



Deciding to be the best starts with a few simple questions

Organizations striving to achieve sustainable excellence begin with a fundamental question: Do we truly want to be the best in the world in this operational category, or do we want to try to be the best we can? These are two different questions resulting in two different answers. For organizations to achieve organizational align-

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ment and accountability, clarity is needed. Rather than solely expressing accountability through repeated communication, which certainly adds initial value, a value framework is needed to reflect decisions upon.

In my April article in BIC Magazine (page 58), I proposed five simple questions that should be utilized in order to ensure sustainability of safety excellence. High-performing

organizations base their operational decisions on the answers they receive to these.

1. How is safety enhanced by this decision? Will this decision enhance or compromise *any* facet of safety? If safety is to play a role in the decisions of executives or part-time employees, the question needs to be asked and answered. The realist in me recognizes we cannot remove all risk exposure in any industrial setting. While this is a reality in all businesses, ask if the decision makes progress toward safety excellence possible, creates no change or takes us back a few steps?

2. How will this influence behavior in the organization? People do things for a reason. If a desire exists to understand the impact on personal behaviors, the motives must be addressed. Moreover, behavioral approaches have taught us if we change influences, we change behavior. Will this decision positively or negatively impact the influences on desirable behavior? A decision that changes the motivation of individuals will, without question, change what they do. This is human nature.

3. How will this influence ownership

in safety? Dr. Deming, founder of our generation's quality movement, said it best. "People support what they help create." Ownership in performance is critical to achieving excellence in any operational category. Doing what is required meets performance objectives. Achieving excellence is accomplished through organizational alignment, by focusing on individual contributions toward a goal. This can only be accomplished through ownership. Will this decision help individuals further their ownership role in safety?

4. How will we gather insight by those affected by the decision? Research has proved responses to decisions are first prompted by emotion and then followed by logic. Empowering others to make similar decisions that consider the core value of safety needs to be reinforced. How will we be sure we understand the operational safety implications of this decision? Hint: The answers are there if we engage others and keep our ears open.

5. How will this help us be the best in safety? If our desire is to be the best in safety, this is the most important question to

consider. Operational decisions should be made that reflect the organization's intent. If the goal is to be the best in safety, will this decision take us closer toward that goal, have no impact or divert our direction?

Remember, core values will never become culturally shared beliefs if they are delegated to a single person or department. If it is a core value, it needs to be tested to be reinforced. Beginning this dialogue is the first step toward creating a culture where progress is validated on a decision-by-decision basis. The decision for what type of culture to create is up to you.

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