LEADing for Frontline Safety Workbook

Developing capable and confident safety leaders who contribute to a positive safety culture and a physically and psychologically healthy workplace.

A self-paced workbook designed to help you develop your capabilities to lead work health and safety effectively in the workplace.
The LEADing for Frontline Safety Workbook

A joint initiative between the Office of Industrial Relations and the University of Western Australia

The Safety Leadership at Work program aims to raise awareness of safety leadership and culture concepts, build capabilities, develop evidence-based resources, and connect professionals to help solve safety challenges and share ideas. With a significant membership base, the Safety Leadership at Work program delivers events, resources, and other initiatives across Queensland in the pursuit of healthy, safe, and productive workplaces.

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Across the public and private sectors, many people undertake safety leadership roles and positions. Sometimes these roles are formal, such as manager, team leader, or supervisor. At other times, people might find themselves in informal safety leadership roles, such as leading a team of co-workers to complete a project on time and without incident. Regardless of your safety leadership level or role, this workbook is for you.

In any safety leadership role people can be unsure or uncertain of how to be effective. For example, many leaders have had inadequate training in the role and it has been assumed that they just ‘know how to do it’. However, for most people, safety leadership is a skill learned over time through experience.

Fortunately, you don’t have to wait to have formal safety leadership experiences before you can start learning. This workbook is designed to kick-start your journey towards excellent safety leadership, with a particular focus on workers with informal leadership roles and supervisors/team leaders who are responsible for teams.

We’ve designed this workbook to stand alone and act as an ongoing resource for you as you embark on your learning journey. Rest assured that everything in this workbook is evidence-based, and uses current theory and practice around effective safety leadership. Throughout, you will find a range of content designed to build essential leadership skills. Also included are a number of activities and exercises to help you apply your learning.

As you work your way through this book, we encourage you to practice the ideas and activities as much as you can. Please try out what you have learned as this will give you the experiences you need to grow and improve your capabilities as a safety leader.

We hope you enjoy using this workbook and we encourage you to use these materials as a springboard to further develop your safety leadership capabilities.
1.1 Safety leadership

Safety leadership is a particular type of leadership that promotes both physical and psychological safety, and so contributes to a positive safety culture, a physically and mentally healthy workplace, and business performance generally.

Safety leadership refers to the specific behaviours and skills that frontline leaders (e.g. team leaders, supervisors, managers) show in the workplace that promote physical and psychological health and safety. Many of these behaviours overlap with good leadership practices in general, and are especially useful in safety-specific situations. There are also several behaviours that are specific to safety leadership, such as being vigilant to risks and detecting hazards.

In a positive safety culture, safety leadership is shown at all levels. However; frontline safety leadership is particularly important and is the focus of this toolkit. If effective frontline safety leadership is demonstrated every day, it can contribute to a work environment where people are more likely to be:

- mindful
- open to learning
- proactive
- compliant
- efficient
- productive
- safe.

Why is safety leadership important?

Numerous research studies show that the safety leadership of frontline supervisors has a positive effect on workers’ compliance with safety procedures and their participation in safety (i.e. going above and beyond what is required)\(^1\).

Safety leadership also contributes to more committed and engaged workers by creating a sense that the business cares about people’s welfare. Also, safety leadership increases workers’ safety knowledge and safety motivation. This means that through safety leadership, workers know more about the hazards that can harm them, and are more motivated to apply and monitor appropriate controls.

Over time, if multiple leaders demonstrate safety leadership, and this happens at all levels of the organisation, a positive safety culture is created. The culture develops because workers look up to leaders when deciding how to act and make decisions. A leader sets the standard for what is expected, valued, and prioritised.

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\(^1\) Clarke, S. (2013).
What’s the difference between safety leadership and safety management?

Although it is not always clear, there are some differences between safety leadership and safety management. Safety leadership involves behaviours that motivate and inspire workers to adopt the organisation’s safety goals as their own. Safety leadership drives a shift in the values and attitudes of workers towards those that are more helpful for safety. Another way of describing safety leadership is the ‘soft’ skills required to lead people in workplaces where there are hazards to physical or psychological health and safety.

Safety management, on the other hand, is more concerned with the ‘hard’ skills required by leaders. Some of these skills include conducting incident investigations and delivering toolbox talks.

As many frontline leaders do not receive development in soft skills, this workbook will focus on safety leadership.

Can safety leadership be improved?

Studies have shown that safety leadership can be improved. Through training and coaching, leaders can develop their safety leadership competencies and capabilities. This workbook will help you to develop your safety leadership skills at your own pace.

Part of the preconditions for learning is a state of confusion, so it is important to keep an open and reflective mind as you progress through the workbook. At times you may feel challenged or confronted, particularly if you realise that you might need further development in a particular area. You may also feel confused or unclear.

1.2 The LEADing for Frontline Safety model

The LEADing for Frontline Safety model (LEAD model) includes four key competencies:

- **Energise**: Giving meaning and purpose
- **Leverage**: Providing clarity and fairness
- **Prosper**: Engaging in learning and improvement
- **Defend**: Being vigilant and detecting risks
- **Stability**: Protecting goals and maintaining a high level of health and safety
- **Flexibility**: Encouraging change and autonomy

This model was developed by the Accelerated Learning Laboratory at the University of Western Australia and underpins the workbook, describing the specific skills required by frontline safety leaders.

The LEAD model describes a variety of specific skills that are needed depending on the types of situations that might be encountered by leaders in the workplace, with an emphasis on health and safety. Through framing or describing safety goals in different ways, workers will be more equipped and motivated to manage risks and generally engage in activities that maintain a high level of health and safety. The different types of safety goals that are conveyed to teams through specific safety leadership behaviours across the LEAD model are shown below.

**LEADing for Frontline Safety model**

Leaders can frame safety goals in terms of either stability or flexibility, and either prosper or protect. The combination of these different goals produces the LEAD model.

When a leader frames safety around flexibility, they are encouraging workers to accept responsibility and ownership for work health and safety (WHS), as shown by behaviours such as voicing concerns, sharing ideas, and accepting safety duties. The goal of flexibility means that the leader encourages change and autonomy among the team, motivating workers to strive towards a safety vision and contribute to continuous improvement. Flexibility is particularly important when changes are being implemented, such as engaging a new technology or forming a team from a diverse group of individuals.
Leverage: Providing clarity and fairness
Leverage refers to leadership behaviours that clarify safety goals and expectations. This makes sure the expectations, as well as the rewards for achieving them, are fair and consistent. When a safety leader is showing leveraging behaviours, they are performing behaviours such as setting challenging safety goals for the team, providing constructive feedback on safety performance, and recognising the team when they achieve work safely.

Energise: Providing meaning and purpose
Energise includes leadership behaviours that give the team a collective sense of purpose around safety and motivates them to take action. Energise behaviours are shown when a leader creates an inspiring vision and empowers the team such as involving workers in decision-making. Energise is important because it builds workers’ motivation to contribute to the organisation’s safety goals.

Adapt: Fostering learning and continuous improvement
Adapt refers to safety leadership behaviours that aim to promote continuous learning and improvement. Leaders who show ‘adapting’ behaviours challenge the team to think creatively about safety and create a team culture of openness.

Defend: Being vigilant and detecting
Defend includes leadership behaviours that aim to identify hazards, assess and control risk, and maintain vigilance across the team. Safety leaders who show ‘defending’ behaviours are more likely to monitor the environment for hazards and work actively to prevent incidents from happening.

There are also situations where a leader needs to frame safety in terms of stability and reliability. When work is routine and hazards are well known, a leader uses behaviours that promote stability within their team. To do so, a leader may emphasise standard ways of doing work and attempt to eliminate sources of unpredictable energy.

Safety can also be framed in terms of goals that emphasise prospering versus protecting. When a leader focuses the team’s attention on prospering, they are setting specific objectives for the team to strive towards, and recognising or rewarding times when the team achieves a positive safety outcome. These behaviours convey to a team the importance of acting in ways that advance safety in positive ways.

On the other hand, leaders may, at times, need to emphasise protection related goals. These goals signal to a team to focus on preventing negative outcomes, such as highlighting risk, implementing controls, and generally avoiding risk taking. Protection goals bolster a team’s defences against safety incidents by refocusing a team’s attention on hazards and risk management, and learning the aims to prevent reoccurrence of negative outcomes like safety incidents.

It is important to consider this full range of safety goals and develop skills appropriate to different work situations that require safety to be framed in certain ways. Relying on a single set of skills is counterproductive – always demanding people be wary of risks can be demoralising for teams if the leader does not also give positive attention such as recognition for good work. On the other hand, emphasising only positive safety goals is not effective if the leader does not also act decisively to prevent dangerous situations and implement controls.

Good safety leaders need to display very different skills over the course of a shift or work day.

The LEAD model summarises the different types of safety leadership behaviours that frontline leaders need to maintain safety in these different situations. Importantly, the LEAD model is dynamic and interactive, meaning that effective safety leaders can:

1. switch between different behaviours
2. combine different behaviours as the situation requires.

The four types of LEAD behaviours specify the leadership skills needed to demonstrate the behaviour provided throughout the sections of the workbook.
The workbook

Throughout this workbook, you will take significant steps towards safety leadership excellence. This will begin by broadly self-reflecting on your own safety attitudes and beliefs, in turn flowing through to developing a specific commitment.

By understanding the influence that workplace leaders provide, together with the thinking and behaviour of others, you can start to secure positive physical and psychological safety outcomes for teams.

Starting with high level strategy, with the end in mind, the workbook will help you to understand how the level and type of safety commitment influences team members. It will continue to describe how establishing a broad safety vision will provide a team with meaning and purpose.

Next, the workbook will focus on the operational aspects of safety leadership by outlining how to define general safety goals and specific objectives to guide team members’ actions and give them clarity. Learning the principles of effective communication, as well as recognition and constructive feedback enables leaders to drive team performance towards goals and ultimately, a safety vision.

Following the strategical and operational sections of the workbook, it will continue onto the tactical implementation of a safety vision and the specific risks that teams need to manage. It will explore how to design good work and anticipate where human limitations interact with situational risk factors, giving equal weight to both physical and psychological hazards.

Finally, the workbook will consider the role of learning and continuous improvement, which are leadership behaviours contributing to the betterment of a team’s safety performance. Over time, effective safety leaders influence their team to make changes to their safety vision, goals, and objectives. Safety improvements can also help to address physical and psychological risks more effectively.
1.3 Activity: Safety leadership challenges

Take a moment to think about your work and the challenges you face as a safety leader.

1. Use a couple of sentences to describe your main challenge as a safety leader in the workplace.

*For example: Making sure workers comply with company safety rules, ensuring positive mental health among my team due to a high stress work environment.*

2. How does this challenge affect your ability to be a good safety leader?

*For example: I feel it is impossible to constantly monitor and enforce safety rules because I can’t be everywhere all the time, I may seem distracted or uncaring to my team.*

3. Thinking about the LEAD model, what do you think are the areas of safety leadership that, if developed further, would help you to more effectively deal with this challenge?

*For example: Being able to influence workers safety motivation so they follow rules even when I’m not watching, learning how to have a conversation about mental health.*
Energise behaviours help to build a sense of collective purpose and meaning around safety and motivate workers to achieve team and organisational safety goals.

It is one thing to set safety goals for the team, and another to motivate and inspire them to achieve those goals. Through energising behaviours, leaders give workers a reason to pursue safety goals at work and increase their motivation to achieve these goals.

As a leader, you are in an influential position. The way leaders behave, and particularly through the goals, objectives, and directions given to people, leaders can influence to what extent good physical and psychological safety is achieved at work.

When using ‘energise’ behaviours, leaders are encouraging their team to take proactive steps towards positive safety goals, and giving them flexibility in how these goals are achieved. This combination of succeeding with flexibility is best suited to situations that require workers to be self-motivated and work towards a common vision or purpose.

At a glance
This section of the workbook will cover the meaning and purpose required to drive high safety performance across your team.

‘Meaning’ refers to the psychological energy or motivation that underpins safety in the workplace. The team’s meaning around safety is derived from the type and level of safety commitment shown by a leader. You will explore the different types of safety commitment ‘drivers’ that each contribute to a sense of meaning around the importance of safety.

‘Purpose’ refers to the inspirational vision that underpins why the team participates in safety in the workplace. It provides a higher reason and overarching end state that the team should strive to achieve.
2.1 Developing your safety commitment

Safety leaders must develop a genuine safety commitment and make this known to employees. Such a commitment lets workers know that you have their health, safety and wellbeing at the forefront of your mind, increasing their commitment and engagement.

Safety commitment is the reason why you look after safety. There are three different safety commitment drivers that, if used together, create a powerful perception of safety’s importance and value across a team:

1. **Transactional** - transactional safety commitment drivers are those that highlight the reasons why safety should be done to prevent punishments or increase rewards. Examples include being safe to prevent regulatory prosecution or loss of reputation, or to make sure the team receives its safety bonus. These types of drivers are not as effective as others because they emphasise the importance of what others think should be done, and if used by themselves, are likely to be less effective over the long term.

2. **Moral** - moral safety commitment drivers are seen by people as an ethical reason for staying safe. This driver focuses on safety being the ‘right’ or ‘correct’ thing to do. Leaders using this driver see safety as a core social value. Moral drivers are powerful because they send the signal to the team that the leader has deeply held values around safety and genuinely believes in the importance of safety to promote a healthy and productive society. Moral drivers may also help to build trust by emphasising the leader’s integrity.

3. **Emotional** – emotional safety drivers are one of the most powerful drivers of safety commitment because they convey the leader’s passion and personal care over the team. Leaders who use emotional drivers may refer to their desire to avoid harm being conveyed to team members or the importance of going home each day free from ill health or injury.

Combining all three types of drivers is likely to create the perception that a leader is genuinely committed to safety. This will then send a clear message to a team that safety is valued.

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**X** Ineffective use of safety commitment drivers can include:
- Just stay safe because I told you so.
- Don’t injure yourself; I don’t want to be the one who cops it from the boss.
- You’ve got to be stupid if you injure yourself on this job.

**✓** Effective use of safety commitment drivers can include:
- It is important to me that everyone goes home in the same way that they arrived. So, I hope that you all take care of yourselves out there today.
- I know that we can sometimes face pressures out there to produce as fast as possible. Let me be clear – to me there is nothing more important than safety. You have my permission to say no to anything you feel is unsafe and may put you or others at risk.
- Our safety procedures state that all high risk tasks must be supported by a thorough risk assessment before work commences. Failure to do so could mean disciplinary action. In addition to this, safety is of utmost importance and I want you all to know you have my support in completing these risk assessments, even if the job takes a bit longer.
2.2 Activity: Safety commitment

1. Take a moment to think about a leader or colleague who was genuinely committed to safety. What did they do to demonstrate a genuine safety commitment? What drivers do you think they used to communicate their safety commitment (i.e. transactional, emotional, moral)?

2. Think about an opportunity you have to demonstrate your genuine safety commitment. What type(s) of drivers do you think fit most naturally with your own leadership style and experiences (transactional, moral, emotional) and why?

3. For each type of driver, write down how you could communicate your safety commitment to other people on your team.

Transactional (focusing on rewards and punishments):

Moral (focusing on safety as the right thing to do):

Emotional (focusing on values and emotional connections):
2.3 Developing a safety vision

A vision is different to a goal or objective. It is a description of what you would like to see with respect to safety in the future. Once a broad and inspiring safety vision is set, the specific goals will naturally flow through from it.

There are several principles that help to set an effective safety vision:

- Create an ideal future that provides direction and guidance for behaviour. This means think about how you want the workplace to look and feel if everyone is acting safely. Use your imagination to fast forward to how the workplace could be. Also ask yourself ‘what if’ and how that future might look to others.

- Ensure your vision has a value-based core. Develop this core by reflecting on what is important to you as a leader and why it is important for others to achieve. Ideally, relate your team safety vision to the broader strategy and objective of the business. For example, the business may have a strategic goal of providing a mentally healthy and productive workforce, which is then translated into a vision for the team that focuses on what that strategy would look like at the team level.

- Make the vision relevant to the team. Make it consistent with the team’s history, culture, values, and present situation so the vision isn’t surprising or foreign to them. Link the vision to things that the team is already familiar with.

- Use positive language that highlights what you want the team to achieve. Focus on positives you want the team to strive towards and do so with enthusiasm and passion.

- Emphasise the change-oriented nature of your vision and consider what you would like the team to do differently to achieve the vision.

- Make your vision inclusive by using words that make the team feel that everyone is working together to achieve the vision (e.g. us, we, our). This creates a sense that the vision is shared and everyone has responsibility for achieving it.

Some additional examples of effective and ineffective safety visions are provided on the opposite page.

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Case study

CV Services is an integrated group of companies that covers functions such as electrical, media and design, and maintenance. Through investing in its safety culture, and in particular through visible safety leadership actions at all levels of the business, CV Services has achieved excellent work health and safety (WHS) performance.

Achieving this level of WHS performance required a compelling vision driven from the top that also resonated with the broader workforce. To achieve this, CV Services started with defining a core value for its health, safety, environment and quality (HSEQ) program - “Always put safety first”. This value acted as a beacon where staff at all levels of the organisation could evaluate their actions, holding themselves and others to account. This value was supported by a specific vision “to have a totally healthy workforce with zero injuries”, and provided the overarching organisational goal to strive towards.

An innovative feature of CV Services’ approach to safety culture change was the persuasive communication campaign built around strong foundations. Two simple messages underpin their program:

1. Keep safety front of mind, simple, and real.
2. Get involved and play your part to achieve zero harm at work.

These messages are effective because they reinforce the value of safety as a core organisational value, challenge the belief that safety is impractical or complicated, and foster workforce responsibility and accountability to ‘make it happen’.
Ineffective safety visions include:

- Starting from today I want you all to wear every piece of PPE we give you. I don’t want to hear any more excuses or reasons why it’s uncomfortable or makes the job harder.
- If you want to keep your job around here I suggest you all follow every safety procedure at all times. I don’t care if there is production pressure or customer demands, just follow all the procedures and you won’t get sacked.

These visions are ineffective because they are negatively worded and are not inclusive, which creates a sense of ‘us versus them’. There are also no values embedded in these visions, and no desirable future states articulated (apart from compliance with instructions).

Effective safety visions include:

- We will build a safety culture shown by visible safety leadership and behaviours that emphasise a genuine care and concern for our team mates at work.
- Our safety vision is to achieve zero incidents and harm. We will do this through focusing on continuous safety improvement and safety leadership activities that decrease our incident rates and make this a safe and welcoming place to work.
- We will maintain a safe, happy and healthy team environment. Our commitment is to not only our workers but also their families, making sure that we achieve a safe working environment that returns everyone home safe and well every day. We will achieve this vision through stopping work and reporting when a situation is unsafe, performing risk assessments to a high standard, and making sure all hazards are controlled as far as is reasonably practicable.

These visions are effective at giving people purpose and meaning around safety because they use positive and inclusive language, which creates a sense of energy and group togetherness in their achievement. These visions also make use of a values-based core, providing emotional and moral reasons as to their importance. Finally, these visions highlight the changes that are required for people to achieve the desired future states.
2.3.1 Activity: Safety vision

1. Please have a go at developing your own safety vision using the principles outlined above to create an inspiring vision for safety in your team. Try to be as specific and realistic as possible.

My safety vision:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What’s the desired future you want to see?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. What other initiatives, values, history, or goals can you link the vision to?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. What are the high-level changes that have to take place to achieve your vision?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
2.4 Empowering your team

When employees feel empowered, they are motivated to work safely, even when unsupervised. Empowered employees are more likely to feel competent and that they have a meaningful influence over their workplace. Empowerment is also related to psychological health, with empowered workers being more likely to feel less stress and show higher productivity 3.

There are four main ways in which safety leaders can build a team’s sense of empowerment.

1. By **enhancing a team’s sense of value and impact**, the team may feel they are acting in ways that align with their personal values, and the impact will occur when team members feel they are contributing meaningfully. Leaders can drive value and impact by engaging in:
   - regular meetings where the team or company safety strategy is discussed and how it relates to work tasks and priorities
   - sharing the safety vision and goals that the team is striving towards
   - explaining to team members how they are personally contributing to the bigger picture around health and safety.

2. Empowerment can also be increased by providing opportunities for team members to **build and show their competence**. Leaders should then:
   - identify training events that team members can participate in
   - set challenging but achievable safety goals for the team
   - give team members tasks that they haven’t done before and the support needed to achieve success.

3. Empowerment can also be increased in a team by giving them **autonomy**, to work independently and with less supervision. This can be enhanced by:
   - reorganising the way jobs are done giving employees more independence in their work
   - revising decision-making processes giving workers greater control of their tasks without involving a leader
   - asking the team to give feedback on how to improve safety
   - involving the team in decision-making processes, particularly when making decisions about safety (e.g. deciding on control measures).

4. Finally, by engaging in meaningful consultation, the workers sense of empowerment will be enhanced. Consultation with workers is legislated under S47 of the Work Health and Safety Act (2011) and can be implemented by:
   - talking to workers about the work health and safety matters
   - listening to workers concern
   - seeking and sharing views on work health and safety matters
   - considering what workers say before making decisions.

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3 Seibert, Wang & Courtright (2011)
2.5 Energise summary

Key concepts
• Over and above setting effective goals, workers need to feel motivated and energised to strive towards them.
• Frontline safety leaders play an important role in translating a high level company safety vision into a team-specific vision that resonates and drives safety behaviour.
• A fundamental part of a safety leader’s ability to give workers meaning and purpose around safety is their safety commitment – using transactional, moral, and emotional driver’s all together sends a powerful signal to workers around the importance and value of safety.

Key skills
A safety vision can be developed using six core principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Create an ideal future that provides direction and guidance.</th>
<th>4. Use positive language.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Connect the vision to values and the broader business strategy.</td>
<td>5. Emphasise the changes required from the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Make the vision relevant to the team.</td>
<td>6. Use inclusive language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Empower team members by providing opportunities for them to show their value and impact, allocating tasks that leverage and grow their knowledge and skills, giving the team autonomy.

Energise Do and Do not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Do not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support safety messages from management or senior business leaders.</td>
<td>Openly criticise management or senior leaders’ safety messages or changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a personal safety pledge or commitment to the team that safety is an important personal priority.</td>
<td>State that safety is someone else’s job or prioritise production goals over safety goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about a vision of the future and how safety is an important part of that vision.</td>
<td>Approach safety day-by-day without thinking of the long term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the team to get involved in or lead business safety initiatives and projects.</td>
<td>Talk about safety initiatives and projects as a waste of time and discourage people from getting involved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.6 Energise quiz

Test your knowledge and tick all the correct answers for the following questions:

1) Leading with energising behaviours:
   - a) is about motivating the team to feel passionate and motivated when it comes to safety.
   - b) helps teams to see the achievement of better safety as a desirable future.
   - c) gives employees the confidence in their contribution to the organisation’s safety goals.
   - d) is about coming up with your own safety vision and directing employees to follow it no matter what.

2) Leader safety commitment:
   - a) is not that important for safety in teams.
   - b) reflects the priority that leaders’ assign to safety.
   - c) is not connected to a leader’s safety vision.
   - d) should be primarily transactional to be effective at driving compliance with rules.

3) An effective safety vision:
   - a) indicates an ideal future state.
   - b) has a value based core.
   - c) focuses on the consequences for not following the vision.

4) Empowered employees:
   - a) see themselves as competent.
   - b) think they can influence their environment.
   - c) are likely to be proactive.
   - d) require a lot of close supervision and monitoring.

5) Leaders can empower employees by:
   - a) sharing safety goals and targets with the team.
   - b) presenting new challenges and opportunities to the team.
   - c) providing opportunities to make suggestions.
   - d) making decisions without consulting the team.

Answers

1. a, b, c  
2. b  
3. a, b  
4. a, b, c  
5. a, b, c
Leverage

Ensuring safety expectations are clear and fair

Leverage is shown when leaders give the team guidance around the goals and objectives they would like the team to strive towards, and providing feedback on the team's performance to drive desired safety behaviours and improve unhelpful behaviours. The combination of prospering with stability means that the emphasis is on supporting team members to strive towards safety goals and promoting a predictable work environment.

Leverage is about clarifying for the team what is expected and why, and doing this fairly. Through clarity and fairness, workers know what is expected of them, how to achieve those expectations, and understand the reasons why the expectations are in place. Clarity and fairness are essential for people to accept and achieve safety goals, and make safe choices in the workplace.

Leverage is best used when the team is focused on getting work done quickly and efficiently, and also striving to achieve work safely.
In this situation, safety leadership behaviours are needed to clarify what team members need to do to maintain health and safety including:

- communicating safety expectations
- swiftly correcting safety issues
- setting effective safety objectives and goals
- driving the team forwards to achieve these objectives.

Effective safety leaders need to have the ability to effectively communicate with team members. Without those core skills, messages may be misunderstood by workers and they may strive towards goals that are in conflict with safety, putting them at risk of a safety incident.

Quality communication sets the foundation of a positive workplace culture by maximising physical and psychological safety. Effective communication also raises awareness of hazards, enables more accurate assessment of risk, and increases the effectiveness of controls. Effective communication ensures that workers’ basic needs of mutual respect and trust are met.

**At a glance**

This section of the workbook describes the characteristics of effective communication and the five foundational skills that underpin all types of communication.

It will then discuss the skill of clarifying objectives, which gives a sense of direction to team members when deciding what to prioritise in their work.

Finally, the workbook will examine how to deliver effective positive recognition (encouraging safe behaviours) and constructive feedback (facilitating self-insight and change).
3.1 Communication basics

Good quality communication is a foundational leadership skill that not only affects safety, but all other aspects of team performance. Good communication allows a safety leader to engage with their team effectively, promote safety messages in ways that make sense to the team, and open up dialogue within the team. Good communication also contributes to a physically and mentally safe workplace.

Poor communication leads to misunderstandings, uncertainty, and possibly also a sense of unfairness. Poor communication can even create psychosocial hazards, if the recipient interprets the message in a negative way or it interacts with other stressors that may be present (e.g. prolonged work pressure and abusive supervision).

When communicating, it is important to consider the 5C’s – making sure your communication is:

Concise – concise communication means it is kept brief and to the point. Messages are best received when they are simple and only relevant information is discussed. Technical jargon is avoided or explained in simple terms.

Concrete – concrete communication means being specific in your wording, accurately reflecting the situation, and avoiding opinion. Being concrete means focusing on the facts and what can be directly observed, rather than what is based on speculation or feelings.

Complete – complete communication involves giving someone all the information they need to be successful.

Courteous – courteous communication makes sure your message is heard and contributes to positive relationships with team members. Showing courtesy also helps to develop a mentally healthy workplace where people feel respected and psychologically safe.

Checking – checking for understanding is one of the most important parts of effective communication, but is also something leaders can forget to do. Without checking for understanding, a worker may miss the point of the conversation and fail to act on any instructions. In safety-critical settings, a misunderstanding can be life threatening. Understanding can be easily checked by asking questions.

Example of poor communication:

“How many times have I told you to use the other drill when doing this task, are you stupid? This is the third time I’ve caught you doing this, how do you even get out of bed in the morning …”

This is an example of poor quality communication because it is:

- negative
- disrespectful
- long-winded
- not based in objective facts
- omits information about the type of drill required.

The supervisor also did not check that the worker understood what was being said.

Example of good communication:

“Mate, I need you to use the impact drill when you are doing any work with concrete, otherwise the drill bit will be worn down, and the task will take longer. Do you understand what I mean?”

This is an example of good quality communication because it is:

- to the point
- uses factual information
- gives all the information required to change behaviour
- delivered in a pleasant and respectful manner while also making it clear that the action is not meeting expectations.
People can’t resist answering questions, which also helps to consolidate the message through recall of facts. In summary, these communication basics can be summed up by the ‘5C’s of communication’

• Complete – have you given all the necessary pieces of information?
• Concrete – is your message based on facts and what has been observed?
• Concise – is your message short and efficient in its wording?
• Courteous – are you delivering the message respectfully?
• Check understanding – are you making sure the message is understood?
3.1.1 Activity: Effective communication

Take a look at the example safety bulletin shown opposite.

Although this is a detailed message that includes a lot of technical detail, it may be difficult to communicate and understand. This means that the important points of the message could be lost. You can use principles of effective communication (the 5C’s - concrete, concise, complete, courteous, and checking understanding) to redesign this message.

1. Identify the key points of the safety bulletin using as few words as you can.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

2. Keeping the 5C’s of communication in mind, write how you might explain the message to your team in a simple yet effective way.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Safety bulletin
ORTHOSTATIC INTOLERANCE/ SUSPENSION TRAUMA

Orthostatic intolerance is characterised by the following symptoms: light-headedness, palpitations, tremulousness, fatigue, nausea, dizziness, headache, sweating, weakness, and fainting. Prolonged suspension from fall arrest systems can cause orthostatic intolerance, which in turn can result in serious physical injury or potentially, death.

Research into the causes of orthostatic intolerance show one cause is suspension in a fall arrest device leading to unconsciousness, followed by death in less than 30 minutes.

To reduce the risk associated with prolonged suspension in fall arrest systems, employers should implement plans to prevent prolonged suspensions, identifying orthostatic intolerance signs and symptoms, and performing rescue and treatment as quickly as possible.

In tests, healthy volunteers were suspended immobile and were seen to lose consciousness in as little as five minutes. Such suspension is life threatening and urgent rescue is needed. After rescue it is essential that casualties are not laid flat at any time either during the rescue or when landing on the ground. The correct management of the casualty is to keep them in a sitting position with legs either straight out or pulled up to the chest for a minimum of 20 minutes, even if they are unconscious. Failure to follow these post-rescue procedures can harm the casualties and sometimes lead to death.

Joe Bloggs,
Frontline Manager
3. An example of a more effective way to deliver the message is shown below. Compare your answer to the previous question to see how you fared. Notice the use of complete, concise, and concrete communication techniques.

**Hanging like this may kill the worker**

Surviving the fall is not the danger – hanging in the harness is dangerous too.
By hanging like this it takes approximately five minutes to fall unconscious and 30 minutes to die.
Manoeuvre the worker down quickly, they are not OK
If the worker is conscious tell them to keep moving their legs
Legs can be problematic when hanging as:
The blood can pool and if the legs are motionless, the blood will not move around the body meaning the heart cannot pump to his head. First the worker will faint, then the worker will die.
When the worker is no longer hanging, ask them to sit or kneel.

**When the worker is no longer hanging, ask them to sit or kneel**

Do not lay the worker flat, ensure they are propped up in a sitting position.
There should be no laying down for at least 20 minutes, giving the heart time to adjust.

**When the worker is no longer hanging, don't do this**

The worker’s legs are carrying too much “blue blood” and not carrying oxygen through it. Sudden laying down could move the unoxygenated blood into their heart and kill the worker.

4. What questions could you use to check that team members understand your message?

---

Joe Bloggs,
Frontline Manager
3.2 Clarifying direction

It is one thing to have an overarching safety vision, but if workers don’t know what they have to do to accomplish the vision, it is unlikely that anything will be achieved.

One of the first steps after developing a vision should be to identify broad goals that summarise in general terms what needs to happen. Goals are the broad aims of your vision and the significant, longer-term changes that you hope to achieve.

Objectives are how goals are operationalised into more specific and actionable directions. Objectives specify the results you expect to see, how you will measure these results, and when the results will be achieved. Accordingly, these objectives will drive the team’s actions.

When actions are supported by this hierarchy, you are more likely to see the desired changes in thinking and behaviour, resulting in a safer and healthier workplace.

3.2.1 Identifying goals

Goals are broad areas of action that support a particular safety vision. Without goals, it would be unclear how the vision translates into actions that the team can undertake. Goals also enable a leader and their team to engage in brainstorming and other activities that aim to develop a more specific action plan.

Consider the following example:

An organisation’s overarching safety vision might be to create a mentally and physically safe workplace that is free from harm.

Underpinning this broad vision is a number of goals that might include:

• improvement in the frequency of PPE compliance
• decrease in the number of musculoskeletal injuries
• promotion of a positive workplace culture that helps employees to flourish and lead mentally healthy and productive working lives.
In identifying goals, a specific four step process can be used:

1. Identify the desired future state - your vision of what success looks like.
2. Identify the current state - what things look like now.
3. Identify the gaps - where there is a mismatch between the current and future state.
4. Identify the goals that need to be in place to achieve the desired future state, taking into account the current state and the gaps.

3.2.2 Activity: Identifying goals
Using the safety vision you developed earlier, complete the goal identification template below.

1. My safety vision is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future state</th>
<th>Current state</th>
<th>Gaps</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your desired future? What will it look like?</td>
<td>What are things like now? What is the current status?</td>
<td>What gaps exist between the future and current states?</td>
<td>Broadly, what needs to change to achieve the future state?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.3 Setting objectives

Objectives support goals by specifying what the team needs to do, how, and by when. Objectives drive group action toward a desired goal, and therefore the overall vision.

An objective must be structured correctly so it is meaningful and drives action. Poorly structured objectives create confusion and may increase risk. Setting well-structured objectives and communicating them effectively increases not only safety performance, but also general work performance. So, getting them right is very important.

When objectives are not structured well, they can create confusion among the team. Poorly structured objectives mean people are unsure what is important and what they should be striving to achieve. Not only will this reduce the team’s performance, but also may create frustration, stress, and lower morale. Failing to give team members clarity through well-defined objectives can create a psychosocial hazard that results in psychological injury.

Setting SMART objectives will ensure your team has structure, and is clearly focused on what matters most to achieve the team’s objectives. Your objectives should include all of the SMART principles at the same time. SMART refers to five principles:

**Specific** - letting people know exactly what needs to be accomplished (who, what, where and why).

**Measurable** - including ideas about how progress toward the objective can be checked.

**Achievable** - being realistic by taking into account the situation such as available resources, workload, and other constraints on work.

**Relevant** - the objectives are linked to the team’s responsibilities and align with other goals or objectives already in place. Relevant objectives provide the reasons why they are important.

**Timely** – communicating to people when the objectives should be achieved. This eliminates any uncertainty about due dates for particular actions.

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**X** A poorly structured objective is:

“Get to work on lowering our back injuries – they are too high”.

This objective is poorly structured because:

- it is unclear what should be done to achieve it
- it is unclear when it should be done by
- there is no performance measure so people won’t know if they have achieved it
- the objective isn’t linked to the team’s vision or anything else that makes it relevant to them.

---

**✓** An example of the same objective reworked as a SMART objective is:

“Guys, we’ve had four back injuries this month. Our safety vision is to make sure everyone goes home safely, which we aren’t achieving yet. I would like you to immediately start using the lifting crane for all manual handling tasks. I’ll make sure you have extra time to complete your work to account for this extra step. By next month, I want us to try and achieve zero back injuries.”

This objective is SMART because it:

- has a specific outcome or result, which in turn is directly measurable.
- it is has been related back to the overarching vision and has been given a timeframe for completion.

It is also a realistic objective because the equipment and actions needed to achieve it are easily undertaken.
3.2.4 Activity: Setting objectives

The workbook has covered how to set effective team objectives by using the SMART principles. This activity allows you to practice how to set an effective objective.

1. Think about a safety goal you would like to meet. You might like to use one of the goals from the previous exercise. What is a safety goal that you could turn into an effective safety objective for your team?

For example: You’ve noticed that pre-job risk assessments have gone down over the past few weeks and you’d like to boost them back up.

Some of your team appear to be struggling with work demands and you’d like to increase your check-in’s with them.

2. Turn your broad goal into a specific objective that you can communicate with the team. Some prompts are below to help you use the SMART principles.

Specific: How can you be very clear about what you want the team to achieve?

Measurable: How will you know the objective has been achieved?
Achievable: Is it likely/possible that the team can achieve the objective?


Relevant: What other initiatives, activities, or goals can you link your objective to?


Timely: What is the timeframe in which you want the team to achieve the objective?


3.3 Giving feedback

Providing feedback to your team ensures they know what is expected and allows them to adjust their behaviour to fit team goals and performance requirements. Feedback has important purposes:

- Reinforces positive behaviours.
- Reduces negative or unhelpful behaviours.
- Increases the team’s confidence.
- Increases the team’s motivation.
- Provides specific guidance on how to do things differently, so contributes to their learning and psychological wellbeing.

3.3.1 Giving constructive feedback

From time to time, there will be situations when you need to give your team members constructive feedback. This type of feedback aims to reduce or eliminate unhelpful behaviours and provide an alternative way of acting that is more helpful to achieving the team’s goals.

At other times, feedback might be less about giving specific direction and more about influencing the way people think and behave over the long-term. Constructive feedback is one method to influence workers to change their behaviour. Constructive feedback is best used when the situation is not urgent (i.e. there is not a serious risk) and your objective is to create sustainable changes in thinking and behaviour.

When giving constructive feedback it is very important to do so in a way that minimises the chances of the team member reacting defensively, such as getting angry or dismissive. Although leaders can’t always control how someone will react to feedback, there are a few things leaders can do to improve their communication when giving constructive feedback. Some general principles to keep in mind which, if done well, will maximise its impact on the team member:

- Be as specific as possible.
- Be clear about what should change.
- Give the worker time to change before addressing again.
- Be patient.
- Be clear and fair.

Sometimes this feedback will need to be immediate and directive, such as when a WHS duty is not being complied with or there is an urgent need to take action to avoid injury or illness. In these situations, use the 5Cs of effective communication: concise, concrete, complete, courteous, and check understanding. The objective is to immediately make a change in behaviour to avoid serious health and safety consequences.
Leaders should also follow a specific process when giving constructive feedback. By following this process it will give the conversation some structure and help the team member receive the message and act on it:

1. Ask a curious question.
2. Describe what has been done well.
3. Describe what hasn’t been done well.
4. Describe how things could be done better.
5. Ask for a commitment to change behaviour.

**Case study**

Imagine you are Tim’s supervisor. Tim has been reported by one of his peers for being rude and aggressive to them especially during peak periods of demand.

1. Step one is to ask a ‘curious’ question about the specific area of concern that opens up further discussion. Being curious means being interested in the person, making the conversation less threatening. It may also open up broader reasons why the performance might not be acceptable (e.g. personal circumstances, work pressure).

   *Example: Hi Tim, I’ve been walking around the shop and noticed a few things. How do you think you have been going with your co-workers lately?*

2. Step two is to provide the constructive feedback. Being specific and objective are critical for the feedback to be effective at driving change.

   *Example: I’m aware of a situation that happened last week where you became angry at a co-worker. You were observed to be aggressive and short-tempered when a request was made for your time and help with a task.*

3. Step three involves giving an alternative action or helpful behaviour that the team member should engage in. It is important to provide the ‘so what’ or why the alternative behaviour should be followed. Also try to use inclusive language (e.g. we, us) to avoid focusing exclusively on the individual.

   *Example: Although serving customers quickly and efficiently is important, we also need to get along with our co-workers so this is a healthy and safe place to work. In the future, please let me know if the work pressure is too intense and we can look at alternative ways of scheduling to reduce stress and conflict with peers. Can I ask that you maintain a professional and respectful relationship with your peers?*

4. The last step is to ask for a commitment from the person to change, and let them know you will check back in at an agreed time later. This creates motivation to change and allows a future conversation to take place. Also important is balancing the need to check in and monitor changes with giving the worker personal responsibility to make the desired changes him/herself. Excessive checking in can create an impression of micromanaging and reduce personal responsibility for change.

   *Example: Tim, based on what we discussed, how will you use this feedback in the future? I’ll ask you again tomorrow to see how I can continue to support you to make changes in this area.*
3.3.2 Activity: Constructive feedback

1. Think about a time when you were given ineffective constructive feedback. Reflect on what was said (e.g. overly critical, non-specific, punitive) and how you felt (e.g. frustrated, angry, humiliated, ashamed). What was said by the other person that made the feedback ineffective?

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

2. As a result of receiving feedback in this way, how likely were you to act on what was said? Was the feedback effective at its goal of changing how you think and behave at work?

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

3. Reflecting on this time when you were given ineffective constructive feedback, and the principles of effective feedback you have learned so far, how might you have done it differently?

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

4. Below is a scenario of safety performance. Imagining you are the worker’s supervisor, write out how you might deliver constructive feedback, using the previously described principles.

   One of your team members has been rushing to get to the next job. Although the actual work task was completed on time, an unexpected request from a customer has created some extra pressure. As a result, the worker has not secured all the equipment on the back of the truck and is about to drive off when you arrive and notice the situation.

   How would you deliver constructive feedback to this worker?

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________
3.4 Rewarding good performance

Recognising and rewarding people for good safety performance is important, as the types of safe behaviours preventing incidents from happening is increased. All too often leaders can focus on what people do incorrectly or how they can improve, and sometimes forget to acknowledge a job done well and safely. Other benefits of rewarding safe work include:

- clarifying team safety expectations (not just the individual involved)
- reinforcing desired behaviours
- increasing the sense of fairness
- promoting a sense of value and positive mental health through acknowledgement.

Rewards can be given through simple messages such as praise and verbal acknowledgment. These methods have a powerful effect on the team’s motivation because of how our brains are ‘wired’.

The renowned psychologist Daniel Kahneman describes different modes or systems of thinking. Kahneman refers to a way of thinking that is fast and automatic. This style of thinking operates below conscious awareness, but drives most behaviour through how people react immediately to situations and, particularly, how they feel emotionally. An example is driving a car on the highway – most of the control over the vehicle is subconscious and automatic.

Giving someone a verbal reward activates parts of the brain that are involved in automatic thinking that, in turn, flows on to their emotional state and how they behave. Most of this happens beneath conscious awareness and all people know is that they feel ‘good’ after receiving rewards. In the future, the person is more likely to behave in a similar way because of this activation of certain pathways and areas involved in automatic thinking.

This cycle reinforces the behaviours that are being rewarded. So, by rewarding good performance at work, leaders can influence how workers think and feel at subconscious level, influencing the workers’ behaviours.

However, it is not enough to simply say ‘good job’. To be effective, rewarding should follow several principles, including:

- be specific around the behaviour(s) you are rewarding
- vary reward times and situations
- balance rewarding individually with rewarding in front of the team
- don’t over-reward
- provide rewards that match the level of achievement
- reward the entire team if possible
- recognise signs of change and reward to promote ongoing effort.
A specific process helps to structure reward and recognition in an effective way. The process includes three steps:

1. Set the scene
2. Give positive feedback
3. Check how to reward

Below is a case study that explores how effective feedback can be delivered.

**Case study**

Imagine you are Anne’s supervisor. Anne is normally quiet and reserved, and although she engages well one-on-one, she doesn’t contribute much to group meetings. Lately, you have noticed that Anne is giving more energy to contributing in group settings and you want to give her some recognition for this. There are some simple steps that can be followed to achieve this:

**Step one – set the scene**

This discussion will capture the person’s attention by letting them know you have noticed their performance. An example includes:

*Hi Anne, I’ve noticed that you are contributing more to meetings and wanted to give you some recognition for this.*

**Step two - give positive feedback**

Be specific and positive to ensure the feedback reinforces the right behaviour. An example includes:

*Anne, your suggestion about consulting with the workers to understand how the new gear we bought might introduce risks to the job was spot on.*

**Step three - the level and type of recognition the team member prefers**

This makes sure that the positive recognition doesn’t embarrass or upset the team member who may prefer one-on-one feedback. An example includes:

*Anne, I’d like to share your idea and recognise you for it at the next safety meeting. Is this okay?*
3.4.1 Activity: Rewarding

Below are some scenarios outlining safety performance. Imagine you are the supervisor in these scenarios and write out how you might deliver recognition in a more effective way, using the previously described principles.

Scenario one

A team member who has been disciplined in the past for taking shortcuts that impacted safety has complied with all safety procedures on an important job. You notice this and recognise the worker by saying ‘good job today mate’.

How could you deliver recognition to this person in a way that is more specific to the behaviours do you want to encourage?

Scenario two

During a safety audit, two of your team members are singled out as having shown excellent safety performance, which means the team has exceeded the average audit score across the company. You approach each team member separately and thank them for their safe work.

How could you deliver recognition to these people in a way that motivates the group to carry out similar behaviours?

Scenario three

Your team has exceeded their safety performance targets for the past four weeks. You have held a BBQ lunch for them each week to celebrate these achievements. This week, their safety performance has started to level off and you are eager to continue the forward momentum.

How could you deliver recognition in a less predictable way that still reinforces behaviour but doesn’t rely on a consistent reward?
3.5 Leverage summary

Key concepts

- Leverage is about clarifying for the team what is expected of them and why, and assisting team members to be successful through fair and helpful feedback.
- Specific team actions to promote safety are supported by:
  1. measurable objectives
  2. goals
  3. the overarching safety vision

Key skills

The 5C’s of effective communication:
- Concise
- Concrete
- Complete
- Courteous
- Check-in

Set well-structured objectives using the SMART model:
- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timely

Use constructive feedback to change unhelpful behaviour:
- Ask a curious question.
- Provide a specific example of effective or helpful behaviour.
- Provide constructive feedback, being specific and objective.
- Give an alternative action or helpful behaviour.
- Ask for a commitment and let him/her know you will check back in later.

Use reward and recognition to reinforce helpful behaviour:
- Set the scene to capture attention.
- Give the positive feedback, being specific and positive.
- Check how the team member would like to be recognised.

Leverage Do and Do not

| Do | Provide opportunities to have input into setting and measuring progress towards team safety goals. |
| Do | Help people understand safety topics by adjusting and using multiple ways to communicate. |
| Do | Give informal coaching and offer mentoring to team members to help them become safer at work. |
| Do | Provide verbal reinforcement to team members who show good safety performance. |
| Do not | Shut down or ignore the team when they ask questions about or try to clarify safety goals. |
| Do not | Fail to consider the audience and their level of understanding or experience when talking about safety. |
| Do not | Fail to give the team feedback or give it in a way that belittles them or is overly harsh. |
| Do not | Show favouritism to certain team members or inconsistency when recognising good safety performance. |
3.6 Leverage quiz

Test your knowledge and tick all the correct answers for the following questions:

1. Providing clarity and fairness is important because it:
   - a) helps workers understand what is expected of them.
   - b) ensures workers are aware of the steps required to meet expectations.
   - c) is very easy to do and doesn’t have to follow a process.
   - d) helps to build trust.

2. Which of the following may lead to perceptions of unfairness?
   - a) Poor communication.
   - b) Vague goals.
   - c) Inconsistent responses from a leader.
   - d) Constructive feedback delivered in a consistent and factual way.

3. Tick all that are true about setting objectives.
   - a) Setting SMART objectives is another way to ensure clarity and fairness in your team.
   - b) Specific objectives clearly outline what your team is expected to achieve.
   - c) It is best to not involve your team in setting objectives.
   - d) People are more likely to achieve an outcome if they have a clear and specific objective.

4. Tick all that are true about rewarding:
   - a) Be clear about what is being rewarded.
   - b) Always reward at the same time or occasion.
   - c) Reward only in front of individuals and not in front of the team.
   - d) Clarify why a reward is being given.

5. True or false:
   It is always a good idea to over reward a team if you get the chance, as you can never run into the risk of the reward becoming meaningless.
   - True
   - False

6. True or false:
   It is more effective to give smaller and less predictable rewards, rather than one large reward.
   - True
   - False

Answers

1. a, b, d    2. a, b, c    3. a, b, d    4. a, d    5. False    6. True
Defend involves being vigilant to the signs of risk and maintaining a keen awareness of the situation so that hazards are identified and the risk is more accurately assessed and controlled.

The risk of a safety incident can be increased by missing certain cues or signals, the type of work situation and our humanly limitations.

For example, complacency is the psychological state where risk is ignored or downplayed due to repeated instances of only minor incidents or no major incident occurring. Combine this scenario with a work situation where extended repetition of actions is required - the risk may be significant and high.

A leader’s role in this situation is to detect signs of risk, helping workers to assess the level of risk, and ensuring appropriate controls are in place. Defend behaviours support a team to achieve safe and healthy work by effectively operating and practicing the safety vision, goals, and objectives.
At a glance

This section of the workbook discusses human limitations, and how these limitations are characteristics of how the human brain is 'wired'. These characteristics work to conserve energy and enable us to accomplish tasks with minimal effort however; the way work is designed and conducted can also increase a risk at work when our characteristics aren't taken into account and controlled.

This will also explore situational risk factors, which are aspects of the task that can interact with human limitations to create unacceptable risks. Situational risk factors can be improved through good work design that effectively eliminates risks with sources of support.

Cognitive biases refer to brain 'shortcuts' that enable people to make quick and efficient decisions. These biases can also create a risk by using the preferred, or bias, decisions and blinding people to other sources of information. For example, a risk assessment may create a bias as workers may ignore or be unaware of certain hazards because they haven't been encountered for a long time.

Finally, the workbook will discuss a model of supportive conversations providing leaders with the skills required to notice and support workers who are experiencing psychological distress.
4.1 Human limitations

Human beings are not perfect and there are a number of limitations that can affect risk levels at work. Brains are ‘hardwired’ to act in certain ways that may not always be appropriate for high risk settings. As leaders, being aware of your own human limitations and those of your team, will allow you to be more informed and effectively manage risk in the environment.

Limited attention

People have a limited attention span and research suggests that most people can only retain and work with between three to four elements of information at any one time. This explains why people can remember certain pieces of information, such as phone numbers as two to three sets of numbers rather than as a string of separate digits. This is due to working memory, which is basically a mental ‘sketch pad’ that information passes through before going to long-term storage. However, in complex situations with large amounts of information, people may become quickly overloaded and miss important things such as the presence of a hazard or an ineffective or missing control.

Autopilot

At times, the brain can switch to autopilot, such as when you drive somewhere and can’t remember key parts of the journey. Autopilot occurs when people are so familiar with a task that it becomes subconscious, which frees up the brain to focus on other things. However, autopilot can increase risk if it causes the mind to be inattentive to the task being done.

Stress

Stress may be helpful in some situations and, in moderation, stress can increase motivation and result in higher performance. However high stress, especially for extended periods, increases the risk of a physical or psychological injury and can cause:

- distraction
- memory and learning difficulties
- fatigue
- rushing tasks or taking shortcuts
- strain
- psychological injury.

Effective safety leaders should be checking in with the team regularly to monitor their stress and, if necessary, redesigning the way work is done to make sure stress is not excessive. This may include reallocating work across the team or changing a work process to reduce pressure on team members. Leaders can also balance or offset high stress with appropriate sources of support and controls, eliminating other risks that could combine with high stress to cause an injury. This could mean offering support to help a worker complete a task safely, or providing additional resources to reduce stress, such as giving a worker extra time to complete a difficult task.
Mental tiredness

Mental tiredness, or fatigue, is caused when a person lacks the energy needed to concentrate and think clearly. This mental fatigue can occur when people perform the same task repetitively, or when they have to maintain concentration for long periods of time. In practice, mental fatigue can cause slips or lapses such as doing the right thing at the wrong time or forgetting a step in a task. Redesigning work can assist in reducing mental fatigue, including:

- varying tasks
- rotating personnel
- ensuring adequate breaks.

Complacency

Complacency causes people to ignore or miss warning signs of potential risks and engage in less effective risk assessments. When situations haven’t changed for a while, the brain works to save energy by assuming that this will always be the case. The brain devotes less attention to the situation, assuming the level of risk will stay the same as it always has. Complacency can occur during periods of low incidents. For example, a workplace may have had more than 100 days without a lost time incident, giving workers a false sense of security and less awareness of risks. It is important to challenge complacency - an absence of incidents doesn't necessarily mean that things are safe.

Skills and knowledge

To perform tasks efficiently and safely, workers need the right skills and knowledge - without these workers may struggle. Competence is made up from attitudes, skills and knowledge. Each of these has to be aligned and adequately developed if a task is to be done safely. Providing workers with the training necessary to perform work safely is part of a Person conducting a business or undertaking’s (PCBUs) responsibilities under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act).

As a safety leader it is important that you plan and monitor work to make sure any risks are adequately controlled, and use your knowledge of human limitations when checking in with workers.
4.2 Situational risk factors

Human limitations can interact or combine with different types of task characteristics. This can create hazards that carry unacceptable levels of risk.

For example, a person who is already experiencing personal stress may arrive into a high pressure environment at work. The stress of the conflict causes distraction and, combined with the high workload, may cause inattention and high risk to the task being completed. Consequently, a safety incident may be more likely to occur than if the sources of stress were assessed and controlled, particularly the stress created by poor work design.

High workloads and time pressure contribute to:

- stress
- decreased attention
- increased mental tiredness or fatigue.

This can result in people being distracted, taking short cuts, and forgetting key steps in a task.

Example controls: Obtain additional resources to reduce pressure, renegotiate deadlines or help workers to prioritise their tasks.

Complex tasks

Complex tasks require workers to devote more effort and attention if they are to be completed safely. When tasks are complex, people may focus on them without considering surrounding hazards, experience mental fatigue, and suffer from stress, particularly if the task is too complex or beyond their ability.

Example controls: Implement training, partner new workers with more experienced workers, break down the task into simpler steps or change the task to reduce complexity.

Routine

If tasks become routine, it means workers are very familiar with them. This routine places workers on autopilot, increases complacency, and workers may miss changes or important signs of risk in their environment.

Example controls: Rotate workers to different tasks throughout the day, provide regular breaks or redesign the task to give more variety.
Change

Change can be stressful for employees and completing tasks in a new way not only increases stress and anxiety for some people, but may also introduce new and unexpected safety hazards. Change requires time to adjust and being provided with the necessary resources, such as adequate training, can assist.

*Example controls: Provide adequate training, communicate regularly about change or, consult with workers.*

End of the day

At the end of a shift or working day risks can be increased because of fatigue or distraction, such as feeling tired and the workers’ minds wandering to non-work related matters. By the end of the day, a worker may lack the mental resources required to focus on the task and its safety requirements. Being mindful about the end of workers’ shifts is important for safety leaders who are trying to maintain a sense of vigilance to risk within their teams.

*Example controls: Schedule safety-critical tasks earlier in the shift or hold ‘stop-work’ meetings late in shifts to refocus attention.*
4.3 Cognitive biases

As the human brain has to work hard to process information in the environment, it has evolved a number of shortcuts to help us manage these demands. Sometimes these shortcuts work out well and allow us to accomplish a lot in a short time or make quick decisions. At other times, they may not work well or could be inappropriate for the situation, exposing us to increased risk.

Effective safety leaders should be mindful of these brain shortcuts and think about them when presenting information to employees and managing risk in the workplace. These shortcuts can be identified as follows:

- **Recency bias** - the brain emphasises the most recently received information, which means that information at the start of a conversation could be lost. If safety information is discussed briefly at the start of a meeting, it may be forgotten about by the end. A better approach is to end on the safety message or integrate safety throughout the meeting.

- **Confirmation bias** - people tend to seek out information that supports an existing view rather than evidence that challenges it. For example, if a leader has the belief that a worker is to blame for a safety incident, he/she might be more likely to pay attention to only the information that supports this belief, and ignore other evidence.

- **Attribution bias** - people tend to attribute the failure of others to the individual (e.g. their lack of skills), and our own failure to the environment (e.g. the safety system is ineffective). This bias could occur in the context of incident investigations, where a leader may be more likely to attribute failure to a team member’s lack of ability rather than looking at the characteristics of the organisation, such as adequacy of training systems and supervision.

- **Anchoring bias** - people use a single piece of information as a yardstick for decisions. An example is focusing on the lost time injury rate as a global measure of safety performance without considering other more frequent measures such as near misses or positive safety indicators such as inspection and audit reports.

- **Overconfidence bias** - people tend to overestimate their own competence and ability. This could mean that a worker approaches a safety-critical task with false confidence or an overly favourable belief that they can carry it out successfully, resulting in increased risk and a lost opportunity to seek out training.

To overcome these shortcuts, human limitations and the situational risk factors, use the defend checklist provided overleaf. The following case study highlights the importance of addressing the biases inherent in focusing on only certain types of safety indicators.
4.4 The defend checklist

This checklist can be used as a prompt when planning work or evaluating how a task could be done. Use it to identify what types of limitations and situational risk factors apply. A list of cognitive biases is also provided to remind you to be conscious of them. You should also think about what types of controls can be put in place to manage the risks posed by human limitations and situational risk factors.

Understand human limitations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limited attention</th>
<th>Autopilot</th>
<th>Excessive stress</th>
<th>Mental fatigue</th>
<th>Complacency</th>
<th>Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What human limitations may be applicable to the task at hand?

What situational risk factors apply?

- [ ] High workload or time pressure
- [ ] Complex or unfamiliar tasks
- [ ] Routine tasks
- [ ] Change or uncertainty
- [ ] End of shift
- [ ] Other:

Overcome any cognitive biases

- [ ] Recency bias shortcut: emphasising the most recently received information
- [ ] Confirmation bias shortcut: seeking out information that supports an existing view
- [ ] Attribution bias shortcut: attributing the failure of others to individual characteristics
- [ ] Anchoring bias shortcut: overemphasising certain information when making decisions
- [ ] Overconfidence bias shortcut: overestimating competence or ability

Applicable controls

- [ ] Change the task
- [ ] Obtain extra resources
- [ ] Provide training to the team
- [ ] Other:
- [ ] Other:
- [ ] Provide additional supervision
- [ ] Educate/brief the team on hazards
- [ ] Other:
- [ ] Other:
- [ ] Other:
4.5 Activity: Reflecting on vigilance

1. Think about a situation where you were not as vigilant as you could have been. Try to think of a time when you might have missed a hazard or been involved in/witnessed a safety incident. What was this situation?

2. Using the Defend Checklist, reflect on the situation and answer the following questions.
   a. What human limitations may have been present during the situation?

   b. What situational risk factors were present that might have interacted with human limitations to increase risk?

3. Reflecting on what you learnt in this section, what might you have done differently should you encounter the same situation again?
4.6 Good work design

Good work design refers to a process of engaging in planning to remove hazards before people encounter them, and incorporating effective risk controls and efficiencies into the way work is done. This means good work design is proactive and focused on getting things right from the very start, rather than reacting to problems and hazards as they are experienced on the job.

Not only does good work design improve safety outcomes, it has also been shown to improve mental health and wellbeing, innovation, quality and overall productivity.

Getting it right can have significant positive effects on business performance.

Good work design addresses physical, biomechanical, cognitive, and psychosocial characteristics of work, together with the needs and capabilities of the people involved.

By examining work for the presence of these characteristics, leaders can design or redesign work to be more efficient, safer and more rewarding for employees.

Good work design can also apply to what you have learnt about human limitations and situational risk factors. You can think ahead to the task that workers will undertake and consider what kinds of human limitations and situational risk factors might occur. You can then put controls in place through redesigning how work is done, communicating this to the workforce, and reviewing effectiveness. This approach is effective because it is proactive and eliminates or reduces risks before they are encountered on the job.

There are seven key steps to go through when performing good work design and include:

1. Secure leadership commitment

In a small business, this could mean approaching the business owner and seeking their support for what you want to do. In larger organisations, the senior management team may need a business case outlining the benefits of good work design to show why they should allocate time and other resources to the initiative.

If you are a senior leader it means reviewing your budget and allocating resources to good work design, including time and personnel.

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4 For more information about good work design, download Safe Work Australia’s Good Work Design Handbook
2. Consult with the workers
It is vital to consult with the people actually doing the work, both to improve decision making and because of the legislated requirement to do so under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. This is because workers know the job best and can anticipate where there might be challenges with doing things differently. Workers can also be a source of new and innovative ideas for task processes and procedures.

3. Identify the differences
Identify what will be done differently, which might involve going through the task and finding ways to improve it so that human limitations and situational risk factors are considered. Highly automated manufacturing tasks is one example where you might ask a worker to step through the process involved in the task, documenting this process, highlighting instances of human limitations and situational risk factors in action.

4. Assess the risks
Assess the risks of each hazard identified in the previous step using a formal risk assessment process or discussion with workers.

5. Apply the controls
Apply the controls to the task and implement your good work design.

6. Review the effectiveness
Review the effectiveness of your good work design plan and make sure there are no new or unintended issues as a result of making changes to the way work is done. Consulting with workers is the most effective way to review good work design.

7. Improvements
Make improvements to the work design if needed as this helps it to get better over time as new hazards or changes are encountered. Workers can be a source of innovative ideas to optimise safety and productivity.

Case Study
Rio Tinto Weipa operates two continuous mines that produce over 28 million tonnes of bauxite annually. Musculoskeletal injuries in mining occur regularly and Rio Tinto Weipa sought to address this risk with an innovative work design program that targets high risk manual handling tasks.

Through their good work design program, Rio Tinto Weipa targets 30 high risk manual tasks each year. Internal assessors receive training in manual task risk assessment and work redesign principles. Workers receive induction and regular training in ergonomic principles to reduce the risk of manual handling tasks.

An important element to the success of this program is leadership support at all levels. Senior leaders have dedicated the necessary resources to enable work design changes to be made, and local supervisors support their workers to put forward work design ideas for consideration.

Rio Tinto Weipa's program is also based on the principle of effective consultation and collaboration with workers. Through a participative ergonomics approach, workers routinely help to identify high risk tasks, put forward potential solutions, and assist with implementation. Workers also help to review the effectiveness of work design strategies and provide ideas to make further improvements.

Reinforcement of worker activities that support good work design is achieved by monthly innovation awards and sharing design solutions between different Rio Tinto sites. Contractors are also included in these initiatives to make sure that innovative work design practices are taken up across the supply chain.

In addition to improved productivity, where in some work areas Rio Tinto Weipa achieved a four-fold increase, the incidence rate of injuries significantly decreased, along with reductions in workers' compensation premiums.
4.7 Activity: Good work design

1. Good work design helps you as a safety leader to proactively identify risks in the team’s working environment, and control them before they can impact health and safety.

For this activity, think about a specific task that your team does at work that could benefit from health and safety improvement. It could be a particularly difficult or complex task, one that is repetitive and routine, but still carries risk, or a high-risk activity.

2. Thinking about the seven steps of good work design, make a plan for reducing the impact of the situational risk factors related to this task that you selected above.

3. How could you secure leadership commitment?

4. How could you consult with the people doing the work?
5. What hazards, including human limitations and situational risk factors, might be present? Use the Defend Checklist (p.49) to help you.


6. What are the risk levels of these hazards?


7. What are some controls that you could use to manage these risks?


8. How could you review your plan and ensure continuous improvement?


4.8 Activity: Safety information biases

We all use different types of information at work to know whether the job is being completed safely. However, this information can be affected by the way people process information and arrive at our decisions. This means you need to challenge any cognitive biases that might be influencing how you use information. You also need to make sure you use multiple sources of information and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each piece of information before making a decision.

1. What types of information do you usually rely on to tell you if safety is being maintained?

*For example: Number of risk assessments completed by the team, quality of safety communication or specific behaviours such as wearing all PPE.*

2. Think about a time where you used some of this information to arrive at a decision that turned out to be incorrect or ineffective.

*For example: Using lost time incident information to arrive at the conclusion that the team’s safety performance was good, and rewarding them for this, then finding out later that many unsafe behaviours were still being shown on the job.*

What was the decision that you made?

3. What cognitive biases could have affected the way you interpreted the safety information and arrived at your decision?

How could you have made a more informed decision? Think about what extra or different sources of information you could draw on, or resources you could use to assist such as checking with a colleague or your team.
4.9 Supporting your team

A reality is that people spend most of their waking lives at work. At times, due to life circumstances and situations people find themselves in, they may experience suffering or distress. Left untreated, this strain can lead to a psychological injury. As a leader, you are in a unique position to notice signs that people on a team aren’t coping and do something to support them.

In the workplace, businesses have an obligation under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to protect, as far as reasonably practicable, both the physical and psychological health of workers. This means that in addition to the moral or ethical reasons for supporting workers, businesses are also legally obligated to investigate and resolve psychosocial hazards such as bullying, occupational violence, stress and fatigue that can result in reduced mental health. As a leader, you play an integral role in helping your business to fulfil its legal obligations.

Mental health can be thought of as a spectrum that ranges from ‘struggling’ (poor mental health and wellbeing) to ‘surviving’ (doing okay), to ‘thriving’ (positive mental health and wellbeing).

Over the course of different events and situations the wellbeing shifts and changes position. However, if someone lingers too long in a struggling or even a surviving state, a psychological injury can result. Due to stigma, such as negative attitudes toward people with a mental illness, and the nature of the psychological injury itself it can be hard or confronting to seek support. Therefore, leaders must be vigilant to signs that something is not right and step in to offer support.

R U OK?5

Checking in with team members and supporting them doesn’t have to be hard. All that is required is a simple conversation. R U OK is a leading Australian organisation that offers a simple to follow guide to having a supporting conversation with people at work.

The R U OK conversation process has three overarching steps:

1. Noticing someone needs support.
2. Getting ready to ask.
3. Starting a conversation.

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5 You can find more information at www.ruok.org.au
Noticing someone needs support

Be alert to changes that might signal that someone needs support. Sometimes these changes might not be obvious, or could just be a temporary time of stress and strain.

Changes to look out for over a period of two weeks include the following:

**Physical appearance**
- Looking tired or worn out.
- Ongoing ill health.
- Seeming fidgety or nervous.

**Mood**
- Acting out of character, such as more irritability or nervousness than usual.
- Overreacting to situations.
- Appearing to be overwhelmed by normal work activities.

**Behaviour**
- Seeming more withdrawn than usual.
- Difficulty concentrating or appearing distracted.
- Not performing to their usual standard of work.

**Thinking style**
- Interpreting situations negatively or pessimistically.
- Sounding confused or irrational.
- Complaints about constant thoughts or feelings that cannot be ‘switched off’.

It is important to ‘trust your gut’ instinct and be vigilant to the signs someone is not coping.

Getting ready to ask

The next step is to get ready and prepare to have the conversation. Taking the time to check-in is easier than you might think, and could make the world of difference to someone who is struggling. Follow these steps:

1. Be ready – check you are in the right headspace and able to genuinely listen and give time to the person.
2. Be prepared – acknowledge you won’t have all the answers, and that the conversation may become emotional.
3. Pick the right moment – make sure you have a private space and ask for their permission to start the conversation.
Starting a conversation

The final step is having the conversation and taking action to make sure the worker is adequately supported. Steps to follow include:

1. Ask R U OK – be relaxed and ask how they are going, mentioning specific things you have noticed that are different or raised a flag to you that something might not be right.
2. Listen – use active listening skills to be present and attentive to what is being said, and maintain a calm and non-judgmental approach (see the ‘adapt’ section on page 64 for more information).
3. Encourage action – ask what you can do to help or what the worker thinks is the right next step to take, and refer to professional support if needed.
4. Check in – make sure to follow up with the worker after one to two days to see if they have taken action and offer your support again.

By following these steps you will have a meaningful impact and potentially be the catalyst for significant positive change in someone’s life. For more information please visit the RUOK? website at www.ruok.org.au.

Case study

Russell Transport is an integrated group of companies that provide a complete logistics solution. They operate a road freight service, a crane hire service, and distribute and store warehouse goods.

Recognising the psychosocial risks of extended road travel and the isolation of workers from sources of social support, Russell Transport designed and implemented a mental health awareness and support program. The main objective of Russell Transport’s mental health initiative is to raise awareness of mental health, dispel the stigma associated, and identify the main risks to mental health that are specific to the road transport industry.

A training program was conducted that focused on raising awareness of mental health, such as recognising the signs of psychological distress and injury, and offering support, such as referral to an appropriate service. This training was supported by the implementation of an employee assistance program and regular driver toolbox talks.

Following the initiative, workers felt more confident to discuss and work through mental health concerns with themselves and others. Leaders reported feeling more equipped to support workers.

To help employers protect against psychological harm, promote positive mental health, and support recovery, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has developed a ‘Mentally Health Workplaces’ toolkit. This toolkit is filled with practical tips and guidance that organisations can use to improve mental health and worker wellbeing, as well as benefits such as increased productivity, decreased costs, and improved engagement. The toolkit is freely available at www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.
4.9.1 Activity: Supporting your team

1. An important first step to having a supporting conversation with a worker is noticing that something is not right. Although it is important to trust your gut instinct, there are a number of observable behaviours that could raise a flag that something is wrong.

Thinking about your knowledge of mental health and experiences with your current team or past teams, write down some of the observable signs you have noticed in the past that someone may be struggling with their wellbeing:

2. Sometimes these types of conversations can become emotional. It is important not to take this personally or become overtly emotional in response to what is being said.

Again, thinking about your past experiences and knowledge of mental health, what are some of the challenges you might experience with having supporting conversations in the workplace? What are some strategies you could use to overcome these challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The person becomes upset or distressed in front of the team.</td>
<td>Make sure a private area is used to have the discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. It is not our role to have all the answers and ‘fix’ someone who is experiencing a mental health issue. Rather, your role is to take the time to listen and act in a supportive way. One way you can be supportive is help someone to take action, such as seeking professional assistance from a medical practitioner, psychologist, or counsellor.

What are some of the sources of professional help that you could refer someone to who is not coping at work? Think of support both internal and external to your business.
4.10 Defend summary

Key concepts

- Despite having amazing capacities and abilities, the human brain has some limitations – people aren’t perfect.
- It is important as a leader to be aware of human limitations:
  - Limited attention span – people can only work with between three to four units or chunks of information at a time.
  - Stress can help performance and in excess leads to distraction, memory difficulties, and fatigue.
  - Mental tiredness occurs when people feel too fatigued to concentrate.
  - People’s brains become used to routine, which can increase complacency.
  - People need competency to do a job productively and safely.
- Situational risk factors are warning signs of risk within tasks:
  - High workloads and time pressure contribute to stress and fatigue.
  - Complex tasks require more effort to sustain and may require special skills or teamwork to complete successfully.
  - Routine tasks become overly familiar, which may increase complacency.
  - Change can make people feel overly stressed and introduce new or unexpected safety hazards.
  - At the end of shifts or the working day, risk is increased due to distraction (thinking about things at home) or fatigue (tiredness from spending effort).
- Cognitive biases are brain ‘shortcuts’ that make tasks easier but may result in poor decision making.
- A leaders’ role includes identifying and managing risks to psychological health.
**Key skills**

Good work design is the process of detecting human limitations and situational risk factors, and redesigning tasks to eliminate and reduce risks to as low as is reasonably practicable.

There are seven steps to good work design:

1. Secure leadership commitment
2. Consult with workers
3. Understand the changes
4. Assess risks
5. Implement controls
6. Review effectiveness
7. Improve the work design.

Support team members by using the ‘RUOK’ model and checking in with them regularly to identify and manage wellbeing challenges before they become psychological injuries.

**Defend Do and Do not**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Do not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remind the team about hazards they could encounter on the job.</td>
<td>Ignore or show complacency towards hazards in the team’s work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain the resources that the team needs to work safely (e.g. PPE, work gear).</td>
<td>Tell workers there is no budget for or interest in getting the resources that the team needs to work safely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure the team follows all business procedures and safety processes.</td>
<td>Ignore business procedures or safety processes if they believe they make the job more difficult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.11 Defend quiz

Test your knowledge

1. Tick all that are correct. Defending involves:
   a) continuously looking for cues and signs of safety risks
   b) using all available information to assess the status of safety
   c) missing some risks by focusing too long on one area.
   d) identifying the most relevant information and carefully interpreting it

2. True or false:
   Whether someone is unsafe largely depends on their personality and isn’t influenced much by the situation.
   □ True
   □ False

3. Tick all that are correct: In work environments where situational risk factors are present, a leader should:
   a) think about how the situational risk factors are encouraging unsafe acts and what controls might apply
   b) encourage employees to pause and reflect about the situation they are in and how it might be dangerous
   c) make sure the team finishes the task extra fast so that they can get out of that situation quickly
   d) closely watch the team’s behaviour and harshly punish anyone who behaves unsafely

4. Name three human limitations and provide a brief description of each.

1. 
2. 
3. 

5. Tick all that are correct: Cognitive biases:
   a) are shortcuts that the brain uses when making decisions
   b) help people cope with complex information
   c) make decision-making less accurate and slower
   d) can sometimes lead to misinterpretation, poor decision-making and unsafe behaviour
6. What are the four steps involved in having a conversation about someone's wellbeing?

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

Notes

Answers

1. a, b, d

2. False

3. a, b

4. See pages 44-45

5. a, b, d

6. Ask R U OK, listen, encourage action, check in later
Adapt
Creating change by supporting safety related learning and improvement

Adapting means the team is supported to engage in safety related learning and maintains a commitment to continuous improvement. Through learning and change, businesses are more likely to be competitive, efficient, and safe.

Without this change, businesses may run the risk of being left behind or continue to experience recurring mistakes, potentially resulting in repeated safety incidents and injuries. Learning is particularly important for safety because without it, people may miss the signals that suggest an incident is about to happen.

Safety improvement is also likely to lead to other innovations that improve the business generally. Therefore, it is important to draw on multiple people in your organisation to drive safety improvement.

These adapting behaviours enable you to reflect on your safety vision, goals, and objectives to identify where you might need to make changes and improve.
At a glance

There are three principles that safety leaders can uphold to increase learning and improvement within a team. In this section we will cover each of these three areas:

1. Establish an open learning culture where people are willing to talk about their mistakes and ideas openly with each other.

2. Use active listening techniques so people are encouraged to share and trust is built between workers and leaders.

3. Encourage creative thinking, which may lead to new and innovative ideas.
5.1 An open learning culture

It is important that leaders spend time and effort to promote an open culture that promotes sharing and learning. In some team environments, people may be reluctant to share mistakes or safety incidents, be less likely to ask questions, seek help, or offer suggestions to improve safety, which can have a negative impact on safety.

An open learning culture is where there is a willingness to talk about mistakes and incidents. The focus is not on whom to blame or what they did wrong, but rather what could have been done differently and what lessons can be learnt.

An open learning culture is created using three techniques:
1. Being available and approachable - maintaining an open door policy, being out on site, and being understanding when team members make a mistake.
   Example: “John, I noticed that you made a mistake on that last job. Look, it happens so don’t worry about it. What is more important is how we learn from the experience.”
2. Being open and honest - talk to the team openly about mistakes or incidents that you have made as a leader.
   Example: “John, this is a mistake that I’ve made a couple of times. I gained a lot of value by talking about it with others so I could learn from the experience and shared what I learnt.”
3. Inviting and rewarding input - ask the team to share their views and ideas and acknowledge them when it is done.
   Example: “Thanks for sharing your slip-up with the team John, we all learnt a lot about how to prevent a similar mistake happening to us.”

5.1.1 Pre-accident investigation

Some safety professionals advocate for a different approach learning and improvement. Rather than investigating failures and problems, which in most workplaces fortunately don’t happen too often, it is suggested that leaders should instead investigate success to improve performance for the future by looking for the following:
• ‘Weak signals’ - signs that things aren’t going well.
• Latent conditions - things that are distant to the actual work but can influence safety such as safety culture or management decisions.
• Active failures – things that directly cause safety incidents, such as errors, mistakes, and failures.

A key feature of pre-accident investigations is that they are done following normal, everyday work. The goal is to investigate success and find out why things went right. Clues will also be apparent around what went wrong, as it is very rare that all work tasks will be completed with 100 per cent efficiency and safety, yet through compensating actions done by workers, variation and damage is absorbed and doesn’t cause a significant incident.
To perform a pre-accident investigation, there are four questions that you can ask your team:

1. What **went well** and happened the way we thought it would happen?
2. What **surprised** us?
3. What **hazards** did we spot, what hazards did we miss, and how did we deal with them?
4. Where did we have to **improvise** or adapt?

Through asking these questions and discussing the answers as a group, you will generate a deeper understanding of how work is actually done (compared with how it is imagined or prescribed), which in turn may reveal a number of potential improvements.

A pre-accident investigation doesn’t eliminate the need for formal investigations following safety incidents. Structured investigations that identify root causes of safety incidents are still an important tool in the safety management toolbox.

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**Case study**

Goldsteins Bakery has been operating for over 70 years and is a well established family owned and operated business that services the broader Gold Coast region. After participating in WHSQ’s Injury Prevention and Management Program (IPAM), Goldsteins Bakery implemented a continuous improvement process that was founded in employee consultation and participation.

Goldsteins now engages with its entire staff through a number of consultation processes that focus on continuous improvement. Specifically, Goldsteins implemented monthly toolbox meetings where workers and leaders can raise improvement actions, identified health and safety representatives, and put in place a suggestion box system where workers can share their improvement ideas.

Following implementation of these initiatives and improved workforce engagement, Goldsteins Bakery introduced a work health and safety reporting system, was able to improve its workers’ compensation claims and also identified and control a number of work health and safety issues, including:

- slip/trip/fall hazards
- electrical problems
- faulty conveyor equipment
- guarding
- lighting.
5.1.2 Activity: Developing an open learning culture

1. What types of safety issues or concerns do you want your team to feel comfortable raising with you?
   *For example: Small mistakes so the team can benefit from learning and safety incidents so these can be reported and investigated.*

2. What are some of the reasons why your team might be reluctant to raise safety issues or concerns with you? Think about reasons related to you, the team, and the wider business.
   *For example: There is a culture of not reporting safety incidents due to fear of repercussions.*

3. What could you do differently in the future to create an open culture within your team and encourage people to raise safety issues and concerns with you?
   *For example: Making time during meetings for people to raise any suggestions or concerns with the team or telling the team I have an open-door policy and following through on it.*
5.2 Active listening techniques

A leader can gain access to ideas and experience through using active listening skills, at the same time building trust with the workers. Your team likely has ideas and experiences that can drastically improve safety as they are completing the tasks.

Active listening is not the same as simply hearing someone’s message - it is a process to make sure the message is understood as intended and develop a trusting relationship with the team. There are three steps to active listening:

1. **Mirror**

Mirroring involves reflecting back what is heard. This means using an open body posture (eye contact, nodding), copying the person’s style of speaking, asking to repeat or clarify if you don’t understand, and summarising what you have heard. These are skills that usually come naturally through the process of having a conversation. They don’t need to be thought about in detail or consciously controlled; otherwise the interaction may seem stilted and unnatural.

2. **Validate**

Validating means you let the other person know you have understood what was said and acknowledge their position on a topic or issue. This does not mean you have to agree with what was said, but simply acknowledge that the worker has a strong opinion.

3. **Empathise**

Where appropriate, empathising lets the other person know that you understand the impact of what they have said. Empathising means you ask or make an educated guess about how they feel as a result of what they said.

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**Case study**

Michelle is one of Robert’s team members, and has approached him following a safety meeting to share an idea about how to improve the company’s zero harm strategy.

Michelle: *Rob, this zero harm strategy is giving me some grief. All we ever hear is that we have to try and reduce incidents further and further - it’s exasperating because I feel we aren’t really getting anywhere at all and there’s basically no support from management to make this strategy possible.*

Rob: *So, what I’m hearing from you is that the strategy is ineffective and not adequately supported. Is this right?*

Michelle: *Yea, that’s right. I feel it’s a strategy that is out of touch with how safety is progressing and that management has all these bright ideas but doesn’t back it up with the resources we need.*

Rob: *I can guess that this must feel frustrating for you particularly when you feel there isn’t enough support from management. I understand your position on the strategy and although I disagree that it isn’t useful, there is probably something we can do as leaders to improve how it is communicated. What I can tell you is that our CEO is very passionate about achieving this goal and has a number of initiatives planned to support it in the near future.*
Encouraging creative thinking

Safety leaders can promote new ways of thinking and encourage the team to come up with novel solutions to safety problems. There are four different ways that a safety leader can encourage creative thinking among their team:

- Ask questions - help people to figure out solutions on their own rather than giving all the answers straight away.
- Reframe difficulties or mistakes - after making sure the situation is under control, ask the person to think about it as a learning opportunity.
- Encourage different opinions - encourage all team members to contribute their ideas and views.
- Facilitate brainstorming - generate a list of ideas, identify the best one, and agree on a plan to action it.

5.2.1 Brainstorming

Brainstorming can be a powerful way of rapidly gathering multiple ideas and maximising the effectiveness of a group, and following a structured process rather than asking a general question such as “have you got any ideas?” is going to result in more and better quality ideas. An example brainstorming process includes:

Step 1: Set up the group for success by carefully explaining the reason for the brainstorm, describing the process, and outlining some ground rules.

Step 2: Post the challenge or question that you want people to brainstorm around. Ask them to work on their own for between two to five minutes jotting down as many ideas that come to mind on how to solve the problem/challenge. Remind the group that they shouldn’t judge or evaluate their ideas, just write down everything that comes to mind.

Step 3: Ask the group to share their top three to five ideas. If possible, write these up on a whiteboard so everyone can see. Allow people to come up with new ideas as others are sharing, and record these too.

Step 4: Ask the group to vote on the idea/s that they like the most, and use this information to make your decision.
5.2.2 Activity: Creative thinking

Read the below quote from a safety leader:

‘If a team member comes to me with a problem I try to get them to solve the problem first. It’s very easy for people to come to me with problems and expect me to have the answers. A lot of the time I don’t have the answer, but someone within the team often has ideas regarding a solution to the problem. So, I try and get them to suggest a way they think we should approach the problem and how we should try and solve it. When they come to me I would ask “What do you think the problem is?”, “Why do we have this problem, and what would you do differently?” or, “What would you do if you were in charge?”. Rather than dictate to them, “This is the solution that we’re going to use”, I try to get their buy-in, so that they have got a bit of ownership of the problem and the outcome. So, really just asking them what they have seen work [well] elsewhere, if they have got a solution or if they know of other technologies available or have seen things that work well in other sites.’

1. Reflecting on the example, take a moment to think about your own team and your ability to create opportunities for creative thinking.

What do you think are the benefits of encouraging your team to engage in creative thinking around safety issues or challenges?

2. What do you currently do well to encourage creative safety thinking within your team?

3. What could you do to improve your ability to encourage creative thinking within your team?
5.3 Adapt summary

Key concepts

- Change and improvement are vital to make sure new risks are known and adequately controlled, and the business remains productive and efficient.
- Investing time and effort to improve safety is also likely to overlap into other areas of the business, such as quality and productivity.

Key skills

- Develop an open learning culture that promotes free discussion about issues and ideas:
  - Be available and approachable.
  - Maintain an open door policy.
  - Be open and honest.
- Implement pre-accident investigations – an informal set of questions that helps you to understand the way work is actually done and identify any weak signals that suggest safety has been, or could be, compromised.
- Use active listening skills to build trust and connect with workers to elicit their ideas and concerns around safety:
  - Mirror by reflecting back what was heard.
  - Validate by letting the other person know you have understood and acknowledge their position, without necessarily agreeing with them.
  - Empathise by putting yourself into the other person’s shoes and suggesting how they might feel.
- Encourage creative thinking to generate new safety improvement ideas and suggestions:
  - Ask effective questions rather than giving the answers straight away.
  - Reframe people’s difficulties or mistakes as positive events to learn from.
  - Encourage all team members to provide their views and ideas.
  - Facilitate brainstorming sessions to generate novel solutions to safety challenges.
**Adapt Do and Do not**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Do not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Appear disinterested in or dismissive of safety training that the team is involved in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the team’s safety ideas by talking about them with management or senior leaders.</td>
<td>Make excuses as to why safety improvement ideas can’t be actioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Adapt quiz

Test your knowledge and tick all the correct answers for the following questions:

1. Continuous learning and improvement:
   - a) benefits from all team members being involved
   - b) can be encouraged by supporting team members to share their ideas and concerns
   - c) distracts a team from their work and is bad for their performance
   - d) is part of the overall effort to maintain a safe and healthy workplace

2. An open learning culture is based on the belief that:
   - a) no one is ever at fault when a safety incident has occurred
   - b) everyone’s suggestions are valuable for safety
   - c) it is better not to ask questions because you will reveal that you don’t know something
   - d) incidents and successful performance can be used as learning opportunities

3. Leaders can promote an open culture by:
   - a) being available and approachable
   - b) showing people how to admit to mistakes and be open to discussing them
   - c) making an example of people who do the wrong thing by punishing them

4. By carefully listening and asking questions, leaders:
   - a) can obtain critical information that will help identify safety issues
   - b) reveal their incompetence on safety issues
   - c) create an open learning and reporting culture

5. Active listening is:
   - a) beneficial for clarifying and understanding the full situation
   - b) about just waiting patiently for someone to finish what they have to say
   - c) helps leaders to develop trust
   - d) based on reflecting back or paraphrasing what was said
6. What are the four questions that you should ask to conduct a pre-accident investigation?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

Notes

Answers
1. a, b, d
2. b, d
3. a, b
4. a, c
5. a, c, d
6. What went well, what surprised us, what hazards did we spot/miss/control, where did we have to improvise?
In practice, it is likely that different combinations of the LEAD behaviours will be needed to achieve safe and productive outcomes. Combining the different LEAD behaviours allows leaders to deal more effectively with a range of situations in the workplace. Below are a series of example combinations:

**Combination one**
When there is a need to set and encourage the team to strive towards new safety goals, energising behaviours can be used to set an inspiring vision of the future, and the team’s performance towards goals can be clarified and reinforced with leveraging behaviours.

**Combination two**
Consider the situation where a team must successfully maintain productivity when confronted with new and unfamiliar hazards. In this situation, a leader can use defending to draw the team’s attention to the hazards and adapting behaviours to make sure the team learns from their experience and improves for the future.

**Combination three**
Consider a situation where an incident has happened in the team. Although no-one was hurt, this is a clear opportunity to understand what happened and learn from the experience to prevent it happening again. First, the leader could use adapting behaviours to ask effective questions about the incident with a view to identifying any situational risk factors that might have contributed to the outcome. Critical behaviours are identified that must then be promoted across the team. Next, the leader could use leveraging behaviours to provide constructive feedback to the team based on what they have uncovered as some of the main causes of the incident, and promote more helpful safety behaviours through recognition and ongoing feedback.
Safety Culture

Integrating the LEAD behaviours and applying the skills that you have learnt will not only directly increase the safety performance of your team members, but also contribute to a positive safety culture.

Leaders play an important role in setting the safety culture because workers look to leaders when deciding what is important and valued by the organisation. Engaging in leadership behaviours that send a strong signal to workers that safety is important will, over time, result in everyone sharing similar ways of thinking about safety. From this perspective, leaders effectively set the workplace safety culture, or at least can influence it through the way they behave towards safety.

One of the most influential models of safety culture was put forward by James Reason\(^6\). He proposed that a safety culture is one where reporting is:

- encouraged
- the workplace is flexible
- people learn and improve
- interactions between people are fair and just.

These four elements then create an ‘informed’ culture, which Reason equates with the idea of a safety culture. In an informed culture, people have the information needed to understand and respect the risks inherent within work, and are alert to ways in which controls can be breached to cause a safety incident.

Importantly, the elements of the LEAD model map out neatly onto the features of a safety culture:

- **Leveraging** behaviours create a workplace where workers’ interactions with each other and with leaders are fair and just.
- **Energising** behaviours set a clear safety vision and priority, which guides people’s thinking and behaviour.
- **Adapting** behaviours provide the flexibility and energy required to make innovative safety improvements.
- **Defending** behaviours build an awareness and knowledge of hazards, risks, and controls.

6.1 Activity: Integration

You may need to apply LEAD behaviours in a combination rather than separately depending on the situation. Read the scenarios below and write down which LEAD behaviours are most relevant, and how you would use them to respond effectively.

1. Your organisation has recently acquired a smaller business that provides speciality production services. This business has not been exposed to many safety initiatives and has an immature safety culture. Some of the employees have recently joined your team and it is clear that they are not demonstrating the safety standard you expect.

   a. What LEAD behaviour/s are most applicable to this scenario?

   b. How would you respond as a leader in this scenario?

   c. Why would you respond in this way?
2. An evacuation drill is run yearly as part of your organisation’s emergency management plan. The last drill was recently conducted and you received feedback from management that your team did not perform as effectively as it could have as some employees on your team did not know the relevant emergency procedure.

a. What LEAD behaviour(s) are most applicable to this scenario?

b. How would you respond as a leader in this scenario?

c. Why would you respond in this way?
Next Steps

**Congratulations on reaching the end of the LEADing for Frontline Safety workbook.**

You will have gained self-insight and development through reading the material and completing the exercises in this workbook.

This workbook is intended as an introduction to the LEADing for Frontline Safety model and is supported by an in-depth training workshop, including detailed exercises and activities designed to improve your safety leadership capabilities. It is recommended you undertake this workshop should you wish to develop yourself further.

On the next page the LEADing for Frontline Safety checklist summarises all the different skills and tools included in this workbook and can be used as a prompt to decide if you have adequately understood the concepts and whether you have tried it out at work.

We encourage you to complete the below professional development plan template along with the checklist to help you to apply your learnings and remove any barriers in the workplace.

It is important to try out at least one skill or concept from the workbook in your workplace. Application of your learnings will assist to consolidate and contribute to an improved safety leadership style.
### 6.2 LEADing for Frontline Safety summary checklist

Use this checklist to identify what you have learnt and what you want to apply in your workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understood</th>
<th>Applied at work</th>
<th>Skills, concepts and tools</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Energise</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing and communicating your safety commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating a team safety vision</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Empowering your team</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Leverage</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>The 5C’s of clear communication</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Setting SMART objectives</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Giving constructive feedback</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Rewarding good performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Defend</strong></td>
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<td>Human limitations</td>
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<td>Situational risk factors</td>
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<td>Cognitive biases</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principles of good work design</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Supporting your team with the ‘RUOK’ conversation model</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Adapt</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing an open learning culture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Active listening techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
6.3 My professional development plan

Using this template, think about what you have learned and what you will start, stop and continue doing to improve your safety leadership performance. It is important to reflect on your learning and think about how you will apply it back in the work place.

Based on what I have learned about myself, my current LEAD strengths are:

Based on what I have learned about myself, my current LEAD opportunity areas are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I will start doing</th>
<th>Things I will stop doing</th>
<th>Things I will continue doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leverage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Energise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defend</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Tick any barriers to applying your learning that you might experience and any strategies that you commit to trying out back in the workplace. It is important to complete this step because you might experience challenges or setbacks that prevent you from applying what you learned.

Possible barriers to using what I learned that I might experience at work:

**Barriers**

- Lack of confidence to use what I learned
- Lack of help/support from company management
- Lack of motivation to use what I learned
- Lack of opportunities in my job to use what I learned
- Difficulty remembering concepts/tools
- What I learned is not useful or relevant for my job
- Lack of help/support from my co-workers
- Other priorities/demands or lack of time
- Lack of help/support from my leader

Strategies I can use to make sure I use what I learned:

**Strategies**

- Discuss what I learned with my co-workers
- Ask for help as I try out what I learned at work
- Discuss what I learned with my supervisor
- Give others positive feedback when I see or hear them using what they learned in training
- Explain a concept or tool I learned during the training to a co-worker/friend/family member
- Spend a set amount of time each day/week/month refreshing my memory
- Respectfully challenge someone who is sceptical or unsupportive of the training
- Learn more about the concepts and tools from the workbook
- Ask my supervisor for ideas about how I might use what I learned during the training
- Try out new skills in small ways first and think about how I can increase their use over time
- Try to incorporate something I learned into a procedure or task I already do
- Manage any negative emotions when I forget or struggle to use what I learned
- Keep in mind how what I learned can help me achieve my personal or work-related goals
- Hold myself accountable to using what I learned by setting reminders or making specific commitments
6.4 The safety leadership checklist

Use this checklist to review the types of behaviours that lead to safe and productive outcomes. Take note of the areas where your safety leadership behaviours are in the “do” column (likely to be strengths) and where your behaviours are in the “do not” column (likely to be opportunities to improve).

### 6.4.1 Leverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Do not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities to have input into setting and measuring progress towards team safety goals.</td>
<td>Shut down or ignore the team when they ask questions about or try to clarify safety goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help people to understand safety topics by adjusting and using multiple ways to communicate.</td>
<td>Fail to consider to the audience and their level of understanding/experience when talking about safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give informal coaching and offer mentoring to team members to help them become safer at work.</td>
<td>Fail to give the team feedback or give it in a way that belittles them or is overly harsh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide verbal reinforcement to team members who show good safety performance.</td>
<td>Show favouritism to certain team members or inconsistency when recognising good safety performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.4.2 Energise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Do not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support safety messages from management or senior business leaders.</td>
<td>Openly criticise management or senior leaders’ safety messages or changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a personal safety pledge or commitment to the team that safety is an important personal priority.</td>
<td>State that safety is someone else’s job or prioritise production goals over safety goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about a vision of the future and how safety is an important part of that vision.</td>
<td>Approach safety day-by-day without thinking of the long-term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the team to get involved in or lead business safety initiatives and projects.</td>
<td>Talk about safety initiatives and projects as a waste of time and discourage people from getting involved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6.4.3 Adapt

<table>
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### 6.4.4 Defend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remind the team about hazards they could encounter on the job.</td>
<td>Ignore or show complacency towards hazards in the team’s work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain the resources that the team needs to work safely. (e.g. PPE, work gear)</td>
<td>Tells there is no budget for or interest in getting the resources that the team needs to work safely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure the team follows all business procedures and safety processes.</td>
<td>Ignore business procedures or safety processes if they believe they make the job more difficult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes and reflections