves, errors are part of the human behaviour. Designing the systems to have multiple layers of control so they can fail safely, testing out defences. Promoting to the company that its natural to fail, it will happen but the business will catch you.

- **Blame fixes nothing**

The assumption is that the worker is the problem, we need to hold people accountable, believing that bias make blame our natural first reaction, but blame will not change the probability of the event. But changing the mindset focusing on opening conversations, telling the story. Discussion on system improvements and forward accountability, discussion increases and discussion on the reactive accountability decreases. The workshop host discussed how blame destroys trust and would prefer to have a cause and effect thought process and start from a position of trust with the workforce; discounting counter factuals.

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"I have never been especially impressed by the heroics of people convinced they are about to change the world. I am more awed by those who struggle to make one small difference."

-Ellen Goodman

The first session was focused on the 5 Learning principles highlighted below:

- **Learning and improving is vital**

The goal is to be less surprised by human error and failure but be more interested in and a lot better at operational learning. Looking at work as imagined vs work as done, working in the space between which gives context to the situation, testing out the capacity of resilience and become masters of the blue line. Putting more effort into understanding the problem ensuring better outcomes to the solution.

- **Context drive behaviours, how to fail safely**

Humans make mistakes, but not intentionally, and companies must have strong systems in place to enable the workforce to fail safely. Procedures are important but they are not sufficient to create a safe working environments, organisations have become complex webs of procedures. It's time to utilise the workforce to tell you what they need to look like, to improve and build more capacity and freedom to harmful failure. Focusing on proactive design, expand lines of questioning from why to when.

- **Response matters**

This is key especially for senior leaders focusing on moving away from reactive behaviour and focus on mindful response. Moving past the traditional view of blame and retribution and to transition towards learning and restoration. To proactively deal with complexity of the situation, giving the workforce the power to ask the right questions coming from acknowledging that you don't know the answer to, removal of confirmation bias.

Focusing on the worker being part of the solution not the problem.

Focusing on listening – learning – then leading.

Book recommendations:

- Simple habits for complex times – Jennifer Govey Berger
- 5 principles of human performance - Todd Conklin
- Better Questions – Todd Conklin
- Manage the unexpected – Welck & Sutcliffe
- The field guide to understanding the unexpected – Sidney Dekker



Workshop Day 2:

On the second day, the workshop host walked us through the best way to create a learning team, how to ask the right questions, delve deeper and how to explore a particular event or task. The host showcased a simple scenario to put our learning from the first day into practice. He shared that when creating a learning team within your business its key to gather a small selection of relevant people across departments, associated with the task you are exploring. This session should take circa 1- 1.5hrs to enable a focused timeslot. It is key for the session leader to ask the right questions which will then form the problem statement. Time to reflect is also important allowing time for the team members to “soak” in the scenario, as further ideas might be highlighted once they have processed the information. Highlighting key problems from the Q&A then creating a “wall of discovery” to highlight the complexity of the problem, creating specific and non-biased problem statements to be shared and highlight areas of improvement or change. This can be then showcased via video or presentation, a visual tool to allow the learning team to successfully tell the story to others.

Looking forward:

The Director and the team are already showcasing this workshop systematically across the other sites within the wider group, which have already been welcomed enthusiastically and received positive feedback. Across the UK sites, they have implemented a program to help people engage with the 4D's and get closer to work as done. Following on from this workshop, it is clear that the workforce now has the knowledge and confidence to start facilitating learning teams. Making respectful enquiries about the blue line so they can improve the workplace and reduce risks.

Feedback/ learning from attendees:

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- “I am now confident in how the business views safety, from the top down and how I can apply it to my daily duties.”
- Not humans, but systems
- Fast vs slow thinking
- Refrain from solution mode but focus on questioning to see the full context of the situation

To discover more about this particular workshop or find out more about our future events please contact:
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