



Finnish Institute of  
Occupational Health

# *Well-being through work*



# Value of Safety - ValoSa

Henriikka Ratilainen, MSc.(tech.)  
Research engineer  
Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

# Objectives

1. To create a common understanding of how value of safety and safety as a organizational value are defined by various key stakeholders
2. To identify practical dilemmas and bottlenecks in practicing safety values, and how organizations can effectively deal with these dilemmas
3. To determine how the value of safety and safety values play a role in daily industrial practice, at different organizational levels
4. To develop a draft methodology to promote and share safety values, thereby also strengthening management commitment

# Tasks and methods

## Literature review

- Descriptive review
- scientific literature
- also including some not peer-reviewed publications

## Interviews to CEOs

- semi-structured
- to provide practice-based information on safety values and their impact on organisations' functions
- with several European CEOs

## Delphi study

- to define consensus on value of safety, a definition of values that support safety
- identification of mechanisms that form and strengthen values that support safety values in practice

## Safety as a value –survey

- developing and executing a survey
- perceived safety values in different organizational levels/groups
- in three (3) companies

# Literature review

- Different definitions of values, but no mutual understanding of safety (at work) as a value.
- The idea of ‘safety is a value’ is based on the “fundamental philosophy that all injuries are preventable and that the goal of zero injuries can be achieved” (Cooper 2001)



# Literature review: some conclusions

- ‘Safety as a value’ goes beyond ‘safety as a priority’. Organisational values have a more strategic impact than priorities.
- There are several safety-related values that are important for developing or supporting safety practices and/or safety culture, like justice, trust and informedness
- Top managers and supervisors can strengthen safety values by consistent actions.
- Employees look at safety values in more practical ways than managers and often do not share the same safety values as managers.
- It is important to distinguish between values that are really shared and lived-up to, and espoused values, which are mainly communicated verbally and in writing. When there is a difference between the two, employees will not believe the espoused values.

# Interviews with stakeholders

The interview covered

- Background information of the interviewee and organisation
- Corporate values (core values, meaning of safety)
- Background and motives for safety
- How an organisation shares the value of safety
- Values in everyday work (motivation, dilemmas on value conflicts, value differences in different personnel groups)
- N=17



# Interviews: some conclusions

- Safety was seen as:
  - a priority, more important than productivity or any other thing
  - a quality of work/product (sign of an expertise, efficiency of production)
  - an investment for employees and the future of the company
  - a goal, but also as an objective: a part of one's everyday work
- Good safety is a sign of
  - good business
  - good management
  - Responsible and respected employer
  - engaged employees
- The most common ways to share the value of safety were
  - communication (regular meetings, different kind of information material, joint discussions)
  - Training
  - continuous development of practices and products



# Delphi study

The aim of the Delphi study was to develop consensus on:

- a) what it means when safety *is* an organisational value and b) the value safety *has* for organisations (i.e. added value)
- the most relevant factors that *influence* the value of safety
- factors that are *expressions* of having safety as a value and can be used to recognise or perhaps measure safety as a value
- the *ethical* justification of 'having safety as an organisational value'
  
- N1=82, N2=25



# Delphi study: Safety as an organisational value

*When safety is an organisational value, this means*

- that safety is regarded as a positive value in itself
- it is integrated into the business strategy as well as in all business operations;
- it generates a work culture that is positive for safety, and
- it implies a long-term commitment:
- it also implies some guarantees that safety will be important in the future, e.g. it ensures that future managers will be committed to safety.
- There was no consensus on having safety as an organisational value meaning taking responsibility for safety of the local community.

# Delphi study: The value safety has for organisations

- Safety **has** a value for organisations, apart from the meaning of safety as an organisational value in itself, e.g.
  - good business,
  - corporate image,
  - the continuity of the organisation,
  - appreciated by customers,
  - Helping to avoid economic loss.
- Good safety management is actually an important aspect of good management.

# Delphi study: Influencing factors

Three levels of factors influencing on value of safety were identified

- 1) societal (developments in national and international society, external factors), e.g.
  - Growing importance of business ethics
  - Media attention to accidents
  - Legal Requirements
  - Best practices of other companies
  - Requirements from important customers
- 2) organisational (organisational factors, business values), e.g.
  - Business values like trust, justice, responsibility..
  - The experience of a serious accident
  - Activities of workers or their unions to improve safety
- 3) individual (personal initiatives), e.g.
  - Individual (higher) managers performing exemplary behaviour
  - Initiatives from the CEO
  - Initiatives from employees

# Delphi study: Visibility in practice

- Safety as a value is expressed by informal talking and communication about safety.
- Safety as a value is reflected by
  - management communication,
  - setting of priorities and
  - role behaviour in safety.
- Safety as a value becomes also visible by integrating it in operational processes, like maintenance, training, procedures, interaction with contractors, investment choices and priority setting.
- There was no consensus that safety as a value is visible in the rewarding systems.

# Delphi study: Ethical justifications

- Study shows very strongly that
  - safe working place is a fundamental right and
  - it is broadly accepted that every employee has the right to return home safely after work.
  - safety was considered as an important factor in reducing human suffering.
- No consensus on
  - All serious accidents can be prevented
  - All minor accidents can be prevented
  - The only justified goal for safety policy is zero accidents

# Safety as a value –survey

- Extensive questionnaire was developed for this study
- Explorative survey approach
- N=1362 from three companies
- The results show factorial structure of different aspects of safety as a value and factors related to it, e.g.
  - Avoiding negative consequences (by focusing on safety)
  - Pursuing positive consequences (by focusing on safety)
  - Importance of performing safely
  - Management do not value safety
  - Supervisors showing their responsibility
  - Practical safety-related conflicts
- The survey distinguishes differences between organisations and between personnel groups

# Safety as a value –survey

Now working on

- Analyzing the data further on, e.g.
  - Relations between different factors -> can we identify what practical factors predict that safety is highly valued
  - The most important differences in perceptions related to safety as a value between management and employees
  - Bottlenecks in daily work hindering safety as a value



# Conclusions for now

- Safety as an organisational value has two complementary and compatible dimensions:
  - safety as a value in itself (intrinsically motivated), and
  - safety as a value as a factor that contributes to other highly valued areas such as good business and profit, people and planet (added-values; extrinsically motivated).
- We propose the following definition for having safety as an organisational value:

*A long-term commitment in having safety integrated as a positive value within all business operations and strategies.*

→integration of safety within all business operations and strategies

→defines safety as a positive value

→refers to a long-term commitment



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*Thank you!*



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