Successfully Aligning and Integrating Safety (SH&E)
Within the Business

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Introduction

The safety function is most successful when it is considered and treated as a business partner. A partnership requires integration and alignment of safety considerations with business processes, goals and decisions. In order for this partnership to be successful, four actions are needed:

1. A complete safety strategy, which includes culture;
2. A well-defined culture approach, which includes business alignment and integration,;
3. An organization which understands and embraces its roles in driving safety; and
4. A logical implementation plan to engage the organization and drive the change.

This paper will describe a proven and effective partnership approach, which accomplishes the four points above. The result is pro-active business ownership and engagement to drive safety, and is equally applicable to broader health and environmental matters.

Defining the Safety Strategy and Culture

A strategy defines what is to be achieved. Whether for safety alone or for safety, health and environment (SHE), a strategy provides a high-level roadmap for the organization. It clarifies and guides what actions are to be taken and which behaviors are expected. Possible actions that are inconsistent with the strategy are not pursued, and such actions are not tolerated.

Three Elements of a Safety Strategy
Experience and abundant benchmarking information have identified three elements of an effective safety strategy, which have all been repeatedly proven to be clear and effective. These three elements are:
1. Safety Culture:
    - Safety is a company value, beyond a top priority because priorities may shift over time;
    - An organization understands and accepts its roles and responsibilities for safety; and

- All people are enabled and empowered to be success in achieving those roles and responsibilities.
2. Safety Talent:
    - S&H leaders possess both technical and leadership skill sets to assume their roles as leaders and coaches;
    - S&H leader's reporting structure is best aligned with operations, and at the highest level of the location or business, which will help to create the needed visibility and impact; and
    - S&H leaders strive to have the right people with the right skills in the right role in the right structure.
3. Safety Processes:
    - Sound programs and procedures form a foundation to pro-actively identify risks, prevent injuries and illnesses, and facilitate compliance;
    - Leading metrics are designed to measure key aspects of the process and culture; and
    - Programs and procedures are systematic, integrated and preventative.

The most crucial element of a safety strategy is culture, because it is responsible for superior and sustainable safety performance. In a company with a mature safety culture, safety is considered a company value, is highly visible and well-communicated, and the organization has clear and specific roles, responsibilities and ownership regarding safety. A strong culture will ensure that the right decisions are made, and actions and behaviors are taken, every time.[1] The four key elements of a superior safety culture are:

1. Visible leadership drive, commitment and personal involvement:
    - Actively and personally demonstrates commitment to safety
    - Provides vision, education, tools and processes to guide and facilitate safety progress
    - Sets expectations, roles, and responsibilities for everyone to be involved in safety
2. Active employee participation and ownership:
    - Employees are actively engaged in safety improvements and activities
    - Employees genuinely care about their own safety and that of peers and co-workers
3. Systemic safety integration into and alignment with business processes, tools, and decisions:
    - Safety considerations and issues are integrated into all business processes, tools and decisions
    - Safety vision and goals are aligned with company, business, site and personal goals
    - Functional leaders know and understand their roles in facilitating and driving safety improvements within their functional areas of expertise
4. Relentless drive to eliminate risks using systematic tools (like Six Sigma and lean approaches)
    - Disciplined analysis of all incidents to identify and remove system-based root causes
    - Statistical analysis to provide details of incidents and performance trends

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[1]Hansell, C. "Achieving Sustainable World Class Safety Performance and Culture." Proceedings of the ASSE PDC Conference. Orlando, Florida, 2007.

Note the third element of a successful culture is "systemic safety integration into and alignment with the business." Integrating and aligning safety, and in fact health and environment matters, into the business is arguably the most important aspect of driving a new lasting culture.

Active leadership drive and employee engagement are indeed important to create and build new expectations and successes. Integrating and aligning safety into the business facilitates the new habits and behavioral norms, which are needed for a culture to take hold. If required actions or behaviors are difficult, unclear or too time-consuming, people will not do them, or at least not willingly and routinely. Likewise, if multiple, and even worse conflicting, process steps and options exist in current business processes, people will be confused and naturally take the easiest path. Integrating and aligning safety into the business solves these problems. The desired actions and behaviors must be clearly defined, and then embedded into the business processes, tools, decisions, and actions. It becomes easier and faster to do the right and safe thing. Safety becomes woven into the way the company thinks and acts, the hallmarks of a sustainable, safety culture.

Readiness and Preparation of the Organization

Once the strategy and culture are defined, including the role of safety integration and alignment with the business, a plan of action is needed. As the plan is developed, consider if the organization is ready for a new way of operating. Expect questions from your leaders, such as:

- What are the characteristics of a culture, and in particular successful integration and alignment of safety within the business?
- Where are we now?
- What are the gaps to the desired end state?
- What actions are needed to close the gaps?
- How long will it take?
- How much will it cost?
- What are the expected results?

Safety, or safety, health and environmental (SHE) for that matter, are not different than any other aspect of running a business. Treat it that way, by defining and communicating a clear strategy, and developing strategic multi-year plans, annual operating plans, clear business and personal goals and expectations, leading metrics, budgets, tools to help the organization be accountable and successful.

Is Your Organization Ready?

This is best answered with specific data, by following a logical approach.

Step 1. Define the "Can Be" State
In order to assess the current state of safety integration and alignment and the needed actions for improvement, the desired end state or "can be" state must first be defined. What does the "best" or "can be" alignment and integration of safety look like? The "can be" goal is to clearly and objectively define the optimum business integration and alignment at both a business and individual levels. How is this done?

First, develop a matrix of the organization. Consider all the different business functions and activities. Usual business functions include operations, engineering, field operations, human

resources, communications, maintenance, IT, risk management, procurement, and safety (SHE). Then consider the various organizational levels of each function. Usual organizational levels include the senior leadership/CEO, vice presidents, site leadership and direct reports, middle management, frontline supervisors, and employees.

Then, seek out the best practices from internal and external sources. Conduct benchmarking with companies having superior safety cultures, both inside and outside of your particular industry. Using the matrix as a guide, gather data that clearly describes specific actions, behaviors, accountabilities and programs, for each function in a business and for each level of the organization. Possible questions to seek out the best practices in these companies are:
- What is the current role of safety?
- What are current roles, responsibilities and personal actions and behaviors to drive safety?
- What education, tools, processes and coaching are in place to drive the understanding and accomplishment of the roles which drive safety culture and performance?
- Describe any business successes where safety was pro-actively involved or informed of the business activity or change.
- Describe any business problems caused from safety being involved or informed too late in the business activity or change.
- What is the overall current company culture and business situation that influences peoples' actions regarding safety? Examples can be their personal motivations or "what's in it for me" (WIIFM), comfort zones, company culture, normal roles, geographic culture, market pressures and customer quality challenges, importance of learning in the organization, and current basis for recognition.
- What lagging and leading indicators and metrics are in place to track progress with safety integration and alignment with the business?

These best practices will have safety considerations pro-actively built into the business processes, tasks and decisions. Safety professionals will be involved early in business discussions and decisions.

Remember that there are twenty-two business processes at work, so questions should be broad to capture many aspects of a business' operations and activities. These processes are listed in Figure 1. Note that Human Resources (HR) is the functional owner of eleven of the twenty-two business processes. HR is responsible for the human capital within an organization. As such, they are involved with every aspect of hiring, transfer, firing, development, motivation (both positive through recognition and reward, and negative through discipline), organization design, health and medical benefits, absence management. With such a broad array of activities and responsibilities, it should be very evident how they entwine with safety. They are a critical partner for a successful and sustained safety culture within a business.

When benchmarking, also discuss the formality and regularity of the consideration of safety issues. Are the safety considerations within the business processes documented, included in leadership and functional training, and tracked for appropriate consideration and closure? What organizational function has the ultimate accountability for safety issues being raised and addressed? It should not be safety. It should be the appropriate process owner of the business process or activity under review.

As you gain information, complete each box within the matrix with what you have learned. Examples of successful integration and alignment of safety into seven business processes are provided in Figure 2.

Human Resources Processes
1. New employee hiring
2. New/transferred employee orientation (at all levels)
3. Third party employee selection, retention and management
4. Discipline
5. Recognition and reward
6. Leadership skill development (business, plants, sites, team leaders/supervisors) and employees
7. Leadership personal performance reviews
8. Labor management, negotiation and agreements
9. Organizational design
10. Health benefits and wellness
11. Communications

Other Business Processes
12. Critical raw material and supplier selection and retention
13. Operations
14. New product development and changes
15. New processes and changes
16. Six sigma/lean processes, projects and training
17. Sales and Marketing
18. Facilities/work environment management
19. Contractor selection, retention and management
20. Business Development and Mergers/Acquisitions
21. Risk Management
22. Security

Figure 1. Twenty-two Business Processes That Are Appropriate for Pro-Active Safety Alignment and Integration

Business Process	Examples of Effective Safety Integration and Alignment Actions
Leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities (from CEO and senior leadership to supervisory levels)	• Safety performance is reviewed in detail at all senior leadership and local site leadership meetings. Safety topics include accidents and serious incidents: root causes, corrective actions and closure of corrective actions; future operational activities or changes with possible safety impacts; Incident and root cause trends; Safety improvement projects, status, sharing of results across business and recognition for team members. Safety discussions are lead by business leaders or management leaders, not safety. • Safety performance (both lagging indicator of rates and

Business Process	Examples of Effective Safety Integration and Alignment Actions
	leading indicators) is included in personal objectives and performance reviews of leadership..
Business planning	• Safety projects are included in capital expenditure (CAPEX), operating expenses (OPEX), appropriation request system, departmental budgets; and staffing (headcount) planning. • Safety reviews and considerations are factored into the business timelines of new product, process and equipment purchases, installations and start-ups.
Recognition and reward – all employees	• Criteria for recognition of safety performance includes both lagging indicators (rates, costs, days away), and leading indicators of processes, activities and personal actions • Recognition and reward criteria are designed to reinforce and promote desired behaviors of all leadership levels and employees: participation in safety programs, committees and improvement activities; identification and resolution of safety risks; timely reporting of accident, incidents and near misses.
Discipline-all employees	• Unacceptable safety actions are clearly defined in the local and company discipline policies. • Safety violations receive the same thorough investigation and discipline consequences for knowing violations of safety rules, consistent with other policy violations..
Organizational Changes	• Safety is informed of organizational redesigns like plant consolidations, restructurings to address possible implications to safety roles and culture. • Safety is informed of impending lay-offs or reduction-in-force, to pro-actively implement awareness programs and incorporate safety messages into local communications, to remain focus on safety despite changes underway.
Process Changes	• Safety is involved in assessing and addressing safety (SHE) impacts of changes in process rates, equipment and layout. • Process change checklist exists to include all possible SHE impacts, and is required to be completed with all issues addressed prior to process start-up.
Product Changes	• Safety is involved in assessing safety (SHE) impacts of changes in product chemical composition, physical configurations and packaging. • Product change checklist exists to include all possible SHE impacts, and is required to be completed with all issues addressed prior to product launches. Product literature (MSDS, labeling) is created and product clearances are obtained to support timely product launch.

Figure 2. Examples of Safety Integration into Select Business Processes

Step 2. Define the "as is" State
Through site visits, interviews and surveys in your company, use the same organizational matrix and ask the same questions as were asked to determine the "can be" state. Complete the matrix with what you have learned about your current organization practices regarding integration and alignment of safety into the business processes.

Step 3. Are You Ready?
Safety professionals also need to be ready to adopt a new way of operating and leading safety. The traditional role of the safety professional as the enforcer or "cop," where safety is only compliance-based, is driven by fear of discipline is over. Today, the more effective and expected role of a safety professional is one of a motivating leader, change agent, and business partner. Compliance and incident prevention is accomplished through developing a culture of prevention, employee engagement, and integration with business processes.

This leadership role requires a particular skill set and mind-set. Guiding, motivating and influencing the leaders are critical to accomplish this task. So, influencing, motivating, negotiating and, communicating skills become paramount to leading and guiding others to your view and for helping them to take the needed actions. Business acumen allows safety professionals to understand business needs and to seek "win-win" solutions.

One additional personal attribute must be highlighted: passion.   A true passion for what you do is the ultimate motivator for yourself and others. With a genuine commitment, you will make a stand, take a risk, do what it takes to change your world for the better. Your passion will generate energy and enthusiasm in others too, along with your new great ideas, stretch goals, exciting challenges and a compelling vision for the future. Others will be motivated to step away from their comfort zones and old paradigms to take new steps and generate new ideas.

Developing a Plan

Now you have a clear view of the current "as is" state of safety integration and alignment within your organization and yourself, and of a "can be" state, learned from superior companies in safety. The next step is to identify the differences or gaps between the "as is" and "can be" states, in the business processes, organization mindsets, and safety staff skills, and approach.   Organize these gaps along the three-element strategy of talent, process, and culture. Then prioritize each set of gaps. You can't work everything at once, so target three to four key processes and actions that will provide the biggest impact to clarify expectations and influence the new desired processes and behaviors.

Consider focusing on the following four very influential business processes to drive early success in alignment and integration of safety with the business:

1. Leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities (most senior to supervisory levels)
2. Business planning
3. Recognition and reward (all employees)
4. Discipline (all employees)

To support these four integration targets, pertinent base business processes need to be modified to incorporate the new expectations to drive safety (Figure 3). It is futile and unfair to demand new actions, decisions and behaviors of the organization if the base processes do not

support, and may in fact conflict, with the new expectations. To successfully integrate and align safety with these supporting processes, partnerships must be formed with the functional owners of these processes. Note the frequency of HR as the functional owner of the pertinent business processes. Again, it is clear the important role of HR as a critical partner with safety.

Key Business Process	Supporting Processes	Functional Owner of Supporting Business Process
Leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities	Leadership Training Leadership Objectives Leadership Performance Reviews	Human Resource (HR) HR HR
Business Planning	Senior Leadership Financial Planning	Senior Leadership/CEO Finance/CFO
Recognition and Reward	Recognition and Reward Incentive Compensation Leadership Performance Reviews	HR HR HR
Discipline	Discipline Leadership Performance Reviews	HR HR

Figure 3. Supporting Functional Processes and Process Owners for Four Key Business Processes

Making It Clear, Easy, and Desirable

In final stage of planning, consider ways to introduce the changes and expectations, by making them *clear, easy and desirable* for your organization to succeed. Using the same matrix described earlier, you have identified the cultural gaps, the education and tool gaps and the business process gaps, all of which need to be newly created or revised to better promote safe behaviors, decisions and results. These business processes span all functions of HR, engineering, operations, procurement, security, IT, and communications. So engagement and ownership of the challenges, and the solutions, will only result from teaming with these business partners. Provide help to make the needed actions:

- **Clear:** By setting expectations and accountabilities; new roles and responsibilities for how and when to integrate safety (SHE); and a communication plan. Safety becomes a strategic component of business and workforce planning.

- **Easy**: By providing tools and checklists; modifying the existing 22 processes, tools, decisions, metrics to include S&H; and

- **Desirable**: By including safety (SHE) integration into recognition and reward consequences and processes; negative consequences for not integrating safety (SHE) and driving the culture of S&H; and maintaining visible of safety in business meetings. Demonstrating the connection between safety culture and business success will encourage and reinforce the business value of S&H integration. Sites with strong safety culture, including the successful integration of S&H into the daily processes, also experience successes in productivity,

quality, employee morale and teamwork and ultimately operating costs and customer relationships.

Through your data gathering, surveys, feedback, and internal and external benchmarking, you now have a clear understanding of your current culture status, a possible future culture state, the gaps to that future state and strategic actions to close those gaps. Specific actions are identified to facilitate understanding and success, by making the expectations clear, easy and desirable. The next step is to begin deploying the new strategy and alignment and integration actions by applying a change model.

Implementing the Plan by Applying a Change Model

In applying a change model, it is important to methodically follow all the steps. This will help to ensure that you bypass common pitfalls. Often, creating new value requires significant change. There might be a temptation to quickly move ahead before the previous steps are complete or to skip steps entirely. As John Kotter has stated in *Leading Change* (1996),[2] there are eight reasons why many change processes fail:

- Allowing too much complacency
- Failing to build a substantial coalition
- Understanding the need for a clear vision
- Failing to clearly communicate the vision
- Permitting roadblocks against the vision
- Not planning and getting short-term wins
- Declaring victory too soon
- Not anchoring changes in corporate culture

The change model, as outlined in Figure 4, addresses these points and is an adaptation from John Kotter's Eight-Stage Change Process, with added change concepts from Jim Collin's *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* and leadership concepts from many business change leaders and experts, including Jack Welch, Steve Farber, Stephen Covey, Srikanth Srinivas, Price Pritchett & Ron Pound, and Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan.[3-10]

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[2] Kotter, J. 1996. *Leading Change*. New York: A Harvard Business Review.
[3] Kotter, J. 1999. *John P. Kotter on What Leaders Really Do.* New York: A Harvard Business Review Book.
[4] Collins, J. 2005. *Good To Great and The Social Sectors*. New York: HarperCollins Publishing, Inc.
[5] Welch, J. 2003. *29 Leadership Secrets from Jack Welch.* New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
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[8] Srinivas, S. 2005. *Shocking Velocity.* Information Age Publishing.
[9] Pritchett, P. and Pound, R. 1993. *High –Velocity Culture Change.* Pritchett Publishing Co.
[10] Bossidy, L. and Charan, R. 2002. *Execution-The Discipline of Getting Things Done.* Crown Publishing Group.

> 1. Establishing a Sense of Urgency: Facing Reality and Understanding your "Brutal Facts"
> 2. Forming a Powerful Guiding Team: Getting the "Right People on the Bus"
> 3. Creating a Vision: Understanding your "Hedgehog Concept" and Core Values
> 4. Communicating a Vision: Keeping it Frequent, Focused and Fresh
> 5. Enabling and Empowering Others to Act on the Vision: Showing Respect and Instilling Confidence
> 6. Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins: Building the "Flywheel"
> 7. Building on Successes: Maintaining the "Flywheel" by Building Cycles of Learning
> 8. Institutionalizing the Changes and New Approach: Building New Processes, while Maintaining Core Values

Figure 4. An Eight-step Model of Driving Major Change with "*Good to Great*" Concepts

The detailed application of this eight-step change model to drive a safety culture is discussed by the author in 2009 ASSE PDC proceedings.[11] Specific deliverables from each step are highlighted in Figure 5, focusing on safety integration and alignment.

Change Model Step	Deliverable
Establishing a Sense of Urgency	Get people's attention and concern as to the current state of workplace safety processes, culture and performance.
Forming a Powerful, Guiding Team	Organize and develop a critical mass committed to act within their responsibilities and as a team to drive the right actions to implement the safety integration and alignment. This critical mass should be the leaders of businesses and key supporting functions of operations, engineering, service, HR, communications and safety (SHE).
Creating a Vision	Develop clear objectives and actions for integration and alignment, building into existing company mission, values and goals.
Communicating a Vision	Clarify and align common goals, objectives and actions, by incorporating them into existing business processes and systems. This enables one to identify and address any systematic constraints that would act against the achievement of our goal of integration and alignment.
Enabling and Empowering Others to Act	Enable the organization to be successful in reaching a common goal by removing obstacles and providing support, time, resources, tools and processes.
Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins	Create interest, enthusiasm and energy in our goals and plans; demonstrate successes and build upon tangible results and emotional buy-in to gain more supporters.

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[11]Hansell, C. "Following in the Footsteps of Leaders: An Effective Method to Successfully Change a Safety Culture." Proceedings of the ASSE PDC Conference. Las Vegas, NV, 2009.

Change Model Step	Deliverable
Building on Successes	Create sufficient interest and enthusiasm to create cycles of self-sustaining success. Be mindful of people's personal motivations, to keep them interested and focused.
Institutionalizing the Changes and New Approach, by integrating into and aligning with the business tools and processes.	Sustain progress in safety culture and performance by building S&H considerations into the core business processes and decisions. It is a systematic approach where all the pieces fit and work together willingly with positive energy and enthusiasm, to a common goal. Make it easy, natural and rewarding to do the right thing, every time.

Figure 5. Deliverables from Each Step of Eight-Step Change Model

Conclusions

Safety culture is the key to lasting success for a safe and healthy work environment. A world-class safety culture focuses on peoples' actions. So their roles must be clear, easy to do and desirable.

The most effective method to accomplish these tasks is to integrate and align the desired safety behaviors and actions into the existing business processes, tools and expected behaviors. The goal is for the desired behaviors and actions to become routine, and rooted in social norms and shared values. It becomes part of the normal activity of the business, rather than separate steps to take after their normal work is done.   It also makes it easier for people to do the right things and make the right decisions when it is built into the daily routines.

This integration and alignment is most easily accomplished by following a plan or the eight-step change model. Clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for all functions and positions in all organizational levels. Make it "clear, easy, and desirable" to make safe choices and to follow the strategy and plan. Leverage existing culture, organization and processes, as much as possible. Work with the businesses and functions to create education, tools and processes that promote making safe choices by embedding safety (SHE) into business processes. HR, Communications and Operations are three key business partners for the success of safety and SHE overall.

If we design and create the education, tools and processes so that all employees and leadership can have the safe, disciplined thoughts that result in safe actions, balanced with the real operational demands, we've embedded safety into the business and created a lasting safety culture.