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# The Critical Role of Relationship and Trust in a Safety Culture

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## ABSTRACT

Although every organization has a safety culture, many of them are defined by activities that are not supported by the organization's mission, vision and values statements that adorn the wall of the office waiting room and web pages. While the company extolls virtues, the culture is often riddled with the opposite. Failure to report injury is more common than those who compile the reports know. Putting negative results in a favorable light is a profession in the United States. Lawyers argue arcane and trivial points in order for the company to avoid negative consequences of a bad culture. When the press puts a favorable spin on a bad situation or the legal department denies culpability, it unfortunately and inadvertently supports the bad culture.

Although some companies are characterized by trying to see what they can get by with in order to avoid costs and accountability, most are trying to do the right thing but are indirectly supporting a culture that is the opposite of what they want.

Values are easy to teach when you know the behaviors involved and understand the critical role of positive reinforcement in the process of teaching. Without a good relationship and trust positive reinforcement is not possible. Positive reinforcement is not natural in most safety cultures. It must be cultivated and supported at all levels of management.

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