



**MARY KAY O'CONNOR
PROCESS SAFETY CENTER**
TEXAS A&M ENGINEERING EXPERIMENT STATION

19th Annual International Symposium
October 25-27, 2016 • College Station, Texas

Improving Contractor Safety Experience and Engagement

Greg Fletcher – Principal
Katherine Molly – Principal
The North Highland Company

Contractor Safety Management (CSM)

Contractor safety management comprises a vital component for managing an outsourced workforce, particularly as owners and operators are faced with additional process and personnel safety regulations and standards – both internal and external. Contractual requirements, industry standards, regulations and risks make it particularly important for employees and contractors to diligently remain informed, engaged, and even change behaviors when it comes to safety. Effective safety programs help employees and contractors understand expectations within the workplace or job site, help them understand how to respond appropriately, and enable them to become better brand stewards who contribute to promoting a safer environment.

While there are implications associated with authorities, fines, and reputation, there are also financial benefits to contractor safety management programs beyond safety mindfulness and the connection with quality delivery. This includes:

- Aligned safety goals, programs and motivations between parties
- Lower turnover rates / impact to cost and schedule
- Consistent metrics for success

A successful contractor safety program requires a holistic system that manages multiple parts simultaneously:

- From collecting to reporting, a process that provides timely and actionable information to decision makers will guard against incidents.
- Ensure that the balance of performance evaluation and cost management incentivizes the right behaviors and safety outcomes in the field.
- Through stakeholder engagement, develop consistency of program content and expectations top to bottom, across the organization.

As shown in the diagram, a successful contractor safety program requires a holistic system that manages multiple parts simultaneously. It involves incident reporting, contractor safety evaluation, culture influence and management of the safety program.



Figure 1. Contractor safety management program

Organizations with a Proactive and Resilient safety culture have high levels of communications, engagement and training. Consequently, contractor safety management emphasizes the importance of people and relationships.

Focusing on Contractor Safety Experience and Engagement

The operator-contractor relationship should provide meaning and value to the contractor, shaping and enabling their sense of contribution and an opportunity to hone their craft. A person's job, whether contractor or employee, is woven into the fabric of who they are as an individual. It impacts how they identify themselves; it dictates their ability to support themselves, their family and their community; and it impacts their pursuit of purpose.

Delivering a compelling contractor experience is differentiator in the highly competitive and highly regulated Energy industry. A contractor's work experience affects their thoughts, behaviors and level of adherence to an operator's requirements. Positive or negative, the impact manifests in engagement levels, retention, loyalty, satisfaction and overall safety performance.

Contractor experience can be described as the sum of all interactions between a contractor and the operator, as they are perceived, understood and remembered by the contractor. This reflects a journey through the stages before, during and after the work arrangement. Each stage contains interactions that cumulatively create the total experience. Intentional or not, good or bad, every organization that uses a contractor workforce offers a contractor experience.

Manfred Max-Neef articulates a model of human needs that goes above and beyond Maslow's expanded hierarchy.¹ In addition to the more traditional pyramid of fundamental needs, Max-Neef identifies how those needs must be satisfied through "being, having, doing" and "interacting." Foundational understanding of contractor expectations begins with understanding the needs all humans share.

To create a compelling contractor experience, organizations must understand the influencing factors and recognize the increasingly complex, interdependent system in which they exist.

Key Components of a Contractor Safety Experience

Contractor Safety Experience is the product of multiple interactions between **People, Jobs and the Organization**. It provides the safety DNA, or makeup, of an organization; in other words, it's the way things are done at every level of the organization. Contractor engagement is a critical component of an organization's safety culture. The higher the level of engagement and communication, the more positive a contractor's experience.

People Component of Contractor Safety Experience

The People component of contractor experience focuses on the interaction between the tangible and intangible experiences of its contractors. Tangible experiences can include training, enabling processes, tools and formal communications. They are the support mechanisms put in place to enable people to get their work done in the safest, most efficient manner possible.

Intangible experiences are built upon daily events or interactions that are not necessarily prescribed or formally documented. This includes fostering an environment where concerns, helpful tips, and knowledge can be shared without fear of repercussion; a work site where the plant manager, foreman, or operations director greets employees and contractors alike, showing interest in who they are and how they're doing.

A best practice example is utilizing the daily project management stand up meetings as a forum to continually spotlight the importance of safety mindfulness above cost and schedule pressures. By placing emphasis on the personal aspects and creating an implied responsibility for one another across contractor lines, a culture of care is fostered.

These intangible experiences provide the glue that forms connections between people, and contributes to the desire to operate as one team, with the same safety goals and objectives.

Contractors should **feel empowered** to make **emotional decisions** based on **rational information** (i.e. Stop Work Order)



Figure 2. Contractor experience features

Features of a Positive Contractor Experience :

- Effective two-way communications
- Confidence in the effectiveness of preventative measures

- Meaningful interactions
- Shared purpose and perceptions of safety importance
- Relationships founded on mutual trust

Job Component of Contractor Safety Experience

From a safety culture perspective, jobs provide a blueprint for how workers contribute to safe and efficient operations. For each role, position, or job, there are a prescribed set of expectations or responsibilities which provide guidelines for how a person should perform or behave within that job. This performance is typically observable, measurable, and rewarded or punished, to varying degrees. On the surface, some performance can be difficult to measure. However, when performance is broken down to the behavioral level, it can be observed and measured.

A good contractor experience consists of an environment where:

- 1) Roles and responsibilities are clear
- 2) Safety goals and expectations are consistently communicated
- 3) Risks are regularly assessed
- 4) Behaviors are enforced (or reinforced) with positive and negative consequences

The most powerful driver of behavior change (or adherence) is the strategic, systematic, and effective application of consequences, which exert ~80% of influence on behavior. The goal is to create a culture where people “want to” perform as opposed to “have to” perform. For example, continually reinforcing the right safety behaviors in daily project meetings sets the standard of high performance.

The Job interaction on a work site can often take shape as part of Behavior Based Safety programs. Behavior Based Safety programs are rooted in behavioral science, which emphasize the achievement of **results** through primarily positive **performance** levers. They can help to provide a clear line of sight between roles, responsibilities, and tangible results that can occur as a result of those actions. When owner/contractor relationships are positive, sharing and collaboration are more likely to occur. Instead of waiting for a safety violation to intervene, owner representatives can begin to educate and influence contractors to empower them to make better, safer decisions.

Organization Component of Contractor Safety Experience

Positive contractor experience requires strong organizational leadership – typically from the top down. Leaders must align around safety as a top priority, with the belief that contractors represent an extension of their organization as partners on the constant journey to eliminate safety incidents. It’s important that they also embody the values they promote (“walk the talk”).

A leader’s level of influence is the highest but conversely the highest degree of consequence lies with the field.

Key Organizational Attributes / Best Practices

- Leadership commitment and action
- Visible leadership (regular on-site presence)
- Open and honest communication across roles and levels
- Thorough and consistent JSAs

- Proper allocation of resources
- Regular monitoring, controls, evaluation and risk assessment
- Comprehensive safety management system
- Knowledge management and sharing platform / tools
- Company policy/strategy development aligned with safety goals

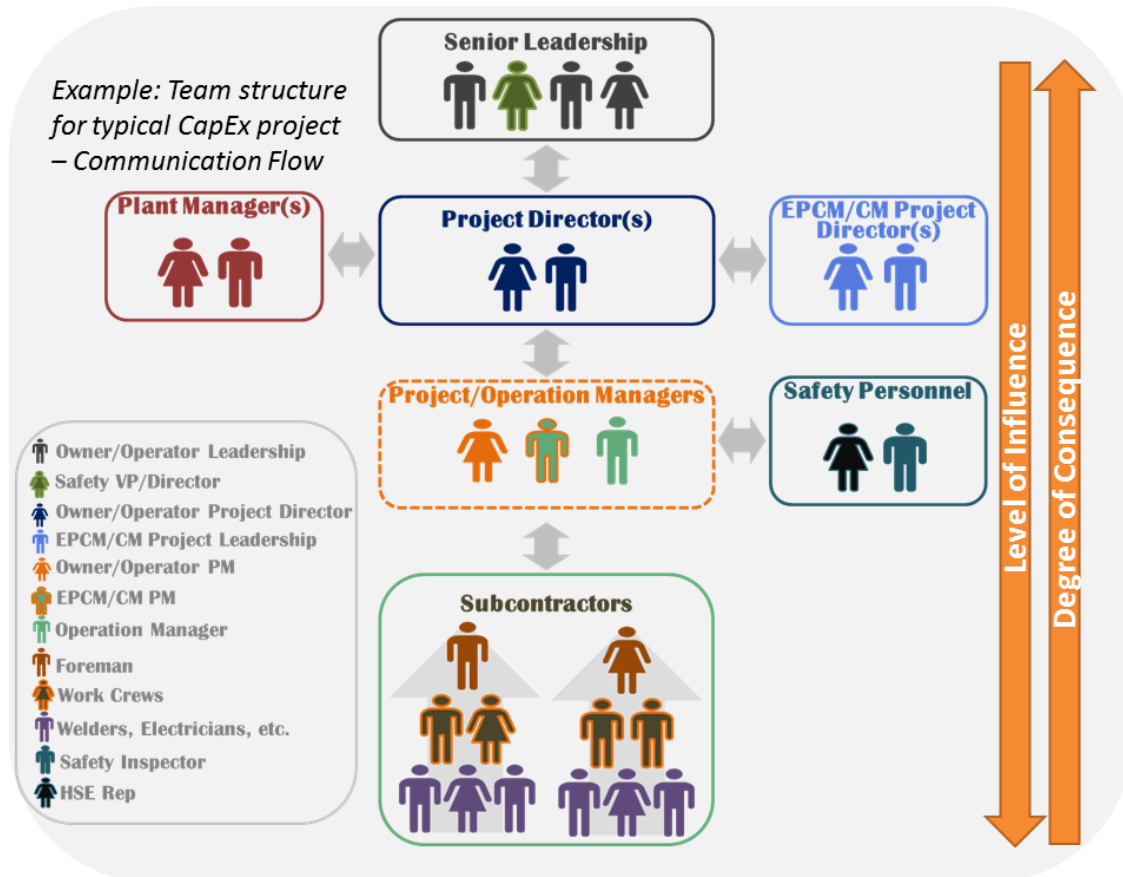


Figure 3. Team structure for typical project – communication flow

A High Level Roadmap to Improving Contractor Safety Engagement

Stakeholder engagement represents a continual process to set and support safety expectations and the owner/operator's philosophy about safety. The level of engagement required with a contractor to improve their safety practices depends upon their level of safety culture maturity as well as the value of existing programs.

As with most stakeholder engagements, managing expectations contributes to success and optimizes the value of your contractor safety program. Some owners and operators initially prefer to engage with contractors at an individual level, while others find benefit by engaging contractor groups in larger forums. Larger contractor forums where contractors engage as a group can provide a healthy sharing of best practices and, more importantly, a healthy dose of competition to raise the bar of safety standards.

Contractor engagement for safety takes place in the field and the corporate office. Leadership in both settings establishes the safety expectations as well as the critical importance of adherence. Communication should come from multiple channels by all parties in environment, health and safety; operations; procurement; commercial; and contractors.

The figure below provides a high level view of the journey to increase safety engagement of contractors.

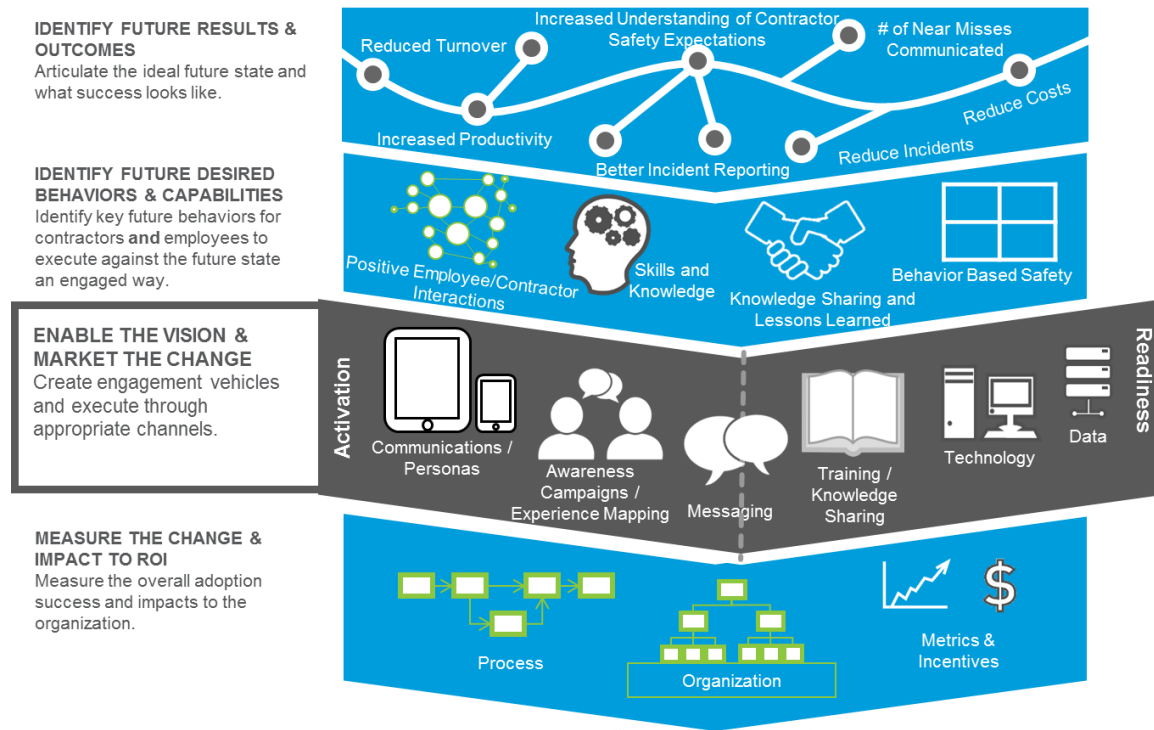


Figure 4. Contractor engagement roadmap

By adopting these practices and continually reinforcing a “culture of care” with contractors, a better partnership is likely to develop which tends to lead towards higher quality, better delivery and safer projects.

References

1. Real-Life Economics: Understanding Wealth Creation, ed. Paul Ekins & Manfred Max-Neef, Routledge, London, 1992