Doing What We Know: Developing a “Culture of Safety”

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Improving Mine Safety

• Important
• Noble
• The intent of LOTs of training
• Hard to do!
• I’ve been asked to share lessons from the field of Education.
We’ve been trying to change “reform” schools for decades.

- We’ve learned a lot!
- Mostly about what doesn’t work.
- In most cases, cultures change, briefly, then revert and after a few years there’s little is any evidence of the “reform.”
There has been recent progress using models based on...

- Systems Thinking
- Chaos Theory
- Complexity Theory
- Changing Organizational Culture
What makes improving mine safety so difficult? It’s not just about what we know, it’s about who we are. (The CULTURE of our organizations.)
What is a “Culture?”

• “the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group”
Cultures, even more so than individual people, resist change.

Are “training” or “education” likely to change behaviors or beliefs?
Based on the work of Dr. Michael Fullan

LEADING IN A CULTURE OF CHANGE

Michael Fullan

CHANGE FORCES WITH A VENGEANCE
“It is a humbling proposition. Contexts don’t change that easily and complexity theory is the operative paradigm, which means that systems can’t be ‘managed’ and reforms rarely unfold as intended.”

Michael Fullan (2003) Change Forces with a Vengeance page xi
“The vast majority of people in the system must end up ‘owning the problem’ and be agents of its solution.”

“We need instead to create the conditions and processes that will enhance the likelihood that we move down the path of increasingly greater ownership and commitment.”

Michael Fullan (2003)  
Change Forces with a Vengeance  
page 23
“In common sense terms:

• Start with the notion of moral purpose, key problems, desirable directions, but don’t lock in.

• Create communities of interaction around these ideas.

• Ensure that quality information infuses interaction and related deliberations.

• Look for and extract promising patterns, i.e. consolidate gains and build on them.”

Michael Fullan (2003)
Change Forces with a Vengeance
page 23
“Tipping Point”

• Malcom Gladwell (2000)
• Under the right conditions, small changes can lead to large effects
• It’s about momentum and communications.
“The right kind of impetus, or ‘tipping point’ may not be as massive as we think; powerful, and the right kind yes, but not necessarily huge. ‘Tipping Point’ is complexity theory -- little causes can have big effects.”

Michael Fullan (2003)
Change Forces with a Vengeance
page 36
• “If the flapping of a butterfly’s wings in Texas can dramatically change weather patterns in Chicago, then the flapping of one’s mouth or seemingly innocuous decisions, or random behaviors, can dramatically affect an organization’s future.”

• Marion (1999, p 212)
About Leadership...

• “Charismatic leadership is negatively associated with sustainability.” (p37)

• Top down changes won't lead to sustainable culture change.

• Need a new type of leadership, at many levels of the organization...

• ... with people working on many aspects of the desired change simultaneously.”

Michael Fullan (2003)
Change Forces with a Vengeance
page 23
“It’s easy for communities of practice to become or be sterile... This means that communities of practice need to be conceptualized appropriately (to include, for example, diversity and the stimulus of outside ideas) and they must be constantly monitored and improved.”

Michael Fullan (2003) Change Forces with a Vengeance page 45
“In a culture of safety the focus is on effective systems and teamwork to accomplish the mutual goal of safe, high-quality performance. When something goes wrong, the focus is on what, rather than who, is the problem. The intent is to bring process failures and system issues to light, and to solve them in a non-biased non-threatening way.”

The Center for Disease Control (CDC)
Change happens when...
Culture of Safety

“Status Quo”

Culture of Neglect

- Setting Objectives
- Training
- Meas & Feedback
- Health

Culture of Safety

- Shortcuts
- Poor Logistics
- Apathy
What Makes an Effective Leader, when Sustained Change is the Goal?
5 “Action Mindsets”

- Strong sense of moral purpose
- Understanding of the dynamics of change
- Great emotional intelligence (ability to build strong relationships)
- Commitment to new knowledge
- Capacity for Coherence making (without being controlling)

Characteristics of Effective Leaders

- Hope
- Energy
- Enthusiasm
To summarize... I don’t have the answer. No one does.

But “all of us are smarter and more capable than any of us”
Although we may never “get there” we can certainly make progress. That progress will require new leadership that generates...
Moral Purpose
Quality
Relationships
Quality Ideas
A New Culture
An afterthought....

Is “a Culture of Safety” really ABOUT Safety?

Or, is safety the product of a new culture that values “organizational learning” and “team”?
Thank you.

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