

Mining Safety Culture Attributes

Research and anecdotal evidence is becoming clearer: there is a strong correlation between companies with certain (organizational) culture attributes, or “enablers”, and safety performance excellence. While it is not certain whether good performance promoted these attributes or if development of the attributes results in performance improvement, many believe the latter scenario to be true. The 14 most commonly reported attributes associated with strong, positive safety cultures in U.S. mining include, but are not limited to: accountability, adaptability, awareness, communication, competency, discipline, empowerment, engagement, justice, learning, leadership, reporting, trust and vigilance.

It is possible to determine if these attributes are strengths or weaknesses in each organization using employee perceptions derived from confidential feedback surveys. Surveys are constructed using statements that are representative of each attribute. The cumulative score for all employees in an organization indicates the relative strength of that enabler. It is not necessary for everyone to use the same survey; however, it is important for everyone to use validated statements, i.e., different people at different levels of the organization will understand the meaning of the statement.

Culture is one-third of the foundation for safety and health excellence: culture, systems, leadership. However, it is not more important that systems or leadership. The relative importance of the three elements is company-specific.

