

From compliance to ownership: Four steps to a resilient and sustainable safety culture

EVENT POST-SCRIPT



Hosted at the iconic World of Volvo Museum in Gothenburg, the dss⁺ event **"From Intent to Impact: Building Resilient Operations"** brought together key professionals from various industries across the Nordic region. The aim was to explore and address the intricacies of building resilient operations within their organisations through an holistic approach of Safety, OpEx and Sustainability practices. Participants from sectors as diverse as manufacturing, power & utilities, oil & gas and metals & mining, among others, engaged in discussions on how resilience can be embedded into the operational core, touching every level of the organisation.

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The event focused on strategies to secure stakeholder buy-in, advance performance leadership, and implement robust risk profiling and mitigation approaches. Designed with the Nordic context in mind, this gathering fostered a rich exchange of insights on enhancing organisational resilience in an evolving global landscape.

A central theme of the event was the importance of **cultivating resilience through a strong safety culture**, significantly shaped by the contributions of Bruno Pinto Borba, Head of H&S at ArcelorMittal Flat Europe segment. His valuable insights highlighted how resilient and sustainable operations are intrinsically linked to a robust safety culture, effectively setting the stage for the discussions that followed.

To drive safety and business excellence, companies must transition their safety culture from a compliance-based approach (Reactive or Dependent stages of dss⁺ Bradley Curve™) to one rooted in commitment (Independent or Interdependent stages). Breaking through the **"cultural wall"** is essential, as a strong safety culture empowers employees to take ownership of their safety and that of their colleagues. This shift necessitates the development of specific policies and systems that guide and support decision-making and actions across the organisation.

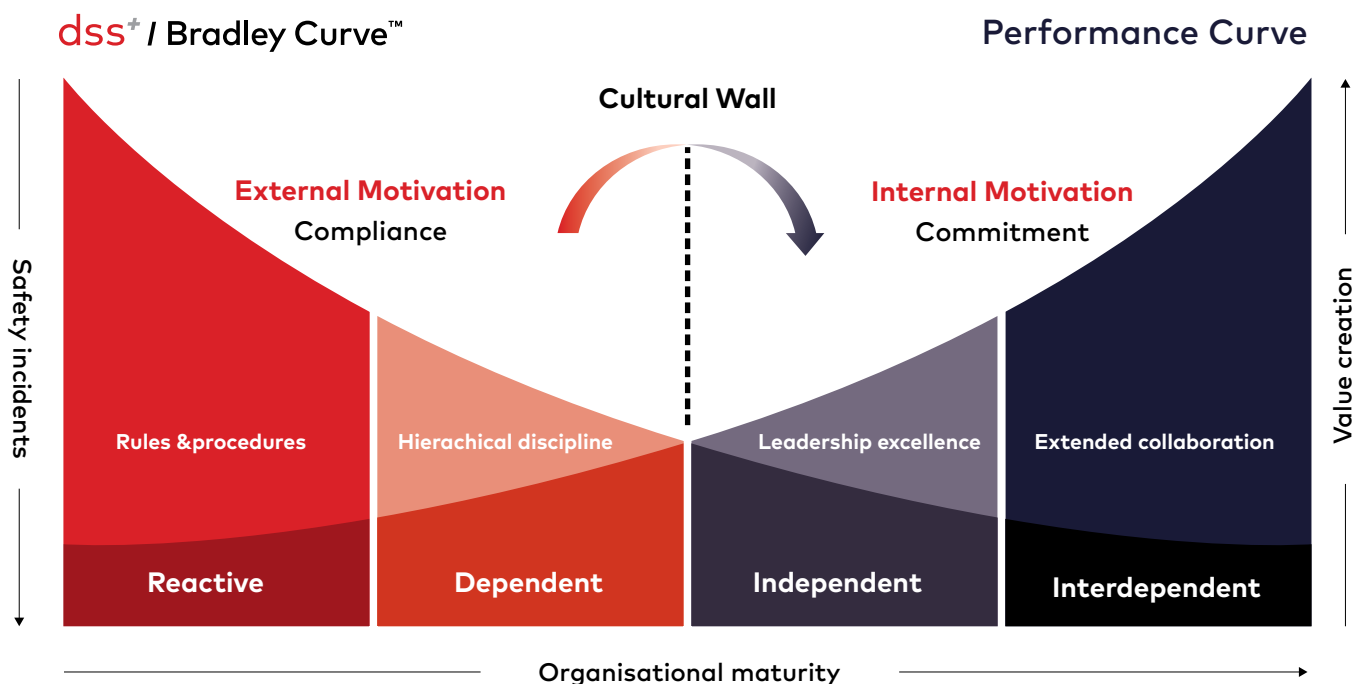
4 Steps to resilient and sustainable operations

As discussed by Bruno Borba, building a resilient and sustainable safety culture is key to operational excellence. Drawing on ArcelorMittal's experiences, he emphasised that achieving this cultural shift requires organisations to go beyond basic compliance, embedding safety as a core value that empowers every employee. A strong safety culture equips people to take ownership of not only their own safety but also that of their colleagues. This progression, as illustrated by the **dss+ Bradley Curve™**, reflects a shift from basic rule-following to a proactive, interdependent culture where zero injuries become a real, achievable goal.

In a mature, interdependent safety culture, the impact is transformative: operational discipline becomes a shared commitment, with employees actively supporting one another to maintain a safe environment, while achieving broader business benefits such as higher productivity and quality. As companies progress from a Reactive approach to an Interdependent culture, they cultivate a workplace where everyone feels a sense of ownership, aiming for zero injuries as a realistic goal.

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Guided by the **dss+ Bradley Curve™**, the following **four steps** outline the progression to achieving resilient and sustainable operations over time:

1.

REACTIVE STAGE:

Building a foundation through compliance

Safety is seen as a matter of basic compliance. Incidents are often accepted as an inevitable part of operations, and employees follow safety rules mainly when supervised. To progress from here, organisations must start by implementing essential safety protocols, setting clear rules, and ensuring leaders enforce them visibly on the shop floor.

2.

DEPENDENT STAGE:

Reinforcing safety with structured discipline

Safety becomes a structured priority, reinforced by management through a top-down approach. Leaders conduct regular safety briefings, inspections, and performance tracking, embedding safety more deeply into daily routines. Employees now see safety as rule-driven, with protocols becoming a standard part of their responsibilities.

3.

INDEPENDENT STAGE:

Empowering ownership and leadership

As the organisation reaches the independent stage, employees begin to take personal responsibility for safety, seeing their actions as critical to preventing incidents. Leaders encourage this mindset by empowering employees to identify risks and rewarding proactive safety actions. Here, employees start to feel responsible for their own safety and that of others, fostering a culture of proactive risk management.

4.

INTERDEPENDENT STAGE:

Cultivating a sustainable, collaborative safety culture

At the Interdependent stage, safety is fully ingrained in the organisation's culture, with employees working collaboratively and challenging one another to uphold high safety standards. Cross-functional teams unite to share best practices and drive continuous improvement, striving towards a shared goal of zero incidents. This mature stage reflects a deeply resilient organisation where safety is a collective responsibility, supporting both employee well-being and operational excellence.

How to embed safety into your organisation's DNA

Achieving this **culture transformation** requires leadership accountability, consistency, and active involvement of all employees. Leaders must increase their presence on and interactions with the shop floor, demonstrating genuine care for employee well-being. This approach fosters a culture that prioritises predicting and preventing incidents, leading to several key benefits:

- Increased **operational discipline, common targets** and alignment, and **commitment to safety protocols**.
- Continuous **reduction of operational risks** through proactive measures.
- **Enhanced psychological safety**, allowing employees to speak up without fear of repercussions.
- **Improved mental health** among employees, contributing to a **more resilient workforce**.

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Drawing from these insights, it's clear that cultivating a resilient safety culture requires more than simply setting policies and procedures. Effective transformation relies on practical, actionable steps that embed safety into the DNA of an organisation. As companies work to integrate these principles, the following actions can guide immediate improvements in safety culture, fostering leadership competencies, employee engagement, and effective governance across operations:

1.

Ensure Proper Implementation of Existing Safety Rituals:

Proactively manage risk by effectively applying established safety protocols and routines. This involves a visible leadership engagement, transparent vision communication, good performance tracking using appropriate tools, as well as fostering employee Involvement from the very beginning.

2.

Develop Key Leadership Competencies:

Invest in developing leadership skills focused on excellence in risk and safety management, empowering leaders to guide their teams more closely effectively.

3.

Optimise Site Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Governance:

Revise HSE governance to prioritise risk management and the effective implementation of safety standards, ensuring that all employees understand their roles in maintaining a safe work environment.

Effective risk control and tailored mitigation strategies are vital for addressing various types of risks, supporting injury reduction, and ensuring organisational resilience. By embedding these strategies within their operational frameworks, business can enhance their safety performance and thrive in a competitive landscape.

How **dss⁺** can add value

dss⁺ is a premier global sustainable operations management consultancy. Our goal is to help leading organisations **Protect, Transform and Sustain** what matters most – **people, assets, communities, business performance, competitiveness, and sustainability** – for future generations, at an organisational, national or global level.

We support safety and **culture transformation** by empowering companies to move beyond compliance, fostering proactive, resilient cultures that prioritise employee well-being. Through an **integrated, risk-based approach**, we help organisations systematically identify, assess, and mitigate risks, embedding a **safety culture** that strengthens both operations and resilience. We are proud of the impact we have made in **driving our purpose to save lives and a more sustainable future.**

Author



Edwin Vercruysse

Director, EMEA, dss*

edwin.vercruysse@i.consultdss.com

About dss*

dss* is a leading provider of sustainable operations consulting services with a purpose of saving lives and creating a sustainable future. dss* enables companies to build organisational and human capabilities, manage risk, improve operations, achieve sustainability goals and operate more responsibly.

Find out more at www.consultdss.com

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