Safety Culture or Culture for Safety?

Why It Matters in What We Measure

Presented by:

Sonja B. Haber, Ph.D.

Human Performance Analysis, Corp.

Session W21- Safety Culture Assessments – How is Culture Measured?

2015 Regulatory Information Conference

Bethesda, MD

March 11, 2015

Cultural Lenses

- National Culture
- Organizational Culture
- Subcultures
- Safety Culture
- Security Culture
- Regulatory Culture

Culture for Safety

- All organizations have a culture.

- Behavior is an outcome of the existing culture.

- Behaviors impact performance, e.g., safety, security, production.

- Just measuring performance outcomes does not always reflect underlying cultural assumptions.

- Assessment focus should include all levels of culture by measuring underlying values and attitudes and determining how they influence behavior.

How the Three Levels of Culture Differ

Artifacts: People wearing appropriate PPE; security screening for people entering the facility.

Claimed Values: Lost time injuries of less than 1 hour for every 100 hours worked for this quarter; 'if you see something say something'.
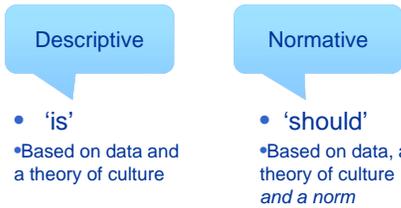
Basic Assumptions: People will always make mistakes; our facility is impenetrable.

Typically assessments focus on artifacts and claimed values with less or no emphasis on determining the basic assumptions.

Aspects of Cultural Assessments

- Need to separate *descriptive* and *normative* aspects of cultural assessments.

Descriptive	Normative
• 'is'	• 'should'
•Based on data and a theory of culture	•Based on data, a theory of culture *and a norm*

Assessment of Culture – Lessons Learned

- Necessary to have diversity of expertise in assessing culture and analyzing the impact on performance.

- Multiple methods of data collection are needed to understand the existing culture and provide convergent validity to the results.

- Need to consider the complexity of culture to understand how it impacts performance (systemic perspective).

- Consideration must be given to the interaction of human, organizational and technological factors.

- More effective culture assessment activities attempt to address all three levels of culture.

Summary

- All aspects of performance are influenced by culture.

- Important to understand the three levels of culture– artifacts, espouse values, basic assumptions, in assessing culture.

- Every organization has a safety culture, but do they have a culture for safety is the more relevant question to ask for sustainability.