

Context

The summary notes here are based on Gunningham, Neil & Sinclair, Darren (2012) *Working Paper 85 Building Trust: OHS Management in the Mining Industry*, National Research Centre for OHS Regulation, ANU

Extract: We concluded that there is a strong association between low trust and low OHS performance and that a *cluster of characteristics* are strongly associated with a heightened presence of mistrust at lower OHS performing mines. Briefly, these are:

- a catalytic event (as for example where management “cut coal” during a strike)
- a divided workforce (with distinctive and antagonistic groups of workers)
- mixed messages, inconsistent actions (for example where management promotes a “no-blame” culture, then criticises workers when reporting incidents)
- a high turnover of senior mine management (in some cases mines have lost approximately 50% of senior management in a single year)
- closed management style (including a reclusive management team; a lack of communication and consultation, and issues of ownership of safety initiatives)
- underutilised, isolated or ineffectual line management (in particular, crew leaders that are “sandwiched” between workers and management)
- certain organizational structures (in particular, fixed shifts and hierarchical shift management)
- a resentment of corporate intervention (middle managers are increasingly frustrated by additional safety-related paperwork and obligations from corporate safety initiatives).

Two Case Studies

Mine B management was encouraged to disengage with union officials, and attempt to win over the workforce through direct communication. The goal was to undermine the capacity of unions to influence management decisions, whilst building direct links between the workforce and management. In this regard, safety was a key battleground. The mine manager noted:

We took safety away from the union, and had no safety committee for over a year. If you give power to the workers, then unions become superfluous – it’s hard for them to hit you on safety. It is a huge battle to win their hearts and minds – we are just starting down that road... Management at [mine B] has spent more time with the workers. Previously, management didn’t get out of their offices, and let the unions take over. We need to squeeze them out.



Source: unmira.com/photos/resample/002.jpg

In contrast Mine A adopted a more inclusive and cordial relationship with unions and made a point of engaging unions in consultation, even to the extent that this approach might draw the ire of corporate management:

Communication with the workforce is all-important. We got into trouble with [corporate] at one point because they thought we were letting the unions “manage the pits”. But it is not them running it – it is really just consulting with the unions. It is all about enforcing the EBA with their consultation. That way, they will respect your decisions.

In mines where management built trust with trade union officials on OHS issues there was no attempt to shift from secure employment to ‘contingent workers’, there were no radical interventions to remove ‘troublesome’ workers, and no attempt to exclude the union from consultation and decision-making. In short, there was no marginalisation. Trade unions and their members do not want to let go of secure employment, and secure employment is associated with the presence of trust. Contract workers feel less valued than those in stable employment. Research suggests that *‘commitment is higher among employees who believe they are being treated as resources to be developed rather than commodities to be bought and sold’* (Gaertner and Nollen 1989, 987). Workers who know that a ‘new’ mine was born out of a brutal history involving strategic closure and redundancies may feel expendable and

Case Study 4

unvalued, and a failure to consult with trade unions may send similar signals. Where health and safety practices are clearly motivated by genuine concern and respect employees trust management sufficiently to commit to such practices (Barling and Hutchinson 2000, 77).

Report Summary The effectiveness of OHS management systems is heavily dependent upon the culture into which they are received and the presence of mistrust has a potent capacity to undermine them. Indeed building trust is essential to their effectiveness.

How can mining companies and mine sites best build trust? A variety of strategies are closely connected to the establishment of trust and that management ignores these strategies at their peril. While the mining sector may well be at close to one pole of the trust-mistrust continuum, many of the findings may be capable of generalization to other industries, particularly those confronting similar adversarial workplace relations.

Some mines in our sample had built a virtuous cycle of trust with positive ramifications for OHS practices and performance, while others, manifestly had not. Fieldwork suggested that mines that with high OHS outcomes had all/most of a cluster of characteristics distinguishing them from low OHS performing mines. These characteristics, with benefits in their own right, were closely associated with the presence of trust, including -

- corporate and mine site leadership
- capacity to overcome middle management inertia
- flatter structures
- devolved decision-making and rotating shifts
- worker “buy in” and effective communication
- consultation and feedback

Some factors appear to be so fundamental that it is difficult to conceive of trust developing in their absence. This is certainly the case with senior management and mine management commitment, and with getting middle management “on board”. But while these may be necessary conditions for the creation of trust, they are insufficient in themselves. After all, as was commonly pointed out: *‘managers come and go but we’ll still be here’*. Without effective worker engagement, trust between workers and managers clearly cannot be achieved. Accordingly, the other criteria described above all form an important part of the composite picture. Certainly building trust is a multi-faceted enterprise and many of the aspects of trust identified above are mutually reinforcing.



Source: www.usmira.com/photos/assorted1.htm

Conclusions

It is likely, then, that trust can only be successfully built (and maintained) between the range of stakeholders in the mining sector, including corporate management, senior mine management, middle management, line management, workers and unions, when a range of factors are present and everyone is acting in a complementary fashion.

While there is no single formula guaranteed to provide trust, it is clear that trust is unlikely to be nurtured unless close attention is paid to a substantial number of the variables discussed in this working paper.

Case Study 4

Analysis

This case study summarises a longer report on working conditions in Australian mining. Your task is to discuss this reading and develop comments and notes on the issues below.

Once you complete this task, you will join another group – so it is important that everyone has comprehensive notes to take with you. Write your own notes - don't rely on a note taker.

The Actors and the Stage

There are always a lot of individuals involved in decision-making in large organisations, and especially those where work occurs in widely different locations and contexts. They are workplaces with many layers of responsibility, hierarchies of authority and decision-making and differentiation along lines of roles and responsibility.

While all these are intended to reduce complexity and increase the likelihood of efficiently managing a complicated set of operations, they can also make it difficult for individuals to actually do their jobs well.

1. Who are the actors in this story? Who creates, maintains and changes the environments described? Since individuals/roles are not mentioned list the kinds of roles you can think of, then consider the kinds of people who occupy them.
2. What is this environment?
 - a. What words can you use to describe the conditions and events described – including any factors you know of personally that are not included in this story. Is it a relaxed and carefree context? Or taut and criticised? Are workers doing a simple job? Or a complex one? Is it regulated or self-managing?
 - b. What are conditions like at some of the settings implied – the mine site – above and below ground, head office, work/transition places in between, etc.?

Intention

One of the key issues in learning to understand and operate effectively within any workplace culture is the perception that no one intends to harm another person. Can you assume that everyone has a conscious intention to behave with due care for self and others?

3. List ways that intentions and behaviours are noted as aligned or at cross-purposes. What are the report writers' intentions? What are the intentions of managers and employees? Of senior decision makers not directly involved in daily activity?

Awareness

The University of Wollongong Engineering Graduate Capability continuum lists the following as a vital capability for engineers

- *Be flexible, thorough, innovative and aim for high standards.*
- *Work collaboratively and engage with people in different settings.*
- *Recognise how culture can shape communication.*

Engineers Australia lists as a key **Attribute of Graduates from an Accredited Program**

- *Understanding of professional and ethical responsibilities and commitment to them*

These are neither simple nor easy to sustain. This unit of study is designed to help you consider your own present state of awareness.

4. While it may be 'easy' to blame or praise all/any of those whose actions are described in this report - what factors can you list that might inhibit their abilities to attend to these capabilities during their normal work?

Recommendations

5. **List at least six actions** that all relevant organisations could take to improve attitudes and behaviours around safety in their workplace cultures.
6. **List three actions** you believe you could take personally, were you to find yourself in this context.

Use the following page to record your answers to each of these questions.

Worksheet for Engineering Across Cultures 3 – Case Study 1

The Actors and the Stage

1. Who are all the actors in this story?

2. What is the environment?

Intention

3. List ways in which good intentions were evident but insufficient on this occasion.

Awareness

4. What factors might have inhibited abilities to attend to the key safety factors on this occasion?

Recommendations

5. Regardless of your access to this report **list at least six actions** that – in your opinion - either/both organisations could take to improve attitudes and behaviours around safety in their workplace cultures.

Work together to complete these tasks.

Task	For your notes
<p>Report. The teams are working on different Case Studies.</p> <p>First each group member introduces your case study and describes the discussion, summarising key elements you recorded on Part A of this worksheet. Use this space to make notes.</p>	<p>Use this column to make notes.</p>
<p>Identify. There are similarities and differences among the case studies.</p> <p>Working together construct a comprehensive summary of all the factors you can find. Where new ideas emerge from this discussion list them also.</p>	
<p>Cues and Actions. The information you have now compiled can be used to develop a list of cues and actions to help identify aspects of underlying workplace culture. You can also begin to construct a list of actions you might employ to ensure you enact good practice in regard to the organisational culture issues examined in each case study.</p>	
<p>Presentation. Knowing <i>about</i> such things is not enough. By presenting this information in an attractive and memorable manner you demonstrate what you have learned and assist others to learn with and from you.</p> <p>The next page sets out options for collating and presenting the data. The choice of what to do is all yours.</p>	

Presenting your agreed Cues and Actions in a visual mode.

The graduate attributes addressed in this Unit include communication skills. In this final activity you will exercise your ability to develop a visual representation of your discussion. Signs, symbols, images, diagrams and words are all forms of communication.

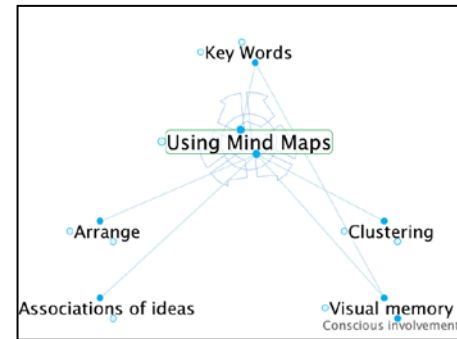
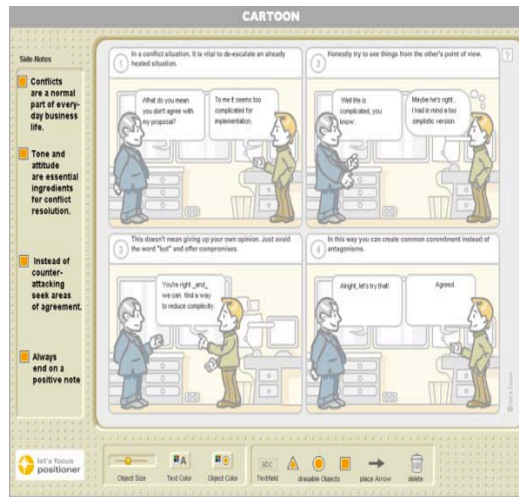
On the following page are four ways in which you could so. However if you know of other ways, or someone in the group is proficient in any form of visual representing of information you may prefer to use that.

You have 20 minutes to use one or more of the A3 sheets of paper to prepare your summary for display to the whole class.

Comic/cartoons

This works likes this–

1. First – decide a ‘story’ to share.
2. On the left hand side list key messages you want to convey. As this example says keep it simple. Have only 4 to 6 steps or items.
3. Draw a 4 to 6 stage process using cartoon figures. There are no prizes for drawing – everyone is interested in the content not how the figures look.
4. Engage the actors in a conversation - each adding new ideas to the story.



Mind map

A Mind Map is a picture showing connections and relationships among ideas. Begin with a key, organising idea in the centre of the page. Then draw lines out ending in circles where you write the ideas and connections you want to illustrate.

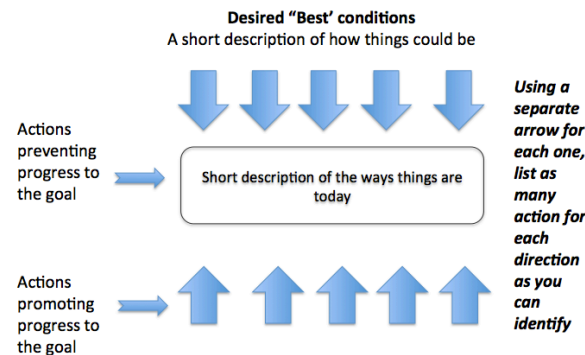
A Mind Map can have several layers when each idea has related ideas connected to it moving further out from the centre. The main ideas to remember are listed in this Mind Map – use Key words, Arrange new items to allow you to show relationships, Cluster like ideas, use any means you like to show Associations among ideas, and draw images to help with recall of the concepts.

Force Field Analysis

This image tells the viewer about four important variables in a situation:

- Where things are now
- Where it is hoped to be
- What is stopping/slowing progress
- What is creating/causing forward momentum

To help your audience list as many factors on both sides of the equation. What are all the possible factors causing the movement towards change? What are all the possible factors holding things 'is stasis' at this moment, and therefore causing a lack of progress towards change?



An 'iceberg diagram' shows the visible factors that can be seen by everyone, and 'below the water line' factors that create and support the 'above the water line' barrier. As in maritime disasters, it is often the hidden factors that create the most damage.

Iceberg diagram

This kind of image is intended to illustrate the relative size of elements in a complex situation.

In developing a "Tips and Actions" visual image, using an Iceberg, you could list the visible and hidden elements, which your Tips And Actions are designed to help you respond to. Then you can – for example - include a boat carrying the cargo of your ideas [remember to list them in some way] navigating safely past the iceberg.

The key factor in such an image is forcefully reminding your viewers of how much may be hidden from view and therefore even more dangerous.