

ADIF SAFETY LEADERSHIP MODEL BASED ON BEHAVIORS

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1. Overall context about safety culture

1.1. Historical evolution of safety and what es safety culture

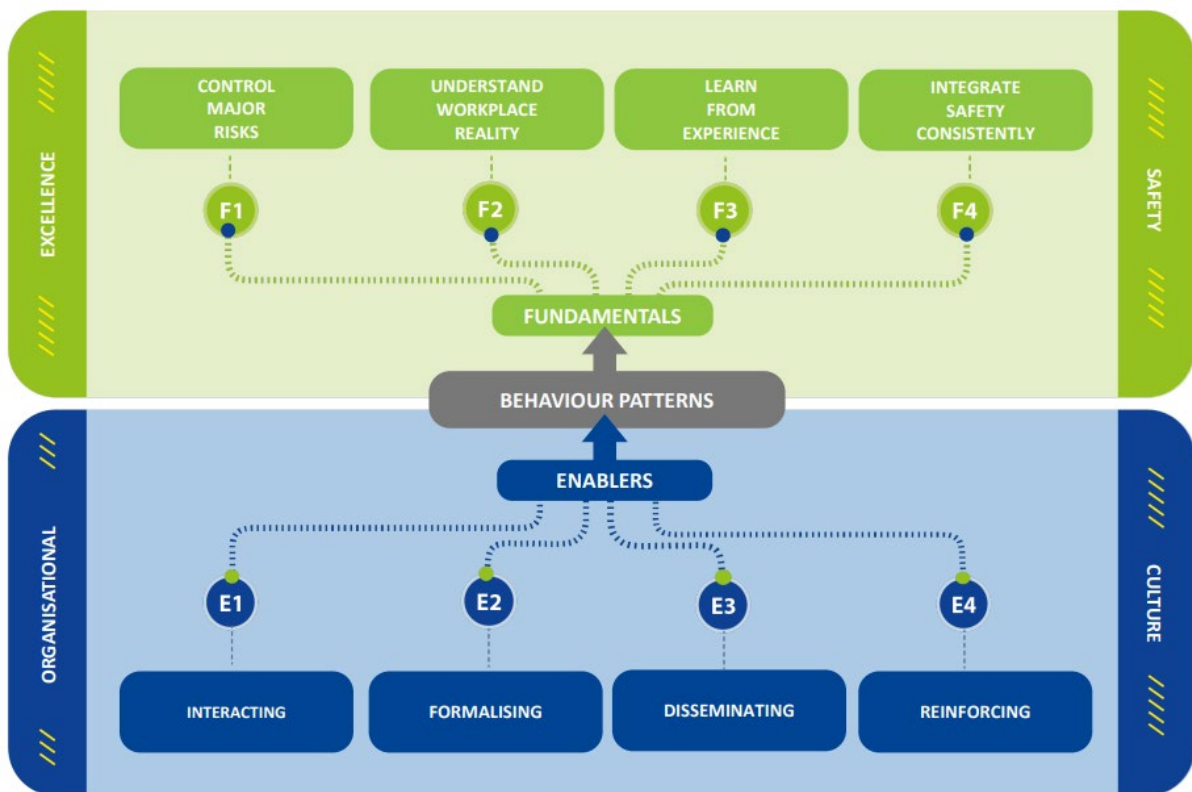
If we talk about the three basic elements of safety: technical developments, safety management systems, and safety culture and human and organizational factors, we see that they are all fundamental to improving safety performance. The way companies have approached and managed them has evolved over time. Until the end of the 19th century, the focus was more on technological developments, such as process improvement, protective equipment, tools, and so on. During the 20th century, the focus shifted to safety management systems, regulation, and the passing of laws and regulations. But since the end of the 20th century, and especially in the 21st century, organizations have taken a more integrated and global view of safety; they are working on improving safety culture and integrating human and organizational factors into their processes as essential tools to achieve radical improvements in the safety of operations¹.

At Adif, we see safety culture as a set of values, beliefs and ways of thinking that define the way people act and manage the risks of the operations. In a nutshell, it is the way things are done in terms of safety in an organization. This means that the safety culture is part of the organizational culture, which influences the way people think and act within such organization.

1.2. ERA (European Union Agency for Railways) Safety Culture Model

The safety culture of any organization is part of the culture of that organization. We share the vision of an integrated safety culture involving all members of the organization.

A set of levers or enablers should be promoted that encourage the right behaviors and promote the improvement of the fundamental pillars for achieving safety excellence (see image below)².



In this integrated culture, leaders must be fully mobilized towards safety, demonstrating, and living the appropriate behaviors, but also ensuring that the ones around them are doing the same. These leaders must be transformational instead of transactional, having a vision and inspiring their teams to follow that vision³. It is a type of leadership that enhances the correct use of the safety systems and processes.

Note:

Transactional leadership focuses on results, efficiency and performance rather than people and relationships. It uses positive feedback or praise and negative feedback or reprimand. There is no idea of training or developing talent for the future, but simply to perform on a day-to-day basis

Transformational leadership is different style in which leaders encourage, inspire and motivate employees to innovate and create changes that will help grow and shape the future success of the company. It is a type of leadership in which the focus is turned to people's own capabilities, giving them more freedom to create and work in order to bring out the best in them. A transformational leader must be able to inspire and motivate their teams, they must have the ability to raise the level of commitment, well-being and performance of their employees through a better working environment and relationship against set objectives and challenges.

Grosso modo, both types of leadership can be differentiated because: transactional leadership seeks to maintain the procedures that the company already had, while transformational leadership seeks to make changes to improve the operation of the business. Transformational leadership is often seen as the opposite of transactional leadership, and rightly so.

Additionally, these leaders must be able to build trust and create a psychological safe environment. Psychological safety can be defined as the climate in which people feel comfortable expressing and being themselves. They trust that company policies protect them, and safety occurrences and observations are used for improvement. They are confident that they can speak up and will not be humiliated, ignored, or blamed. They feel they can ask questions when they are unsure about something. They tend to trust and respect their colleagues. This is why leaders have such a big impact in the safety culture.

This is our vision for the safety culture model in Adif, and we see leaders as the ambassadors of this culture. Besides leaders having a critical role in this cultural evolution, as we will see below, there is a proven link between leadership and safety performance. According to the ERA safety culture model, improving safety leadership has a direct impact on two pillars and three enablers of the model.

2. The leadership role in a safety culture

2.1. How we think and how we act

Aligned with our definition of safety culture, there are visible and invisible elements to this culture:

- The mindset which is invisible and is composed by the beliefs, the enacted values, and ways of thinking, etc.
- The ways of acting, which are visible and are composed for example by the organizational structure, the processes, the risk management, etc.

Likewise, this relationship between visible and invisible cultural elements also happens at the individual level, with behaviors or ways of doing and values, beliefs and mindsets.

This means that if we, at Adif, want to move our safety culture forward, we must tackle the visible but also the invisible elements, which sometimes are the most challenging ones. One of the keys to work on the mindset is to help the employees gain self-knowledge and realize that there are many beliefs that appear in their day-to-day without them noticing it, affecting the way they behave. These beliefs can prevent us from moving forward in safety, and we will use the concept of mind traps to explore them within Adif leaders¹.

The mind traps are a concept based on extensive field experience from BTS, working with over 6,000 leaders from different industries such as manufacturing, energy, airlines, and mining, among others¹.

There are seven different mind traps that drive people into the following beliefs:

1. **Complacency:** *“We have been working on this for a long time and we have made a lot of progress, so it is difficult to go any further”.*
2. **Evasion:** *“Safety is not my responsibility, it is the responsibility of others (the safety area, operations, etc.)”,*

3. **Skepticism:** “No one can expect not to have accidents on the everyday activities, that’s what the data shows”.
4. **Criticism:** “How do you expect me to set an example if my managers don’t?”
5. **Short-termism:** “My responsibility and that of my team is to meet the business objectives proposed by the company and safety takes a second place.”
6. **Victimize:** “No matter what I do, things will remain the same”. “My team and I do not have enough leverage to impact on safety”.
7. **Control:** “Safety is, above all, a consequence of supervision and control”.

Mind traps have an impact on the way people communicate and behave, which shapes the organizational culture, and that’s why it is so important to tackle them. How can organizations overcome safety mind traps? The first step is to recognize that these mind traps exist and identify the ones we are more likely to fall into. Then, we must reflect about the impact that the mind traps may have in us but also in the ones around us. And finally, we must find mechanisms to question the logical reasons behind the mind traps and break free from them¹.

For a business to achieve results sustainably, safety must be integrated into the organization’s culture and ways of working. And for this to happen, one important step is to build the right safety mindset.

2.2. The correlation between safety leadership and safety culture

According to the article “Liderazgo y cultura en seguridad: su influencia en los comportamientos de trabajo seguros de los trabajadores”⁴ (research work done by *Ciro Martínez Oropesa and Lázaro V. Cremades* and published in ‘Salud de los Trabajadores Magazine’ in December 2012), safety leadership and safety culture are two important predictors of a good safety performance. And leaders play a critical role being the intermediary in the relationship between culture and safety performance.

From all the elements that contribute to an effective management of safety performance, the commitment with safety and the behaviors of Directors and Middle Managers are the most important ones⁴.

Even without noticing it, leaders are spreading messages about safety at all times, with their words and actions. They must be committed towards safety to really inspire the ones around them to do the same.

It is fundamental to work directly with Adif’s safety leaders to prepare them to be the catalysts and ambassadors of the expected safety culture. And since, just like culture, leadership is also contextual⁵, it is crucial to have clarity of what Adif expects from its leaders: what are the behaviors that all safety leaders in Adif should demonstrate?

That’s exactly what we present in the next section.

3. Adif Safety Leadership Model based on behaviors

Our work in terms of Safety Leadership Behaviors is based on the five ERA Safety Leadership Principles⁶. According to this model, leaders should be able to create a safety

vision and share it through their communication and through example. In addition, a strong leader in safety promotes team spirit and horizontal cooperation, as well as acknowledges good practices and evaluates deviations fairly (see image below).



Following these principles, at Adif, we have defined a model of six key dimensions that every leader at the organization must demonstrate in terms of safety.



Below, we present the behaviors that define each dimension.

Always integrate safety in decision making:

- Integrate safety in all business activities.
- Always analyze safety risks and find out how are affecting safety decisions that a priori are good for the business.
- Make sure everybody knows and personally analyzes the safety potential risks in their areas of responsibility.

- Pay special attention to new situations, changes in technologies, etc., and evaluate its implications on safety.
- Never compromise safety to achieve other business outcomes.
- Use the KPIs (*Key 'Safety' Performance Indicators*) on safety performance from the approach to the human condition and valuing its positive safety contribution.
- Recognize trust as a key predictor of mature safety cultures.
- Ensure that the incentives, sanctions, and recognitions reinforce behaviors and outcomes that support a sustainable and safe performance.

Have orientation to safety results:

- Improve safety performance by accepting and applying learnings and best practices from other safety events.
- Be proactive to identify unsafe situations and seek safety improvements.
- Communicate and demonstrate the conviction that our own safety, the safety of others and the protection of the operations and the environment depends on us.
- Avoid risk normalization in the day-to-day.
- Generate a sense of vulnerability in the teams.
- Be concerned about the fact that if a safety event occurred elsewhere, then a similar incident could also occur in any other part.
- Get involved proactively in most of the safety events investigations in the own working area.
- Show a self-critical attitude and always look to improve the safety performance.

Promote dialogue on safety:

- Give and ask for feedback frequently and honestly.
- Correct unsafe behaviors to managers, peers, contractors and third parties, and expect them to do the same for us.
- Raise our hand when we see that safety is at risk.
- Establish an agile procedure to communicate to everybody within Adif the lessons learned, and the solutions applied from all relevant safety events in the industry.
- Protect the individuals that share mistakes or raise their hand about safety.
- Overcome the resistance to share mistakes and safety events within Adif.
- Communicate safety events and learnings to other areas without hiding information, so that they can also learn.
- Ensure that every failure is turned into an opportunity to learn and improve.

Develop people to act as safety leaders:

- Be aware that people are the solution, not the problem.
- Facilitate the access of the teams to information about safety events, the correspondent investigations and outcomes/learnings that are published.
- Ensure everybody knows and personally analyses the safety potential risks in our areas of responsibility.
- Motivate and encourage our peers and teams not to relax and to always look for continuous improvement.
- Empower our teams.

- Spend time recognizing the safety improvements us and our teams achieve.
- Establish relationships with partners and suppliers to influence their safety performance.
- Balance the pressure for results with the requirement to comply with safety standards with third parties (contractors and suppliers).

Lead by visible example:

- Feel oneself empowered.
- Lead by example, being consistent between what we do and what we tell people.
- Do not say or do things to comply, do it only when we are truly convinced.
- Be aware also of what we don't say and what we don't do.
- Get personally involved in improving the effectiveness of the safety activities in our areas (preparation and quality reviews of standards, meetings, working groups, feedbacks, investigation of safety events and communication of lessons learned, etc.).
- Adopt and exhibit behaviors that set the standard for safety all time.
- Personally comply with all regulations without exception, avoiding taking shortcuts or seeking privileges based on our role or level.
- Have the same behavior when we are seen and when we are not seen.

Build trust and commitment:

- Create a psychological safe environment where people speak without fear.
- Be close and committed to our colleagues because we all belong to the same team.
- Listen to learn, not to respond.
- Convey with conviction the idea that all accidents are avoidable.
- Value all points of view and create an open, engaging and trusting environment where people are comfortable asking questions, raising concerns, and reporting safety events and learning from technical, behavioral, and cultural factors contributing to safety events.
- Provide effective feedback and positive recognition when people raise concerns.
- When something goes wrong, “look into the mirror” to reflect on what we might have done to create confusion among the team / When something goes right, “look outside the window” to give credit to the team for their positive actions.
- Show genuine concern about the well-being of our teams and foster an environment where we all take care of each other.

These are the leadership behaviors that will help us to continue evolving our safety culture in Adif.

4. Implementation initiatives

Since we believe that our leaders have a fundamental role in moving forward our safety culture, we are developing a Safety Leadership Program.

We know that an isolated capability training is not enough to change behaviors, we need to start aligning everyone around why we need to evolve our safety culture, put focus on the mindset shifts that need to happen in each leader to sustain the evolution and then give them the capabilities to apply the expected behaviors⁷.

Instead of looking at a *Safety Leadership Program* as a one-off milestone, we are building a learning journey that started with a diagnosis phase to have a clear picture of where we are in terms of safety culture and safety leadership. We will use those inputs to develop the contents of the program and then have a sustainability phase to help the leaders incorporate the learnings back on-the-job and cascade the messages to the rest of the organization.

The journey has the following objectives:

- Align everyone around where we are in terms of safety culture and what's the evolution we want to achieve.
- Dive into the concept of mind traps and explore how they affect our decisions and prevent us from moving forward.
- Communicate and experiment some of the critical behaviors that all leaders should demonstrate to achieve an integrated safety culture (Safety Leadership Behaviors Model) and learn tools to apply those behaviors in a daily basis.

Adif will start this initiative working directly with 1,500 leaders in the organization, inviting them to be the protagonists in this cultural evolution. The objective is to build a scalable model that allow us to share these messages with the rest of the organization, and with our partners, contractors, and suppliers.

We are confident that the Safety Leadership Program will align the leaders around their critical role in safety and give them clarity about the behaviors that Adif expects them to demonstrate in the day-to-day, independently of their area.

5. Conclusion

To continue evolving our safety culture in Adif, we must focus on the human and organizational factors. Leaders have a huge influence on the way people think and act across the organization, so in this Safety Leadership Program we are putting a lot of effort to prepare them to be the protagonists and lead our safety culture evolution.

We have defined a set of dimensions and behaviors that we expect every leader to demonstrate in his/her day-to-day (Safety Leadership Behaviors Model), and now we are starting the beautiful journey of communicating these behaviors and equipping the leaders to apply them.

Keywords: Safety; Culture; Leadership; ERA Safety Leadership Principles; Behaviors; Adif Safety Leadership Model.

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