



Question No. 6 to develop your safety excellence strategy

What supports or conflicts with your ability to succeed? Do you have snipers or support? My military experience taught me it's a bad idea to get surprised by sniper fire. You want to be prepared. You have to identify where danger lies before it gets you and minimize the possibility of being ambushed. This analogy works within an organization as a strategy is created to improve safety. What do conditions on the ground look like? Are you going to be shot at by snipers or supported in your strategic purpose?

When creating a strategy and execution plan across a multiyear time horizon, it is vital to review the landscape and try to identify what will work with or against you and your choices before you begin acting on them. One client chose to focus on a belief that data proved important to change. For most events, behavioral solutions were found to be the greatest control point opportunity for prevention, not conditions or tooling or equipment changes. Cultural data also proved most people didn't feel the events were preventable.

This particular client used the term

"injuries" for incidents that hurt a person and "accidents" for events that involved vehicles. The belief they wanted to establish was that all injuries and accidents can be prevented. However, when we arrived at this question in the strategy development process (snipers or support), we identified that the client communicated "Non-Preventable Vehicle Accident Rates." Imagine the loss of credibility if a leader said, "We want you to believe that all injuries and accidents are preventable. Now this month, our non-preventable accident rate is ..."

Another client chose to establish a common belief that safety is just as important as production. They had just finished creating a comprehensive system for rewarding and recognizing individuals and teams for meeting well-thought-out leading indicators that support the strategy. However, when arriving at this question, they discovered the board of directors had recently announced that safety rewards and recognition bonuses would not be paid out if EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation

and amortization) numbers were not met first. This required a discussion with the powers that be, and the board's decision was reversed before damaging the success of culture transformation efforts.

These additional questions will help you answer this question in your strategy development processes: Who are the influencers? Who are you ignoring? How will you minimize resistance? Do goals get in the way of performance improvement and how? What's undiscussable (the proverbial elephant in the room)? What do people have difficulty understanding and why? What gets hidden and why? What cultural/organizational antagonisms exist? What cultural/organizational synergies are present? How are sub-goals dependent upon each other? What are the political realities? How will you test for them? How will you manage what you can't change?

Identifying the snipers and/or support mechanisms requires reviewing both what is known and unknown. In the opening of the movie "The Big Short," a funny (but fake) Mark Twain quote is

presented as saying, "It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so." For your strategic choices, what supports or conflicts with your ability to succeed? Upcoming articles will focus on the four remaining questions that must be asked and answered to create your safety excellence strategy.

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