

Senior Leaders: Emerging from the Safety Shadows

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Linking senior managers to safety

- Public Inquiries and major accident investigations have emphasised the role of senior managers and their leadership in safety:

Incident	Comment Regarding Senior Management
Clapham Junction rail crash	"Reliance on lateral management is bound to produce a lack of teeth in getting to grips with problems and getting them sorted out. Large schemes need firm, positive and sufficiently senior control in order that they are carried through properly, which means safely, efficiently and economically." (Hidden, 1989 p.161)
Herald of Free Enterprise sinking	"But a full investigation into the circumstances of the disaster leads inexorably to the conclusion that the underlying or cardinal faults lay higher up in the company . . . From top to bottom the body corporate was infected with the disease of sloppiness." (Sheen, 1987, p. 14)
Piper Alpha fire	"The quality of safety management by operators is fundamental to offshore safety. No amount of detailed regulations for safety improvements could make up for deficiencies in the way that safety is managed by operators." (Callen, 1990, p. 301).
BP Texas City refinery explosion	"BP has not provided effective leadership on or established appropriate operational expectations regarding process safety performance at its U.S. refineries [and] the panel believes that the lack of effective leadership is systemic, touching all levels of BP's corporate management having responsibility for BP's U.S. refineries (Baker, 2007 p.66).

Texas City: U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB, 2005)

stress the importance of senior managers' influence on safety and urge, "corporate officials (to) exercise appropriate leadership to promote adherence to safety management systems" (p.3).

What is appropriate leadership for safety?

Industrial Safety Legislation

“Top management shall take ultimate responsibility”

...for safety and safety management systems

(OHSAS 18001:2007:Section 4.4.1)



Guidance for Senior Managers

- Initiatives by the UK Health and Safety Executive to produce guidelines for senior managers (HSE, 2000, 2004, 2006 & 2007)
- Guidance from organisations (i.e. Railway Safety)



Growing Media Interest in Senior Managers and Safety

Continental Airlines CEO, Jeffrey Smisek is being criticized for comments he made before the House Aviation subcommittee on Wednesday, (June 2010)

Smisek, told the committee, he was not aware Colgan Airlines had not fully trained the pilots of flight 3407 and that it was the responsibility of the Federal Aviation Administration to check.

Colgan flew the plane under the Continental name. It crashed in Clarence Center in February of 2009, killing 49 people on board and one person on the ground. U.S. Senator Charles Schumer (D-New York) has already taken issue with Smisek's comments. "for him to say it is callous and it shows somebody not owning up to his responsibilities." Schumer went on to call for an apology and an explanation from Smisek. "Unless he explains why and apologizes to the families of flight 3407 and all Continental fliers, then you have some doubts whether he should stay the head of this airline." Jennifer West's husband Ernie died in the crash and she says the CEO would feel differently if his family was on board that flight. "It almost feels like 51 lives weren't enough for them to take it seriously. I think they feel like it was a statistic and oh we're so sorry it happened..." says Jennifer. (wgrz.com)





Deepwater Horizon

'As congressional hearings on the Deepwater Horizon disaster kick off today, lawmakers are likely to get a tangle of finger-pointing from the corporate leaders whose companies are being sued for negligence in connection with the disaster' *Houston Chronicle*, May 10 2010.



"When you became CEO of BP, you promised to focus "like a laser on safe and reliable operations.""

"I clearly am the ultimate power..."
"We have begun to change the culture."
"It is a thing that I talk about every time I talk internally or externally."
"I wasn't part of the decision-making process... I wasn't involved in any of the decision making... I simply was not involved in the decision-making process"

'Bonuses to boost safety culture at BP'

BP'S NEW chief executive has said safety is so important to the company that it will be the only measure for staff bonuses in the final quarter of this year.

Bob Dudley added: ***"We are taking this step . . . to be absolutely clear that safety, compliance and operational risk management is BP's number one priority; well ahead of all other priorities."***

A BP spokesman confirmed the statement and said a review of BP's system of incentives by Mr Dudley to ensure employees were never pressured to sacrifice safety would be completed early next year and that the fourth-quarter bonus move was aimed at instilling a stronger safety culture in BP as soon as possible.

Some US lawmakers have argued the Macondo incident, a refinery blast in 2005, and Alaskan oil spills in 2006 reflect a [corporate culture that encourages managers to put profits before safety](#).



(Aberdeen Press & Journal 21.10.10)

Patient safety failures + leadership

- Senior managers prioritised fiscal performance and there was a 'clubby' atmosphere which prevented speaking up (Bristol - Kennedy, 2001)
- At least 33 patients died from *C. diff* because senior managers failed to follow infection advice or learn lessons from the first outbreak (Stoke Mandeville, 2006)
- Joint Commission (USA, 2009) – 50% of sentinel events involve leadership failings

Leadership checklist for NHS CEOs

1. Build a safety culture
2. Lead and support your staff
3. Integrate your risk management activity
4. Promote reporting
5. Involve patients and the public
6. Learn and share the safety lessons
7. Implement solutions to prevent harm

National Patient Safety Agency (2004)

How do CEOs influence anything?

Most management experts support the notion that senior managers “have a substantive effect on the overall performance of the firms they lead. However, questions remain as to exactly **how such effects come about (and) little empirical evidence exists** regarding the performance-stimulating potential of CEOs,” (Waldman et al (2004) p.356).

Minimal research evidence

- Only 5% of the existing leadership literature focuses on senior level management (Horn & Zaccaro, 2003)
- In the safety research literature senior managers are a ‘neglected species’ (Flin, 2003)

Interview study (Rogers et al, 2010)

9 Senior Managers; 5 HSE Managers

- Senior managers leading safety should be able to
- 1) Set the safety tone from the top
 - 2) Establish and communicate clear safety expectations
 - 3) Monitor safety performance
 - 4) Lead by example
 - 5) Maintain a close relationship with the

Authentic leadership

Characteristics: Genuine, Consistent, Trustworthy, Hopeful, Approachable, Communicative, Fair (Avolio et al)



“speak in an authentic way, it’s very easy to know the words around (safety), but the people who really mean it and are authentic...it comes across in a much more powerful way”
-Senior Manager

“the way people judge you and the way they accept the words that you issue...I think a lot of it is about just being genuine”
-Senior Manager

Consistent and reliable behaviour.....

Upon delivering safety messages... “really (need to be) seen by the organisation through **constant word and deed** to back that up”
Senior Manager

“it’s important **that what people say, is actually what happens**. The network quickly understands if there’s a dissonance”
Senior Manager

“the most important thing is that managers have to **not only talk the right language and set the right policies, they actually have to show by their actions** that they are committed to safety”
HSE Manager

Effective safety leaders

Approachable “encourage the flow of all information”
 -HSE Manager

Open “a willingness to hear bad news...they
 need to have a kind of openness”
 -HSE Manager

Straight-forward

Honest “it’s my experience that it’s far better
 to have an honest discussion about
 the realities, to explain what is and
 isn’t possible, and to discuss what we
 can do together”
 -Senior Manager

Transparent

Ineffective safety leaders

Promote safety *insincerely*...



“all kinds of negatives come from back-handed, behind-the-door conversation. And if you start getting that, and there isn’t a cohesion about the safety message, it gets quite corrosive”
 -Senior Manager

Safety Intelligence of Senior Managers and Safety Outcomes in ATM

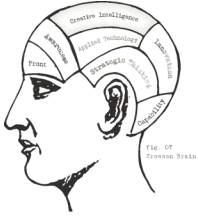


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What is Safety Intelligence?



- Skills and traits of senior managers in relation to safety
- Abilities and Understanding regarding
 - Information
 - Safety risks to the organization
 - Decision making
- Testing with problem solving scenarios

Managerial Resilience

Managerial resilience is the ability of managers and supervisors to manage severe pressures and conflicts between safety and the primary production or performance goals of the organization. (Flin, 2006).



Senior Managers' Safety Skills

- Safety Leadership (topside)
 - open, authentic communication on safety/ production balance
 - demonstration of commitment to safety eg prioritisation re schedule/ cost/production/resources
 - reinforce middle managers' safe behaviours
- Safety Personality (substrata)
 - safety values, beliefs – commitment
 - risk tolerance
- Safety Intelligence (substrata?)
 - safety knowledge, problem solving skills

New safety leadership advice for healthcare organisations (USA)

- Regularly measure leadership’s commitment to safety using climate surveys and upward appraisal techniques.
- When leaders assess managers during the annual performance review, make sure they ask about the safety issues the manager encountered, how they were handled, and the impact their actions had on reducing unsafe conditions.
- Communicate to staff when their work improves safety. Reward and recognize those whose efforts contribute to safety.
- The Joint Commission (USA) (Aug 2009)

How top management can influence safety

Claudio Cignetti Eni Safety Department (SPE, HSE, Nice 2008)

- Rewarding the middle management that “plays by the rules” rather than the one that “takes shortcuts”
- Discouraging the “macho” attitudes within the middle management in reality and not only officially
- Avoiding putting too much pressure on the middle management to get results
- Encouraging the middle management to “put flesh into” the company safety culture

Safety leadership at an operational level

Non-technical skills



Sarah Parker (PhD student 2008-11) & Yule, Flin, McKinley Surgeons’ intra-operative leadership. *BMJ Quality & Safety* (in press)

Reader, Flin & Cuthbertson Consultants’ ‘floor’ leadership in the ICU. (under review).

Further information

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- www.abdn.ac.uk/iprc
lists of projects and papers and reports

Scottish Patient Safety Research Network

- www.spsrn.ac.uk
