

Putting safety leadership thinking into practice

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Abstract. The International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (IOGP) is a global forum in which member companies identify and share best practices to achieve improvements in many areas, including upstream safety. In 2013, IOGP published Report 452: *Shaping safety culture through safety leadership*. Written collaboratively by a team of industry experts, the principles of academic and theoretical work from authors such as Andrew Hopkins and James Reason were used to produce a short guide for industry leaders to explain how their leadership characteristics can shape the culture of their organisation. This report has been the most popular of the IOGP reports, with requests for over 1500 hard copies despite the report being publicly available to download at no cost. This level of industry interest prompted the authors to create a complimentary guidance document aimed at senior and middle management as well as supervisor levels to support their application of safety leadership characteristics in developing and maintaining a workplace culture with safety as a core value. The guidance uses the recent experiences of IOGP member companies in how a positive, safety-oriented organisational culture is formed and maintained. Using a straight-forward, storytelling approach, the reader is introduced to the theoretical concepts using practical workplace examples, aimed to resonate with the reader. This paper will provide a summary of the IOGP guidance as well as example good practice case studies from IOGP member companies.

Keywords: collaboration, culture, safety.

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Introduction

When, in 2013, the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (IOGP) published Report 452: *Shaping safety culture through safety leadership* (IOGP 2013), its popularity was unexpected. It is the document for which the IOGP has received the most requests for hard copies, and that continues to appear on the most downloaded list. It was targeted at senior leaders, explaining in simple terms how their leadership shapes the culture of their organisations, but did not attempt to describe how to put that knowledge into practice. IOGP members, therefore, asked for a document that would take the concepts of Report 452 and help organisations make them real on worksites. In the years since this report was published, the oil and gas industry has also gained a huge amount of experience and insight into how workplace cultures are formed. Taking this knowledge, IOGP recently published Report 453: *Safety leadership in practice: a guide for managers* (IOGP 2019) aimed at helping leaders across an organisation, from senior leaders, to mid-level managers and

frontline supervisors, to be more effective in their role as leaders in safety.

Developing the guidance, aka ‘writing what we preach’

The Human Factors Subcommittee of the IOGP is composed of individuals with deep knowledge and expertise in psychology, human factors engineering, and organisational and leadership factors. They have a good grasp of the research, much of which is written in an academic style, and they wanted to translate it into practice for the IOGP members. The Subcommittee decided to frame the document in an engaging and colourful way, with a narrative running through it, like a children’s picture book, but with grown-up language. The aim was to produce a document that encouraged continued reading from start to finish, and that could be read while waiting to board a plane.

The theme running throughout the report is that leadership has an especially high influence on workplace cultures. In

other words, safety leadership is what leaders do to get the culture they want.

The report explores this theme with a continuous case study that follows a hypothetical leadership team after they hold a meeting on the safety performance in their organisation and decide to discover 'if it's something we are doing?' that is affecting performance (Fig. 1).

Each of the characters in the team meeting get their turn to illustrate a section of the report, as follows:

- In 'Underpinning knowledge', the HSE Manager learns that only a very small proportion of all incidents resulted from intentional rule-breaking and that if the workforce and leadership work together, they could tackle some of the big issues that underlie many of their incidents.
- The Maintenance Manager reflects on the courageous decisions and actions they might have to take so as to actually fix a problem and demonstrate their *credibility*.
- The Operations Manager learns how they can respond in a way that is *action oriented* and helps their company learn when something goes wrong.
- The Finance Manager witnesses how setting a *vision* can have unintended consequences, and how to turn that into something positive.
- The Engineering Manager sees how a reorganisation and relocation has eroded *accountability* and led to real consequences at a plant.
- The Contract Supervisor works *collaboratively* on a procedure with operators, supervisors and managers so that it is practical and helpful, and people actually use it because they feel ownership over the content.
- The Drilling Manager learns a lot by *communicating effectively* during a rig visit, rather than by reading a contract and bridging document.
- A Site Superintendent learns that *feedback* and *recognition* do not need to wait for formal culture surveys.

Throughout the document, a series of icons (Fig. 2) directs the reader. The 'Start' icon has been especially well received and seen to help individuals immediately put things into practice.

The intent of the document is to leave readers confident that leadership skills can be learnt, that an organisation can be systematic about developing all their leaders, and that is really does not matter what the exact starting point is, but to start.

Report 453 in action

IOGP members have been putting into practice the concepts that informed Report 453; for example, a major international oilfield services company has used the principles of transformational leadership and the key characteristics of a great leader, as described in the document, to completely revitalise their internal HSE leadership and management training. They have also used proactive HSE objectives to develop the reporting culture of the organisation, encourage management field visits and face-to-face employee engagement to develop management credibility, visible commitment and collaborative action-oriented HSE improvements at the work site and enhanced the communication of feedback and recognition using internal social media platforms. They report that the visible commitment and leadership of management has enabled the successful implementation of a wide variety of HSE initiatives, which together have resulted in the highest proactive reporting rate per person and the lowest recorded injury rates for the organisation.

Another major operator is using many of the concepts in Report 453 as part of its cross-company leadership development program. Leaders at all levels are learning how to build trust between leadership and workforce by showing genuine care for their teams. They are practicing being visible in the workplace, understanding the daily difficulties involved in work, and promoting speak up about


Scenario: The leadership meeting

It's the monthly leadership team meeting, and all the heads of department are gathered around the table. The vice-president is there, as are managers from operations, finance, maintenance, wells, engineering, contractor management, HSE, and projects. The VP is looking at some graphs, shaking his head and frowning.

"We have to do something about our safety culture," he says. "It seems like our people are taking risks, making mistakes, and simply not doing what they are supposed to. We have to do something before we have a bad accident. What on earth can we do?"

There is silence. At the end of the table the engineering manager cautiously raises her hand.

"I wonder," she says, "if it's something we are doing?"

That's a very good question...

Fig. 1. The leadership team meeting – extract from IOGP Report 453.



Fig. 2. Icons in use in IOGP Report 453.

challenging conditions, all of which help show the factors that could lead to accidents. They are learning how to respond when things go wrong, to maximise the opportunities to learn and reduce future risk. These efforts are having a positive impact on both process and personal safety performance.

Conclusions

Safety leadership is about what leaders do to get the culture they want. The document shows the many ways that leaders'

skills and actions can create the environment for safety success. It concludes with a message that it does not matter where you start on your safety leadership journey, but make a start. With Report 453 and the initiatives IOGP is leading, the authors hope that readers can find impactful things they can do to make a difference.

Conflicts of interest

None exist.

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Mariana Carvalho is the Occupational & Process Safety Manager for the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (IOGP). Having started working for IOGP 8 years ago supporting its safety work, Mariana has managed the publishing process, organised external events and is closely involved with the global safety data-collection process. In her current role, she is now responsible for all health and safety projects and coordinates two standing technical committees and all related subcommittees and task forces. She has been instrumental in coordinating Project Safira, which aims to eliminate fatalities in the Upstream industry through work in the following four areas: life-saving rules, aviation, process safety and motor-vehicle crashes. Mariana holds a Chemistry degree from Imperial College London and a Masters in The Technology and Analysis of Archaeological Materials from UCL.



Simon Robinson is the Senior Human Performance Advisor at BP. Simon is a chartered engineer and graduate psychologist with a strong operations pedigree, pursuing a career in safety with a special focus on how organisations help people make safer operations. With 30 years of experience in BP and the oil and gas industry, Simon has gained a reputation as a thought-leader in Organisational Learning and Human Performance. He is currently the Senior Human Performance Advisor at BP, and chairs both the IOGP Human Factor Subcommittee (International Oil and Gas Producers Association) and the OCIMF Human Factors Focus Group (Oil Companies International Marine Forum). He likes to explain complex issues simply and is pursuing a lifetime goal to convince people that 'human factors are easier than you think'. He has written for and edited several popular and accessible industry guides, including IOGP 621 'Demystifying Human Factors', IOGP 453 'Safety Leadership in Practice' and IOGP 552 'Components of Organizational Learning'. Many of these are being translated into multiple languages and are available free-to-all from the IOGP bookshop.



Martin Anderson is the Principal Adviser Human Factors at Woodside Energy Ltd. Martin is a graduate in psychology with over 28 years of experience in human factors and safety management in relation to major hazards and complex systems. He has two Master of Engineering degrees, in human factors, and in process safety. Prior to joining Woodside in 2013, Martin played a key role in developing human factors within the UK Health & Safety Executive (UK HSE). He was a Specialist Inspector for 12 years, regulating human, management and organisational aspects on over 150 major hazard sites, both on and offshore. Martin is currently providing oversight and governance of human factors in several major capital projects. He has been an active member of the IOGP Human Factors Subcommittee since 2013, contributing to several published IOGP reports. Martin is a Fellow and Chartered Member of the UK Chartered Institute of Ergonomics & Human Factors (CIEHF) and was a non-Executive Director of the CIEHF for 10 years.