

Changing Workplace Attitudes

Positive attitudes toward safety and health are essential to developing a strong safety culture. But what should you do if some workers have negative safety and health attitudes?

DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS SOUND FAMILIAR?

Management gives lip service to safety, but all they *really* care about is production!

That is not my job – it is safety's job.

I do not need a guard to protect me; I have been doing things this way for years!



WORKERS LEARN THESE ATTITUDES OVER TIME THROUGH THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCES!

Statements like these come from a worker's life experience.

Maybe they lived or worked somewhere that did not value safety, or maybe they learned these attitudes where they work right now—YOUR workplace.

You must take action to change poor attitudes towards safety and health to build and maintain a strong safety culture. Leaders and supervisors play key, but somewhat different, roles in helping to change poor attitudes.

Bad safety attitudes do not develop overnight and they are not going to change overnight. The approaches in the table on the next page offer ideas on how you can change worker attitudes.

Be patient, be persistent, and follow these change elements to move towards positive change. The attitudes you build will be the foundation for a better safety culture!



Tire image retrieved from Bing Images
Quote – Author Unknown

ELEMENT	TOP LEADERS	SUPERVISORS
HEART	Be clear on why you want change. Workers will find personal reasons (keeping them safe, preventing impacts to their families) more powerful than business reasons (mission, cost, production).	Embrace and communicate leadership's reasons for wanting to make a change. Assume nothing – if you are not sure, ask questions until you are sure.
VISION	Create a vision of your future safety culture. What will our workplace look like? How will workers act? How will things be better?	Support leadership's vision of our future safety culture and how things will be better. Discuss it with everyone in your work group.
ACTION	Change flows from doing – not talking. Focus on changes that will get many workers doing things in a new way.	Do not delegate new processes to one or two workers – get the whole work group involved.
PRIORITIZE	Focus on one to three issues at a time. Too much change can be overwhelming and cause workers to shut down.	You cannot change everything at once. Work on one or two significant changes at a time. Too much + too soon = too hard
RESOURCES	Make sure workers have the time, tools, procedures, and training they need to make the desired changes.	
PARTICIPATE	Set an example. Be part of the change. If you ask workers to do something new or different, do it with them.	
MONITOR	Create and monitor change metrics. Are changes progressing as expected? Are workers participating as expected?	Stay aware of the group's progress in making the needed changes. Are changes on track? Is the workload being shared fairly?
FEEDBACK	Report information on how we are doing. Actively encourage worker input, lean toward acting on worker input. Acting on today's idea encourages workers to give you their next idea.	Watch what workers are doing. Where improvement is needed, provide coaching – not criticism. Listen to what work group members tell you. Offer leadership constructive suggestions for improvement.
APPRECIATE	Give workers the credit when something good happens. Share stories and metrics that show you are moving in the right direction.	Say "thank you" when workers volunteer, try hard, do well, offer suggestions, mentor co-workers, etc. No good deed is too small to be appreciated.
APPLAUD	Honor the workers who make change milestones happen. If you are doing this right, that will be everyone.	Celebrate when the work group implements a change. How? How about a group photo, a team "high-five," a little time off – whatever you can manage.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smscx.org/>.