

GE Inspection and Repair Shops Culture Change Crash Course

Introduction

When General Electric brought in Culture Change Consultants (CCC) to improve the safety culture at the 35 North American inspection and repair shops, it represented an unusual departure for the CCC culture change methodology. Instead of working with intact groups at a large manufacturing facility over many months, we had the opportunity to gather all employees at each of these relatively small sites—20 to 150 skilled trades people per I&RS shop—for an intense, two-day off-site crash course in safety culture.

Rob Wagner, an experienced EHS professional who had previously partnered with CCC in facilitating a very successful 4-year culture change project at the much larger manufacturing facility at Fitchburg, Mass., could readily appreciate the difference. “Having everyone in the room at one time, sharing the same experience, is very powerful, very emotional. Instead of waiting weeks to receive feedback, it is instantaneous.”

The 2-Day Offsite

The EHS culture change process within GE I&RS that has been installed in 42 shops in the past three years starts with a two-day offsite. Day One begins with a two-hour interactive workshop on the fundamental concepts of how culture influences behavior, the role of leaders at all levels in changing culture, and a description of the characteristics of a world-class safety culture.

This is followed by all present completing the CCC “Safety Culture Perception Survey™” to assess management and worker mind-sets about how safety is valued, the effectiveness of the safety program, levels of frustration in resolving issues, etc. In all, twelve categories of safety culture are measured.

Immediately after lunch, still in Day One, findings from the survey are presented. Although there is the usual surprise and dismay at some of what the survey reveals, with 100% participation in the room, it has been impossible to ignore or deny the results. According to CCC consultant Dr. Harvey Liss, “It is the standard SARAH response, with participants moving from shock and anger, through to recognition, acceptance and ultimately, hope.”

Table groups then help fill in the picture of a less than positive safety culture and safety mindset. Small groups work to identify key issues. Thus is Day One concluded.

Day Two takes off where Day One ends. Of course, identifying the problems is only half the battle. The second day is spent creating action plans and having individuals sign up to work on those issues with which they personally identify. The result is the formation of a number of very highly motivated safety-focused teams working on tasks to which they are deeply committed. By the end of Day Two, these teams are formed and ready to work.

The key to success is then maintaining all this positive momentum. In order to take ownership internally of the culture change as soon as possible, EHS and shop management have been encouraged and trained to take on a leadership role. Most of them have “caught the wave,” as one manager put it, and kept riding it.

Results

The culture change process is intensely results-oriented. Here are some of the results to date: ·

- Perhaps the most dramatic result has been in the reduction from 22 lost-time injuries in the 11 shops in which culture change was installed in 2002 to zero lost-time injuries YTD for the same shops in 2003. ·
- All facilities have made significant improvement in the year following their culture change off-site. One facility had zero recordable injuries for ten months.
- One advantage of this multiple site project has been the opportunity to test the results by comparing those shops that undertook the culture change training in 2002 (11 shops) and those that did not (approximately 24 shops). The difference between the base year and the following year on I&I rates for the culture change sites is significant, down 43%, and for Days Away From Work rates, even more



impressive, down 70%. Those shops that did not participate in the first year showed no statistically significant improvement in I&I nor DAFW rates.

Going Forward

In 2002, the EHS culture change process was installed in 11 I&RS shops. These 11 shops are currently going through their Year 2 Resurvey and Refresher activity, a one-day follow-up offsite. Meanwhile, the EHS culture change process is expanding. Since the beginning of 2003, it has been brought to 9 more I&RS shops, making a total of 42 GE shops that now have installed EHS culture change. Not unexpectedly, I&RS management is committed to implementing culture change in all domestic inspection and repair facilities within the next twelve months.

***Culture Change Consultants is currently implementing the Culture Change Crash Course in more than 42 GE Inspection and Repair facilities.**