

TRANSMITTING AND SUSTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

To enhance the success of a culture change process, essential elements of the desired culture must be integrated (through formal and informal means) into every level of an organization's operations, translated into routine practice, and expressed in the work environment. It becomes the "way of life" within an organization. Presented here are some of the vehicles that facilitate transmitting these essential elements and sustaining organizational culture.

Statements of Principles

- ❑ Cultural attributes are conveyed through statements of organizational mission, vision, values, goals and objectives, policies and procedures, standards of practice, and job descriptions. (See sample "UMHS Commitment to Safety")
- ❑ Principles are captured in organizational mottos. For example, in Japanese industry the concept of "Kaizen" is used to propagate the notion that *"every defect is a treasure that can point the way to improvement."*
- ❑ Elements of safety are incorporated into the strategic planning process, including development of a formal safety plan and program, and setting concrete safety goals.
- ❑ The organization's overall mission is linked to department goals and objectives, detailing specific strategies on how to achieve a safe and healthful workplace and how progress to this end will be measured.

Jargon

- ❑ A unique and common organizational language exists to enhance the verbal exchange of essential cultural characteristics.
- ❑ A common language communicates shared meanings among an organization's members.
- ❑ Language that reflects old, undesirable values is replaced with a new language that communicates desired philosophies. (For example, "blame" becomes "accountability"; "fault" becomes "root cause"; "who did this?" becomes "what happened?")
- ❑ Jargon includes rhetoric around safety concepts, such as the language of systems theory, human factors, root cause analysis, Failure Modes and Effects Analysis, etc...

Symbols

- ❑ Symbols objectify organizational values and serve as a visual backdrop for the activity of an organization.
- ❑ These can include historical artifacts, portraits of founders, corporate logos, decor, graphics depicting hospital activity over time, mottos, statuary, furnishings, and architecture, as well as attire (For example, the clinician's white coat).
- ❑ Safety reminders are publicly displayed and widely distributed, such as safety posters and handouts, posted statements of principles, warning signs, etc...
- ❑ Symbols include public display of rewards and recognition for successful accomplishments and healing stories.

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Stories, Legends, and Corporate Myths

- ❑ In a safety culture, the telling of stories is viewed as having greater importance than mere data collection, because it is in the story where the knowledge and the emotion lies, not in the numbers.
- ❑ Stories have a transformative quality and power to them in that they can elicit emotion and propel one to action.
- ❑ Historical information about the organization's evolution and its heroes is transmitted via legends and corporate myths, making present day linkages to the roots of the organization.
- ❑ New heroes are created from within an organization that exemplifies vision in action.
- ❑ Story telling can take the form of:
 - Continuous Quality Improvement Storyboards showing process improvement cycles
 - Sharing success stories and stories of healing (describing what the new heroes have achieved)
 - Exploring possible root causes of error by sharing observations and experiences
 - Sharing compelling stories of adverse events that touch the sympathies of the listeners and create a transformative moment

Ceremonies and Rituals

- ❑ Rituals include medical rounds, regular meetings and planning cycles that reflect a certain character by the way they are conducted.
- ❑ In a safety culture, rituals can include safety rounds, morbidity and mortality conferences, and formal organizational responses to errors such as the root cause analysis process, or responses to JCAHO sentinel event alerts.
- ❑ Ceremonies celebrating accomplishments bring to life the corporate vision and cultivate a sense of belonging and mutual appreciation.

Leadership

- ❑ *"Leadership is defined as the art of accomplishing change through people. Good leadership provides the motivation for achievement of goals. Leaders inspire their people through personal example, good management practices, and sense of moral responsibility." (8)*
- ❑ Behavior modeling is evident, especially with an organization's leaders, who "walk the talk".
- ❑ Leaders clearly articulate organizational principles with empowering messages that reinforce "doing the right thing" as a corporate priority.

Socialization Process

- ❑ New employees undergo a socialization process, both formal and informal, that acclimates them to the appropriate philosophies and expected code of conduct of the organization.
- ❑ Organizational values are not left for interpretation. The organization educates members on how these values should be demonstrated through their behavior.
- ❑ Socialization involves a formal safety orientation process.

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- ❑ Periodic assessments of members' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions around employee satisfaction in general, and around the "climate" of safety in the organization specifically, are conducted to gauge the success of the socialization process.

Setting Safety Goals

- ❑ Goals are action-oriented
- ❑ Achieving a safety culture is considered the super-ordinate goal (ultimate outcome) of the organization.
- ❑ Multiple sub-goals (such as conducting risk assessments, getting leaders to "walk the talk", etc...) are strategically created in order to advance progress towards the super-ordinate goal.
- ❑ A safety culture is recognized to be the result of goal-directed interactions between the individual members of an organization, the work they do, and the organization as a whole.

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