

Interview.

James Cook

European safety report 2021.

Adopting a forward view on safety



You need to turn over a lot of different rocks before you can define what a good safety culture looks like. James Cook, Senior Vice President EHS & The Manitowoc Way at The Manitowoc Company explains where to start and how to stay on the right path.

With only 50% of the workforce believing that all accidents were preventable, our initial starting point was the need to demonstrate that safety is a core company value. The fact that it was leadership that pushed this message through made by far the biggest impact on our path to total employee engagement on safety. The project was helped by having my role reporting directly to the CEO. This accountability strengthened the importance of good safety procedures within the company. A further lever has been consistent and frequent intercommunication between employees, safety functions, and management.

Don't drive safety through the rearview mirror

One important transition has been to stop the focus on the recordable injury rates, which is like driving the car looking through the rearview mirror. Progress on safety issues requires us to look forward to see what we can change by, say, empowering the workforce to raise safety issues through an easy to use process, or by having clear after-sales support policies that include training and guidance on health and safety issues. These are relatively small processes to implement but have a huge positive

effect. A forward-thinking approach helps move away from a culture of blame to one where we get a better picture of what a good safety culture looks like.

Assess what's below the water

If we think of safety as an iceberg, we will never know what dangers are hidden below the water unless employees trust they can speak openly on safety issues. By providing such an environment, an organisation gets access to information required to assess the entire safety iceberg. Additionally, being aware and tolerant of the cultural makeup of the workforce and how this impacts reaction, understanding, and implementation of safety issues is key to developing trust and good safety skillsets.

Importantly, it's leading by example and never turning a blind eye to a potential hazard. When leaders tackle safety issues head-on it shows they are serious about all incidents being preventable, which is the ultimate aim. Positive reinforcement can be achieved by recognising the safety achievements of employees which helps to visualise the benefits.

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