JUST CULTURE concept

Member Company
Aperam

Category
Workplace improvement
Accident analysis and countermeasure development
Safety training and/or skills development
to reduce the number of safety incidents
Introduction or enhancement of
behavioural safety approaches

The Challenge
As part of our project to develop the
maturity of the Aperam H&S culture, the
results of the analysis conducted in 2019-
2020 on almost all Aperam sites showed
a lack of confidence in Aperam’s Fair Play
policy: not fair and not clear enough in its
application.

But to become a true learning organization
we need to learn from our mistakes, that
means if we want to progress in safety we
need an environment in which individuals
feel free to point out their mistakes.

Why?
We needed to make a fundamental change
in our way of treating accidents. In our
complex working world, quick decisions
are increasingly important. Mistakes are
part of everyday work and can rarely be
completely avoided. It is crucial to deal
with mistakes in a constructive way,
which allows the whole organisation
to learn quickly. People are less willing
to inform the organisation about their
own errors and other safety problems
or hazards if they are afraid of being
punished or prosecuted. Such lack of trust
of employees prevents the management
from being properly informed of the actual
risks. Managers are then unable to make
the right decisions in order to improve
safety.

But it is also crucial not to accept any
deliberate infringement of the rules.

The aim of this revised concept, which
we have decided to call the “Aperam
Fundamental Standard JUST CULTURE”,
is to provide a response to improve one
of the biggest weaknesses revealed in the
survey of our health and safety culture.

This new standard, based on an analysis
of human factors, is a guideline to provide
sites with a common definition, an
understanding of human behaviour and
a common methodology for the decision
making process.

The application of the Just Culture
Standard is intended to ensure a rapid and
appropriate response to good/positive
individual behaviour and, in return, to
correct bad/negative individual behaviour,
all in a fair and transparent manner.

The aim is to value the positive more,
to have a culture where the positive
consequences outnumber the negative.

The aim is to ensure that people are treated fairly,
without blaming and punishing them hastily - but remaining
strict and clear about unacceptable behaviour - by providing a consistent
impartial and objective approach when analysing events.

For each event (accident with or without
stoppage, first aid, incident, dangerous
situation), for which it is clear that the
behavioral component is predominant, we
ask to carry out a more detailed analysis
before taking any personal consequences!

We take care of a qualitative investigation
including an analysis of the human failure
that led to the accident. This to better
understand what are the latent conditions,
the weaknesses, in our organization.
The treatment of positive aspects should be given more weight than the treatment of negative aspects - at least 4 times more.

It is important to have a clear procedure for deciding how a breach of the rules should be dealt with depending on the type of behaviour: is it an error of action, an error of understanding or a deliberate violation, and if so for what reasons? The appropriate measures may then vary from coaching to discipline.

Treating people fairly, not rushing to blame and punish, and taking into account the actual circumstances in which staff find themselves, encourages them to be more open and proactive in reporting hazards.

Needed Action

The first step was the H&S cultural maturity evaluation and its analysis.

Then we looked how other companies treat the issue of human failure and look for literature. We found the Model for a Just and Fair Culture from Patrick Hudson immediately appealing. The Just culture philosophy is already used in a considerable number of high reliability organisations such as the oil and gas industries, airlines and hospitals.

We defined our new standard in collaboration with the worker representatives. We called it the “Aperam Fundamental Standard JUST CULTURE”

We shared the principles with our Top Management and gave them a training on Human Behaviour. Then we gave training to the Site Managers.

In parallel, training at various levels has been launched. The “Just Culture” philosophy and the understanding of human behavior are core parts of the “Safe - Me with my team” leadership training, given at all sites to operational managers and supervisors. This 20 hours training has been created for the specific needs of Aperam and translated in 10 languages. It includes workshops and discussion. Today nearly 600 people took part to this training.

For the analysis of safety incidents, a new common Root Cause Analysis tool has been created, taking into account the human factor. This tool has been broadly shared in the Health and Safety network and training has been given. This tool has been developed in consultation with the corporate team of Environmental & Industrial Risk Management, to ensure compatibility with the needs arising from the analysis of such events too.

A part of that an E-Learning on Human behaviour and the main principles of our JUST CULTURE standard has been developed, as well as a complementary training on the practical application of the Root Cause Analysis principles and tool.

A 3 days training dedicated to blue collars has been created. At the moment the future moderators are trained.
What is Just Culture?

“A Just Culture is an atmosphere of trust in which people are encouraged (even rewarded) for providing essential safety-related information, but in which they are also clear about where the line must be drawn between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.”

Professor James Reason, 1997
Professor of Psychology, world-renowned researcher on human error

By implementing these principles we become a true learning organisation, knowing its risks better and implementing effective measures. This will greatly help us on our journey to zero accidents.

Roles and responsibilities

Members at all levels of our organisation have to be involved and engaged to achieve our common goal of developing and implementing a robust and positive health and safety culture.

Find out which roles are involved in developing and implementing a positive health and safety culture.
The 4-Step approach of the concept

In our complex working world, quick decisions are inevitable. Errors are part of everyday work and can rarely be completely avoided. It is crucial to deal with errors constructively, which enables the entire organization to learn quickly. The focus is on root cause analysis: What exactly happened? What caused the error? How can it be prevented in the future?

Step 1: Classify the behaviour
Step 2: Check whether it is a routine error or violation
Step 3: Identify effective interventions
Step 4: Determine accountability
Step 1: Understanding human failure and behaviour classification

In the previous chapter, we have seen examples on how behaviour below expectation is classified. This graph summarizes the categories. Click on the + signs to see what a person would typically be thinking once the error or mistake has taken place.

Action Review

**Specific:** standard and training specific to the needs of Aperam, defined after the cultural assessment.

**Measurable:** nearly 600 operational managers and supervisors have been already trained. About 400 persons will get the training until the end of the year.

**Achievable:** The new standard has been validated by the Top management and the Aperam’s European Health and Safety Commission* (*a body in which workers’ and employers’ representatives are brought together to work on health and safety issues at European level).

**Realistic:** The Just Culture principles are in practice in other industries.

**Time-bound:** The implementation is immediate, the change of culture will take some time

Horizontal Expansion Capability

The principles of Just Culture can be expanded to all activities where you can have human failure (Quality, sales department, environment incidents, etc.)

Outcome

- Satisfaction of staff representatives with the system's correctness in the face of human error
- Satisfaction of employees who no longer have to be afraid of making honest mistakes and who know clearly where the line is between a mistake and an intolerable violation.
- Satisfaction of the company which, through the right culture and the analysis of human behaviour, reveals the weaknesses of its system and can thus more easily put in place the appropriate measures to avoid a repetition of an incident.