
The Human Dymensions Safety Management Philosophy

Developing Ownership in Safety



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The Challenge in Developing Ownership in Safety

The current state of safety management systems

The discipline of Occupational Health and Safety in Australia is relatively new with the first OHS legislation in Australia being introduced in Queensland in 1989. Whilst conditions for workers had long been the agenda of the Trade Union movement it was not until the Roben's Report in the UK that OHS moved from a prescriptive focus to a process focus in regulation resulting in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (UK). Since then and towards the end of the millenium OHS has become a discipline in its own right and a critical part of workplace organisation in Australia.

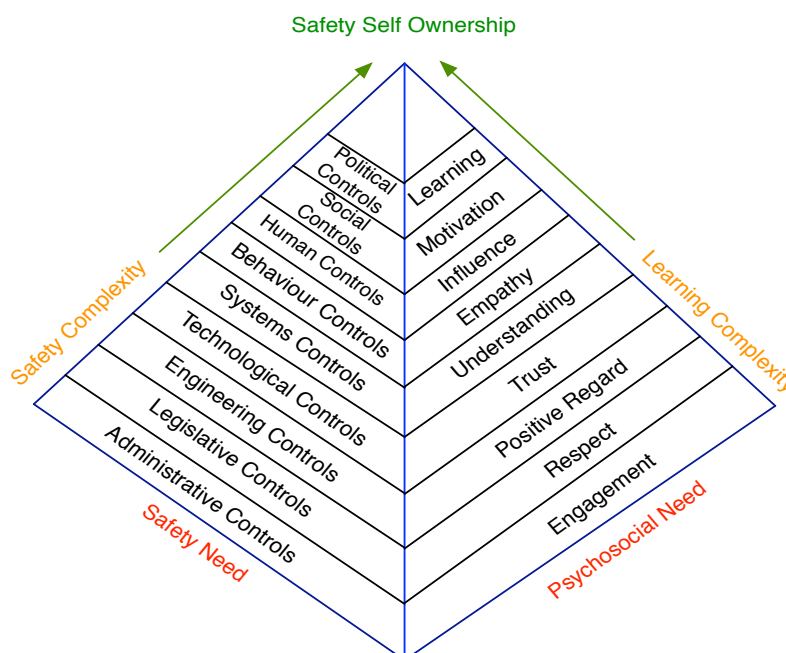
The general approach which has become the focus of OHS legislation has been managerial in character even though self regulation and mutuality are enshined in the legislation. What has actually developed has been a fixation with regulation. What has resulted is a range of regulatory authorities in industry which duplicate regulatory demands and a resultant bureaucracy which has the capacity to create (through cognitive dissonance) a culture which runs counter to the very intent of the legislation. Rather than creating a self regulating workforce of mindful employees who "own" their own safety the current trend in OHS has the capacity to create a dependent workforce on OHS professionals to police OHS at work.

From dependence to ownership

The focus of the approach of Human Dymensions Pty Ltd on safety is that of developing safety mindfulness or safety maturity. The key to developing maturity in safety is to help develop workers to own their own safety and respond maturely to risks and hazards at work. Human Dymensions acknowledges the excellent work performed by so many in the field of OHS and understands the importance of continuing to undertake this work however, regulatory and instrumental approaches to safety in themselves are not sufficient to make a work culture safe. This is why the approach of Human Dymensions is on developing safety "actualised"¹ workers who develop ownership of their own safety by maturing through a hierarchy of safety development (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Human Dymensions Safety Actualisation Safety Method



1. The concept of "actualisation" was first introduced in the learning theory of Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) who argued that learning development was dependent on a "hierarchy of need".

Developing safety maturity

Ideally it would be excellent if people just realised the nature of hazards and risks and behaved mindfully in managing their safety. Unfortunately, we all make different sense of hazards and risks (our risk homestasis as described by Gerald Wilde) and to some extent those hazards and risks have to be learned. What therefore is the best approach to helping workers learn to develop and own their own safety?

The famous educationalist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) discovered that learning occurs best when it is “scaffolded” and developed on the basis of firm foundations. This is explained in the safety actualisation pyramid where one matures and progresses to safety ownership on the basis of grasping previous stages of growth. The best way to help others learn and develop into workers who own their own safety is to know at which stage they are at in their safety development. In this way a safety management system is developed on the basis of evidence and need rather than regulation. Whilst the one-size-fits-all approach to safety development has some merits it does not intersect with the worker or workplace culture as it ebbs and flows in the course of a project as it too develops (further see Figure 2).

An evidence-based approach to safety development.

It is important that any safety management system be able to change and mature with the same pace and variation of the project. This happens best when safety developments are monitored, assessed and interventions developed on the basis of known trends, attitudes, beliefs and knowledge, this is the sense of keeping statistics in safety. The Human Dymensions approach to safety maturity is premised on the importance of evidence, mapping gaps, targetted interventions and safety cultural change. In this way the fundamentals of OHS can be covered as a foundation but also allows for OHS in the workforce to mature as key trends and sub-cultures are recognised and addressed. Safety maturity can be achieved through a variety of means (training, mentoring, coaching, modelling etc) to help workers learn and own their own safety. This is the pathway to safety ownership and it is reliant on the positive psychology approach of actualisation, this approach is compared to other approaches in Table 1.

Figure 2.

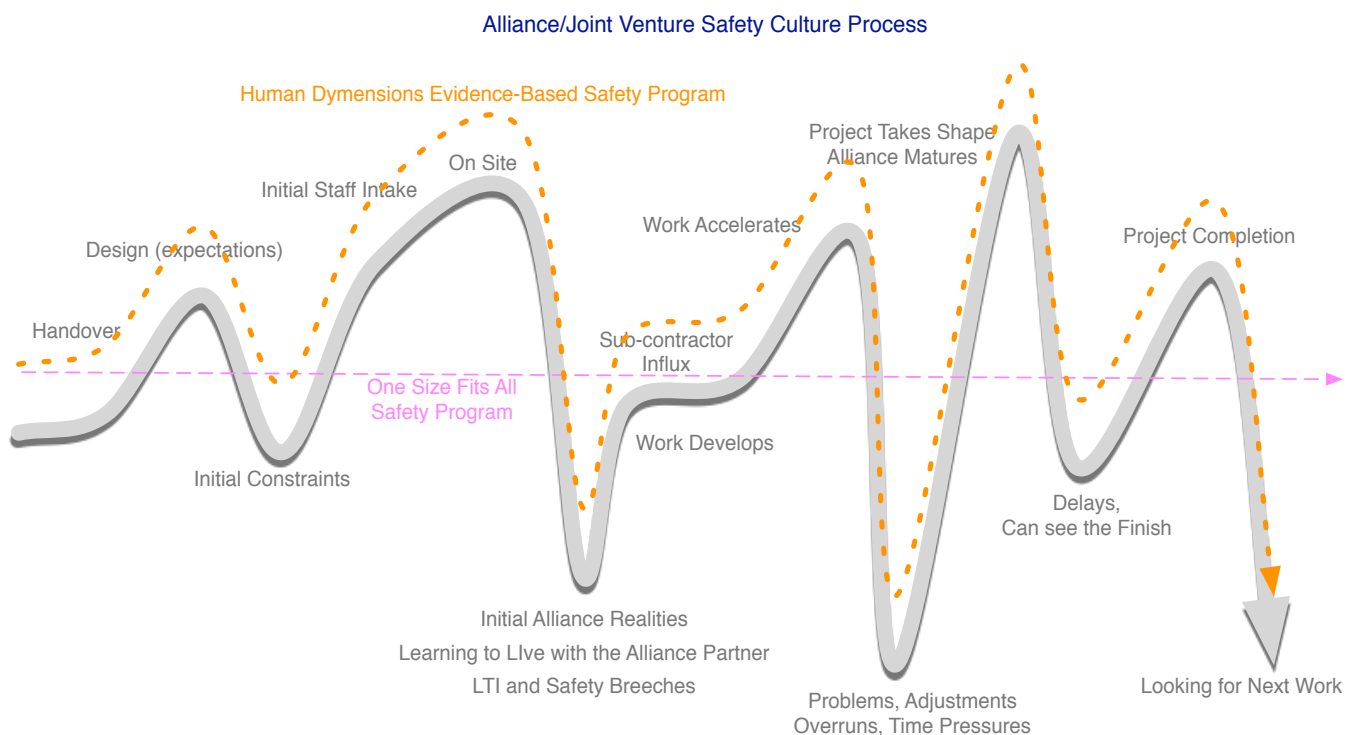
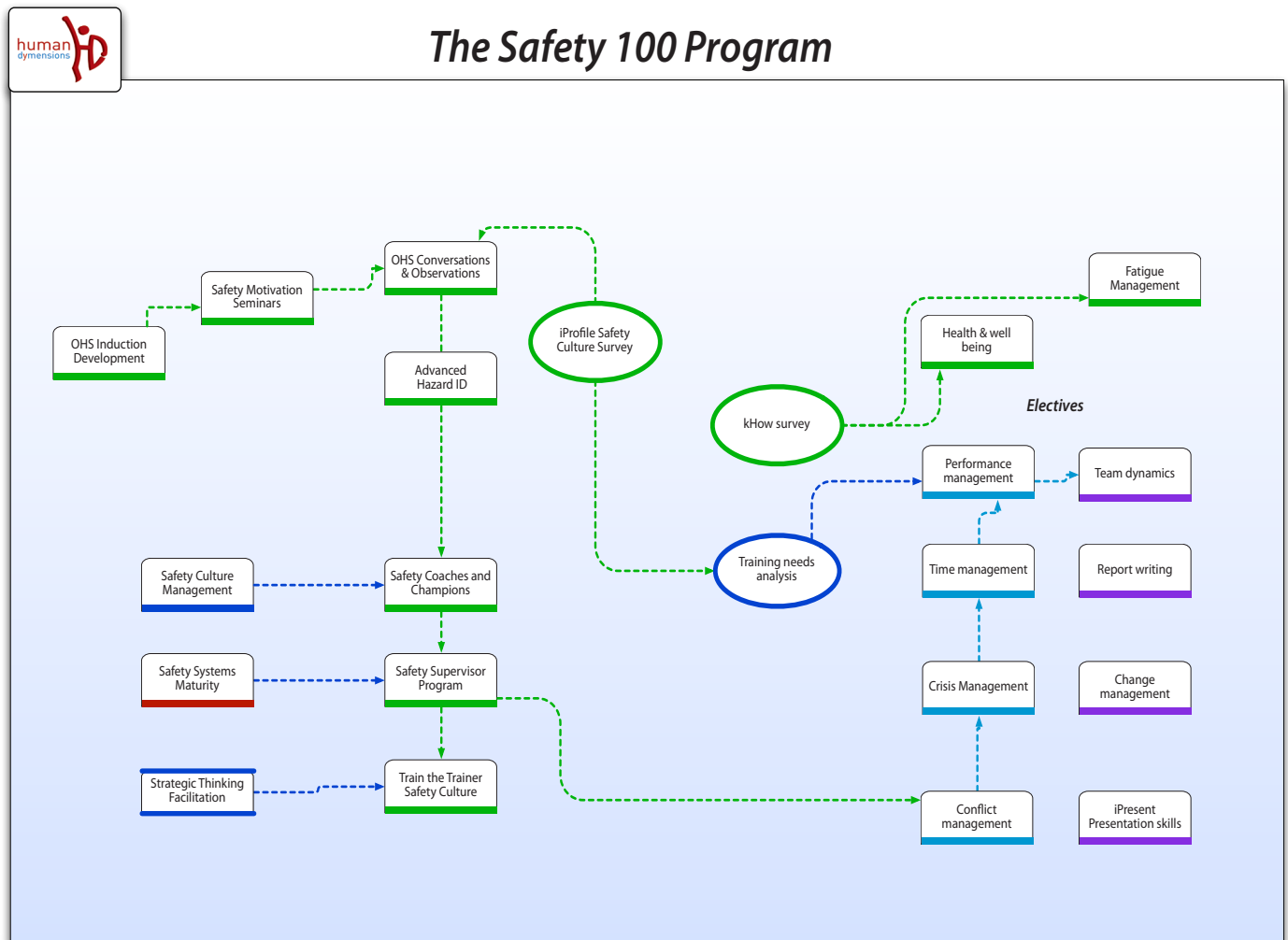


Table 1. Comparing OHS Safety Cultural Change Styles

	Behaviour Based Safety	Zero Tolerance	Positive Psychology
Key Words	Behaviour Human Error Actions	Compliance Regulations Legislation Policing Rules Consequence	Motivation Learning Development Ownership Encouragement Values Beliefs
Underpinning Foundations	Behaviourism (Skinner)	Broken Window Theory (Wilson and Kelling)	Self Actualisation (Maslow)
View of People	People are like machines and are the sum of inputs and outputs	People make choices and think according to rules and rule braking	People are complex and follow what they value
Strategy for Change	Negative and Positive Reinforcement Behaviour changes values	Punishment Authority and control changes culture	Motivation Culture changes as people develop ownership of values
Focus Question	How can behaviour be changed?	How can breaches be enforced?	How do people learn?
View of Culture	Culture is the sum of observable behaviours	Culture is defined by rules	Culture is the expression of underlying values held in common
View of Organisations	Mechanistic Reality is the sum of what I can observe	A traditional hierarchy with strong lines of command and control	Organisations are organic and a complexity of interrelated systems of people, groups and values
Sub-cultures	Depersonalised machine like processes Indifference Going through the motions Uniformity through process	Hidden resentment Champions and Misfits Uniformity through compliance	Engagement Humaising Understanding of diversity Harmony through understanding
Training	Doing and practicing	Learning the rules and reinforcing the consequences	Engagement and influencing thinking and values
Essential Concepts	Observable acts	Compliance	Sensemaking Mindfulness Above and below the line

Possible program structure

The following diagram (Figure 3) is an example of the kind of program that may be developed for the life of a project. The program example is entitled a Safety 100 Program simply because it outlines the delivery of 100 days of safety interventions and sets the goal for the project of being 100% committed to safety. What is important to note in this example safety management program is the centrality of safety cultural assessment and analysis. All interventions develop out of this evidence-based approach.



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Dr Long is the Director of Human Dymensions Pty Ltd and specialises in the psychology and culture of organisations. Dr Long has developed a range of unique safety culture measurement tools and interventions which support organisations in developing safety cultural change. Dr Long has extensive experience in the mining, construction and government sectors, current clients include: Beaconsfield Mine, CSIRO, Baulderstone Hornibrook, Dept of Finance, Dept of Defense, United Group, West Gate Freeway Alliance, Hindmarsh Group, PBS Property Group and MBA.