

THE HUMAN AND SAFETY - A CULTURE ISSUE



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Human Factors

In an industry such as aviation, the focus has traditionally been on the technical aspects. However, statistics demonstrate that the majority of accidents have not happened because of equipment failures, but have involved performance errors made by healthy and qualified individuals. Unfortunately, when embracing new technologies, the performance of people who must interface with and use this equipment is often overlooked.

Once again, the Human part of the system is the more vulnerable and, at the same time, the more important of the whole chain. Because of this importance, a purely intuitive approach to Human Factors is no longer appropriate. Whatever the origin of the problems causing or contributing to aviation accidents and incidents, a mature understanding of normal human performance capabilities, limitations and behavior in aviation operations is central to understanding safety management.

to just attribute them to human error. However, blaming humans is of little help in safety management. Although it may give an indication of where in the system the breakdown occurred, it provides no guidance as to why it occurred.

Human error is then to be considered the starting point rather than the stopping point. To minimize the adverse safety consequences of human errors that will inevitably occur, it is important to understand the factors and conditions that may affect human performance in the workplace, such as the cultural environment in which they may occur.

Safety Culture and Individual Behavior

Personnel within each organization are generally influenced in their behavior by the values of their organization. Thus, the organization is a major determinant of employee behavior. Organizational or corporate culture sets the framework for accepted human behavior in the workplace by establishing the behavioral norms and limits. Organizational or corporate culture provides a framework for managerial and employee decision-making.

Safety culture is a natural consequence of a safety conscious corporate culture. The corporate attitude towards safety influences the employ-

ees' group approach to safety. Safety culture consists of shared beliefs, practices and attitudes. It emanates from the communicated principles of top management and results in all staff achieving a safety awareness that transcends departmental boundaries. Corporate safety culture is then the atmosphere created by management that shapes the workers' attitudes towards safety.

The real key to success in a company's safety performance is the existence of a positive safety culture, a culture that fosters safe practices, encourages safety communications and actively manages safety with the same attention to results as financial management.

Top Management's Responsibility

A positive, if not generative, safety culture must be generated from the "top down". It relies on a high level of trust and respect between management and employees. Everybody within an organization must believe they will be supported in any decisions that are made in the interests of safety. Everybody should equally understand intentional breaches of safety or regulations that jeopardize operations will not be tolerated.

Safety is the responsibility of every single worker involved in Air Operations. At every level, what is produced by one person is inevitably passed to someone else and eventually to the final customer. All decisions need to consider the implications on safety. This way of thinking must be so deep-rooted that it truly becomes "the way we do things here".



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ERROR
Having two in the cockpit significantly decreases the vulnerability of human error.

Human Vulnerability

With the majority of accidents and incidents resulting from inadequate human performance, the tendency is