

Case Study.
Enercon.
Europe.
Renewable energy solutions.

Accelerating safety performance: ENERCON's cultural shift in production

Background and context

As a provider of integrated solutions for the connected Renewable Energy Ecosystem, ENERCON supports its customers in realising high-performance onshore wind projects through a modular portfolio of services and technologies. With around 13,000 employees worldwide and a recognised global track record of engineering excellence, ENERCON has long maintained a strong commitment to workplace safety.

In 2024, the company initiated a strategic transformation of its safety culture, focusing on its two major production facilities in Aurich and Magdeburg. These sites were selected as pilot locations for a broader international rollout, with the goal of embedding safety more deeply into daily operations, leadership behaviour, and organisational governance.



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Challenges

Over the past three years, ENERCON had already achieved a significant reduction in its Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR). This progress reflected the company's dedication to improving safety outcomes. However, ENERCON wanted to continue its efforts to improve the company's safety culture.

The leadership team identified several key areas for enhancement. While safety systems were in place, there was a need to strengthen the consistency of safe behaviours on the shop floor, increase the visibility and impact of safety leadership, and establish more robust governance structures to monitor and manage safety performance. ENERCON chose to act proactively, seeking expert support to accelerate its cultural transformation.

Solutions

ENERCON's leadership recognised that sustainable safety excellence requires more than systems and procedures; it demands cultural alignment, visible leadership, and empowered employees.

To support this ambition, ENERCON partnered with dss⁺ to co-develop and implement a comprehensive Safety Culture Transformation Programme. The programme was designed not only to improve performance metrics but also to foster a mindset shift, to proactive ownership of safety across all levels of the organisation.

The initiative was structured around **three strategic pillars**, each designed to address specific cultural and operational needs.

1.

Visible Leadership and Safety Routines

The first pillar focused on equipping leaders with the tools and mindset to make safety a visible and integral part of their daily interactions. Together, ENERCON and dss+ developed frameworks for safety routines and competencies that encouraged open conversations about risks and unsafe behaviours.

2.

Governance and Performance Management

The second pillar addressed the need for structured oversight and accountability. A new HSE governance framework was introduced, including standardised meeting formats, a documented KPI matrix, and clear roles and responsibilities. These tools enabled production teams to use leading indicators to identify and resolve safety issues proactively. The governance model also facilitated top-down and bottom-up communication, ensuring that safety insights and concerns could flow freely across the organisation.

3.

Total Risk Management

The third pillar focused on enhancing risk awareness and control. ENERCON conducted a comprehensive safety risk mapping of its value chain, identifying critical barriers and controls. A gap analysis of the existing safety management system was carried out, providing a clear roadmap for future improvements. This approach helped leaders prioritise risks and ensure that protective measures were both understood and effectively implemented.



The three pillars were then implemented across production

Leadership teams were trained to reinforce safe practices, provide constructive feedback, and model safety-first behaviour. These sessions were followed by a four-month period of group coaching, where participants applied their knowledge in practice. A key element of this approach was the certification of internal Safety Coaches: employees who were empowered to support their peers and sustain the programme beyond its initial implementation. Bringing together leaders from different departments, backgrounds, and experiences, alongside the internal Safety Coaches, created a rich environment for sharing insights and best practices, all guided and supported by experienced dss+ coaches.



Sustaining the Transformation

To ensure the long-term success of the programme, ENERCON committed to continuing the journey guided by their Safety Coaches trained during the initial phase. In a dedicated anchoring workshop, dss+ and ENERCON jointly defined clear goals and a roadmap for the continued rollout. This includes the next wave of coaching at both production facilities (Aurich, Magdeburg), ongoing quarterly coaching sessions for previously trained leaders, and the development of new internal coaching resources. Maturity targets have been set for all safety routines to guide and measure progress over time.

A total of 174 coaching sessions were conducted across both sites, with 91 leaders trained in Safety Leadership. Of these, 34% were prepared for a second wave of coaching, ensuring continuity and deeper integration.

ENERCON also certified 12 internal Safety Coaches, who now play a central role in sustaining safety performance.

Participant satisfaction with the training averaged 8.6 out of 10, and the maturity level of safety routines reached an average of 3.7 out of 5/ improved by 47% by the sixth coaching session.

86% of all leaders attended their coaching sessions, reflecting strong engagement and ownership throughout the organisation.

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These sessions greatly enhance our observational skills, helping us overcome the blindness that comes from routine.”

A leader's "Aha Moment" in safety dialogues at a wind turbine plant

During a coaching session at a wind turbine production facility, a seasoned team leader was introduced to new techniques for conducting effective safety dialogues. Initially, she approached these conversations with a directive style, offering advice and instructions based on her experience. Everything changed when she began asking more focused questions and intentionally reducing her own speaking time. The result was a powerful aha moment: her team members started sharing detailed observations from the shop floor and contributed practical ideas for improving safety. The quality of the dialogues improved significantly, not through more talking, but through better listening and genuine curiosity.

Empowering through questions – a safety coach's breakthrough

At a wind turbine production site, an internal safety coach faced a common challenge: giving feedback to leaders who were higher up in the hierarchy. Despite his technical expertise and training, he often hesitated, fearing his input might not be well received. Through targeted coaching, he learned to transform direct feedback into thoughtful questions, inviting leaders to reflect and discover their own insights. The shift was subtle but powerful. Instead of telling, he started asking. The results were striking: leaders became more engaged, more open to change, and more proactive in improving safety routines. For the coach, it was a breakthrough moment, realising that influence doesn't come from authority, but from curiosity and connection.

From strong knees to smart protection – a moment of realisation on the shop floor

In the middle of a coaching session at a wind turbine production site, a leader noticed a technician working on his knees directly on the hard floor. Concerned, the leader initiated a safety conversation. At first, the employee brushed it off with a smile: "Don't worry, I've got strong knees." The leader hinted at the implications. He observed that something clicked with the employee, who paused, reflected, and realised that even strong knees wouldn't last forever. Without another word, he jumped up and ran to the locker room to grab his knee protectors. It was a simple moment, but one that showed how awareness, sparked by genuine dialogue, can lead to immediate and lasting change.



Quick win: Making warning signs unmissable

At a wind turbine production site, a worker entered a hazardous area despite warning signs posted on the door. The signs had become so familiar that they were routinely overlooked. In response, the safety team implemented a simple but effective solution: they reinforced the barrier with a physical chain and placed a highly visible warning sign directly in front of the door. Additionally, the incident was discussed during a safety moment in the daily shop floor meeting to raise awareness. This quick intervention significantly improved hazard recognition and helped prevent future unsafe entries.

Quick win: Providing prescription safety goggles

At a production site where workers handled chemicals, several employees required corrective eyewear but were using standard safety goggles. This created discomfort and reduced compliance, increasing the risk of improper use or removal during tasks. In response, the site introduced prescription safety goggles for all workers who required vision correction. Additionally, the importance of proper eye protection was reinforced through targeted safety briefings. This quick intervention significantly improved compliance with PPE requirements and reduced the risk of exposure incidents.

Quick win: Preventing hazards through proper chemical storage

A hazardous substance was placed in the material line without a spill containment tray, posing a risk in case of leaks or collisions. To address this, additional containment trays were ordered, and a clear instruction was issued: IBC containers must only be stored or exchanged with a tray underneath. This simple measure significantly reduced the risk of environmental and workplace hazards and reinforced safe handling practices.



Quick win: Improved visibility for safer forklift operations

On the south side of the wind turbine production site, visibility was severely limited during dark hours, posing a risk for forklift drivers (IBTR). To address this, suitable LED lights were installed to significantly improve visibility – especially during the darker seasons. This straightforward measure enhanced operational safety and reduced the likelihood of accidents in low-light conditions.