

Unique programme reinforces safety culture through motivation, communication, teamwork

By Stein Rønning, Baker Hughes

IN 2004 A unique safety coaching programme was designed and implemented within **Baker Hughes, Norway**. The programme built on the company's strong existing safety culture and was aimed at reinforcing safe behaviours to achieve a higher level of safety performance to avoid the danger of a plateauing performance. The programme reinforces the safety culture through motivation, effective communication and teamwork among employees.

Baker Hughes has approximately 1,000 employees stationed in Scandinavia.

WHY EXSTO?

A number of efforts have been made to make the oil and gas industry a safer place to work. However, accidents and incidents continue to occur. Historically, the focus of safety improvement has been on creating safe work environments and designing safer tools for the employees. While these efforts have led to a great decrease in accidents and incidents, a number of onshore and offshore accidents and several high-potential near-misses have remained an actuality. These, we believed, indicated the need for improvements in the manner in which Baker Hughes approached safety in Norway.

The question arose: Why do incidents and accidents occur when the workforce is provided with the safest workplace and safest equipment? Partially, the answer may be that the traditional historic efforts to improve safety have overlooked one crucial factor in the industry — the workforce itself. The eXsTO coaching programme sought to close this perceived gap in an effort to increase overall safety performance.

ORIGIN AND PRINCIPLES

eXsTO is Latin and means to stand forth/out; exist; be extant/visible; be on record, providing a fitting name for the

programme. More specific to the goals of the programme, eXsTO denotes the act to say stop, stand out, be visible and be present. The eXsTO programme therefore embodies the 3 principles of individuals being present, being visible and being accountable for safe behaviours and actions. Its fundamental tenet is, "Positive attitudes are worthless unless they are translated into action."

eXsTO offers coaching to encourage employees to demonstrate the best

(CRM) of the airline industry focused primarily on increasing efforts related to co-adjutant work environments. By increasing awareness and knowledge, as well as through direct coaching within the fields of communication, planning, coordination, sharing of workload, decision-making and situational awareness, the CRM programmes have been extremely successful.

An important underlying concept of the eXsTO program is that it is directed at enhancing the safety culture within the company. Safety culture has become a much used term in recent years and has been identified as a major contributor to most industrial accidents.

Before being able to enhance safety culture, one must clarify what this broad term describes, which is the subject of some debate. Organisational culture has been defined as consisting of the behaviour, actions and values that people in an enterprise are expected to follow. Safety culture is part of the overall organisational culture and has been identified as "the will at all times to be aware and think of the risk and how the organisation handles it."

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

This author and a small team of safety advisers and psychologists developed eXsTO. Its foundation relies on the shared expertise related both to offshore and onshore work environments as well as consideration of issues related to human factors. The primary goal of eXsTO is to increase motivation and teamwork and to create proactive safe behaviours through empowerment and engagement to reduce the number of accidents and incidents.

The aim of eXsTO is to create a safety culture beyond the call of duty and which extends beyond merely the workplace. The principle is that if each individual is empowered in safety, this will result in a more safety-conscious workforce. In turn, the overall level of safety will



The eXsTO coaching programme is based on the humans-technology-organization model of viewing the factors influencing safety. In it, strong focus is first placed on technical improvements. Then, incidents caused by humans become more visible. Subsequent to focusing on potential human error, it becomes necessary to consider organisation issues. Focus on all 3 components is required to improve safety.

practices of safe behaviour and reinforces safety by employing the safety culture through individual and group attitudes, teamwork and communication. It introduces the concept of the collective "safety net" and presents techniques to help employees comprehend underlying mechanisms and ways to reduce the risk of incidents and human errors.

The programme rests on the principle that all individuals within an organisation must work together to create a safe work environment. In this respect, the concept is strongly related to similar "human factor" programmes that were implemented within the airline industry throughout the '90s. The cockpit/crew resource management programmes

increase, and the safety culture within the organisation will continue to develop and get stronger.

It has been suggested that an organisation with a strong culture will perform at a higher level compared with an organisation lacking a strong culture. Hence, it can be expected that a strong safety culture will lead to an increased safety performance.

By focusing on the individual's behaviours and attitudes leading to both safe and unsafe acts, the safety culture concept aimed to increase awareness, motivation and engagement in safety at an individual and personal level. The programme's movement and specific method occasionally allows for the instructor to work by several principles of coaching on an individual level. By motivating and promoting responsibility to the individual, the participants are encouraged to act in a hands-on manner related to their own work. To achieve this goal, Baker Hughes, Norway set the target that all employees in Scandinavia were to complete the eXsTO coaching programme by year 2006.

IMPLEMENTATION

This eXsTO coaching programme was undertaken using the simple recognition, evaluation and control process from the field of organisational behaviour. During the coaching programme, practical exercises were undertaken, including role-play, one- and two-way communication exercises, review of an internal case study, and the sharing of real-life stories from the coach's and participants' experiences. The experiences, case studies and situations from the participants' daily work formed the basis for the exercises and were essential to the overall success of the programme.

Intentionally, the first team to attend the eXsTO programme were senior managers within Baker Hughes, Norway. Demonstration of senior managerial commitment to the programmes offered a unique opportunity for them to be trained in being present, being visible and being accountable for safe behaviours.

Subsequently, the decision was made that representatives from this management team were to participate in every coaching session held thereafter. Active involvement by senior management is considered essential in that the participants recognize this innovative programme as whole-heartedly supported,

as are the behaviours and beliefs that it espouses.

Organisational literature has undoubtedly expressed the importance of management commitment to the implementation of safety-related issues. More specifically, management commitment to safety has been identified as the biggest single predictor of workforce safety behaviour. The involvement in eXsTO at the senior management level was therefore regarded as crucial to the development and improvement of safety culture within the organisation and in advancing its success.

The programme included mixed teams across the operations of Baker Hughes at offsite venues where individuals were encouraged to consider the organisational and personal factors that affected safety and their roles in influencing it. While the programme to date has focused mainly on Baker Hughes employees, a number of participants from operating companies in Norway and Denmark and a number of Baker Hughes subcontractors have attended.

As a part of the programme, groups of colleagues met over several weeks to discuss their safety behaviours and how they coincide with the norms of the

organisation's overall safety culture. Parallels are drawn between behaviours and practices within the oil and gas industry, both particular to Baker Hughes and more generally — for example, within the worlds of aviation and sports. The groups' familiarity with the latter fields facilitated interpretation of how aspects of skilled teamwork, motivation, achievement and setting objectives could be transferred to Baker Hughes' organisational approach to safety. Coaching on the above activities allow for lessons to be drawn. However, even though a great responsibility is placed on the individual's level of awareness and development of skills, success is also based on arrangements from the organisation and the system surrounding the individual.

The eXsTO coaching programme takes into account the above aspect and is based on the humans-technology-organisation model of viewing the factors influencing safety.

FEEDBACK

About 850 workers have so far completed the eXsTO coaching programme. All Baker Hughes employees are expected to have attended the workshops consti-

tuting the programme's first phase by the end of 2006. It is apparent that the programme has been a powerful agent of cultural change in the effort of making safe behaviour part of everyday life.

While this coaching programme does not exist in isolation but as part of a comprehensive programme, in general there has been a decline in accidents across Norway operations. Where incidents have occurred, employees involved have identified their own lack of behaviours when compared with those applicable and for which they have previously been trained. This willingness to discuss their own oversights indicates an established trust between the employer and employee, based on the eXsTO system's assurance of open communication.

It is interesting and a source of motivation that the eXsTO coaching programme has been recognized by operational organisations both nationally and internationally, independent of the Baker Hughes organisation.

Feedback has been extremely positive, with the exception of a fraction of the participants. Specifically, the practical communication exercises are described as especially useful and valuable in their

eXsTO reinforces safety by employing the safety culture through individual and group attitudes, teamwork and communication.

daily work. Subjectively, a number of participants have described the coaching sessions as thought-provoking. The challenges provided by the instructors promote rich discussions highlighting the important relationship between organisation and individual commitment to safety-related issues. Moreover, the participants have expressed appreciation of the instructors' broad experience and extended knowledge within the fields of the programme.

THE FUTURE

The subsequent phase of eXsTO will particularly focus on team- and self-motivation, proactive behaviour, coaching and teamwork. Working with individuals and smaller groups, instructors will focus

even more on specific areas and challenges. A significant development is an expanded use of psychologists within a more detailed form of coaching. Further development will include efforts to modularize the coaching aspects and to train more instructors. The second phase will seek to deal more actively with eXsTO's underlying principles related to reliability work and reduction of human errors by improving design and work methods. Baker Hughes will aim at extending the programmes to include other countries and distinct cultures.

Stein Ronning is program manager for eXsTO and all HSE safety culture training in Baker Hughes Scandinavia. He is now teaching the eXsTO programme in both Scandinavia and UK for all Baker Hughes employees. He would like to thank Rune Frøfjord, Baker Hughes HSE manager in Scandinavia for the EARC region, Kenneth Lang and his colleagues in Aberdeen, especially Kathryn Breitsprecher. He also thanks his colleagues in the HSE department in Stavanger Norway, Pamela Bochee in Houston and Tor Anders Eide and Vibeke Francisca Søiland with Falck Nutek Bergen who have made a great support and help making the training and the eXsTO programme work.

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