

Speaking up for safety

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Safety Science Innovation Lab



AIHS

The story of British Midlands Flight 92



Inspiring Stories about Speaking Up

- **Humanising mistakes:** “It’s like anywhere, depends on the type of mistake made. But we are all human, we make mistakes here and there. I need to be aware where every one is. You follow your daily plan.”
- **Owning up:** “I went to see my superintendent, and told him I messed up. He asked me to calm down, and find out the solution.”
- **Just chatting:** “I’d like to be more available. Having a chat with people. Know them on first name basis.”

What will we learn?

What is safety voice?

Identify the critical practices that underpin safety voice

Reasons why people don't speak up

Understand the barriers to speaking up for safety

Practical take-aways

Apply the learning to your own team

Have you ever felt
discouraged from
speaking up about
safety?

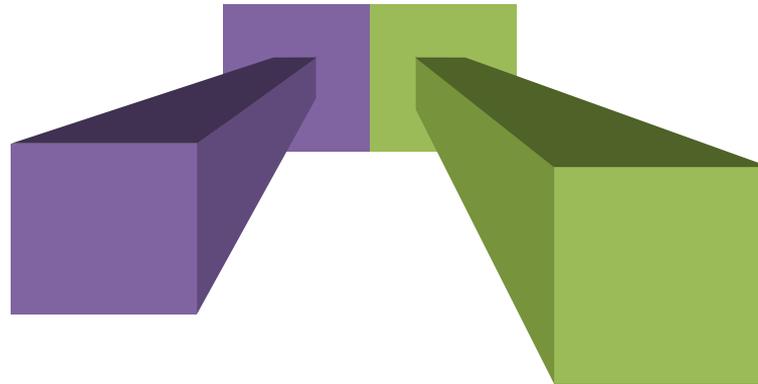
Speaking up for safety – what is it?



Different types of safety voice

Safety promotion

Exploring safer ways to
carry out the job



Safety prevention

Risk mitigation, preventing harm,
compliance

Reasons why operators don't speak up



How leaders can react to speaking up

Threat
Response &
Defensiveness

It's too much extra work!

Their issue exposes my weaknesses!

I don't know the answer!



Avoid Response

Accept and
Think of a
more Effective
Response

How can I delegate or prioritise?

I want to understand their concern

What can we both learn together?



Approach Response

How can we
encourage speaking
up for safety?

What is psychological safety?

-  To what extent it is “safe” to express one’s true thoughts and feeling at work 
-  People’s cognitive construction of the world 
-  Shared in a team environment 
-  Is dynamic and can be cultivated and destroyed overtime 

What is psychological safety?

People are able to raise problems

I can ask others for help

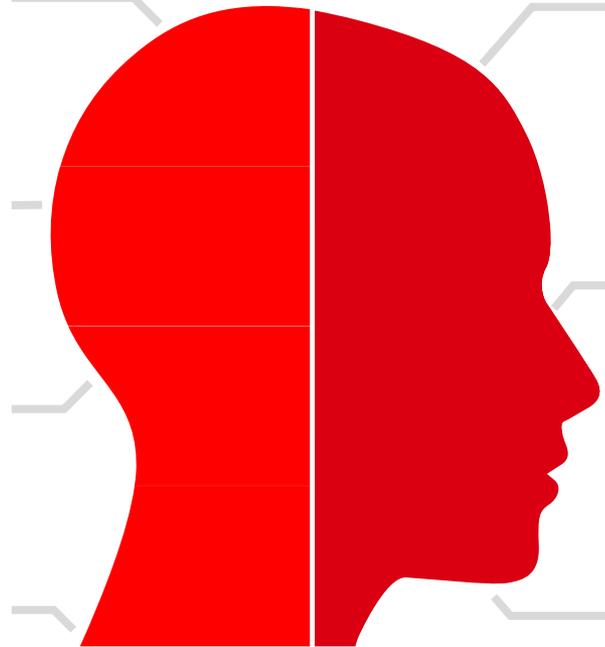
It's okay to make a mistake

My unique skills and talents are valued and utilised

I won't be rejected for expressing a different view

It's okay to be controversial

No one will deliberately undermine my effort



What psychological safety isn't

A

A direct measure of
psychological and mental
health

B

A dimension of safety
climate

C

A behaviour of
speaking up

D

Something that is
achieved and then
forgotten about

We found 5 common factors that seem to influence psychological safety

Factor	Definition
Leadership style	Types of leadership behaviours used to achieve team goals and motivate/drive performance among team members.
Communication flow	Communications up and down the line, including timeliness and quality of feedback to workers about issues raised.
Team relationships	The quality of team interactions and the working relationships between team members.
Rewards and punishments	Practices to manage team member performance.
Organisational culture (perceptions and attitudes)	Common or shared ways of thinking in the organisation.

Psychological safety is difficult

Psychological

Our tendency to avoid conflict

Our tendency to conform to group norms

Our tendency to not embarrass ourselves and/or others

Contextual

Hierarchy and power imbalance

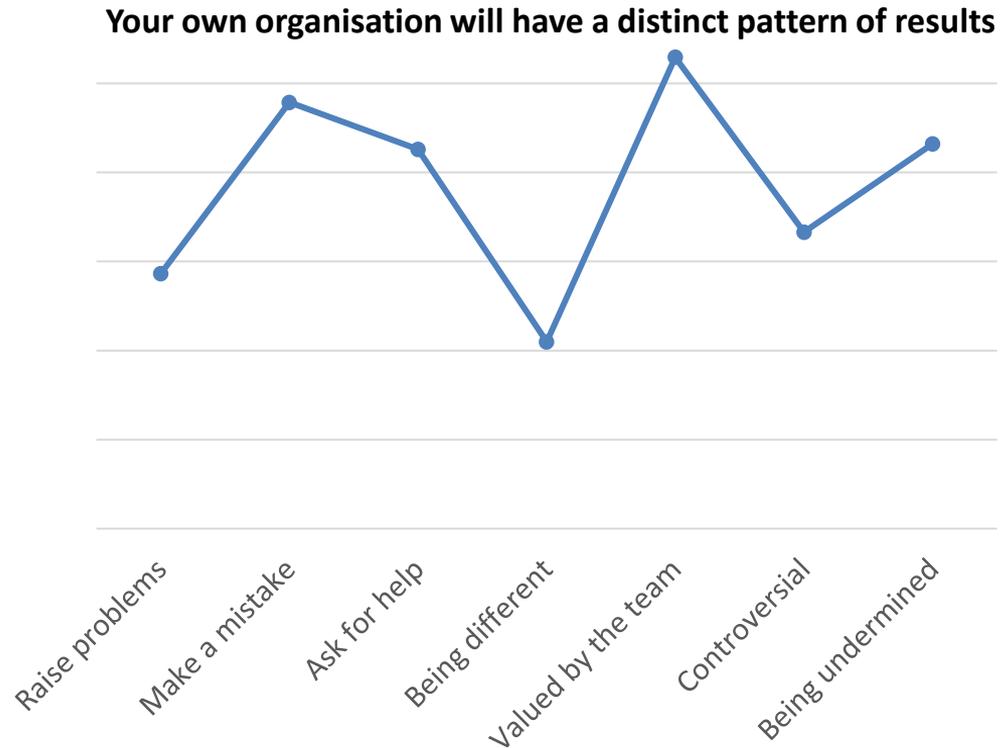
Leadership styles

Norms around masculinity and diversity

What % of workers at
your organisation feel
safe to speak up?

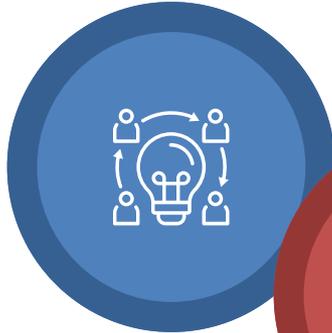
How do you compare?

**30% agreed
that they
felt safe to
speak up at
work**



How can psychological safety be built?

Authentic leadership



Employee involvement



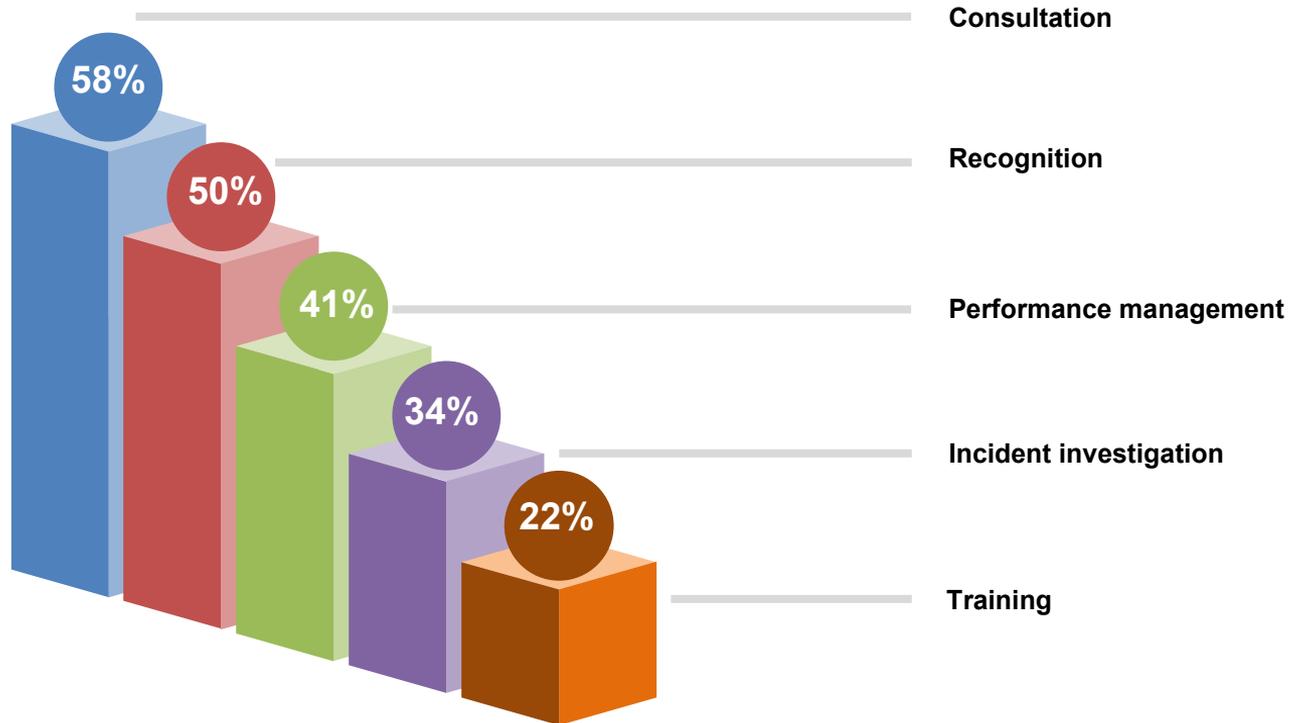
**Learning-oriented incident
investigation**



**Fair and transparent
reward/discipline system**



HR practices



Performance management



Tangible and intangible rewards for speaking up behaviours



Seek to understand constraints before making decisions



Link rewards/disciplinary actions to safety values and expectations



Reward based on the absence of negatives (i.e., lagging indicators)



Inconsistency in employee disciplinary actions



Underestimate the impacts on observers

Authentic leadership

Open to and seek constructive feedback

Credit others

Admit their own mistakes

Listen to the concern of others

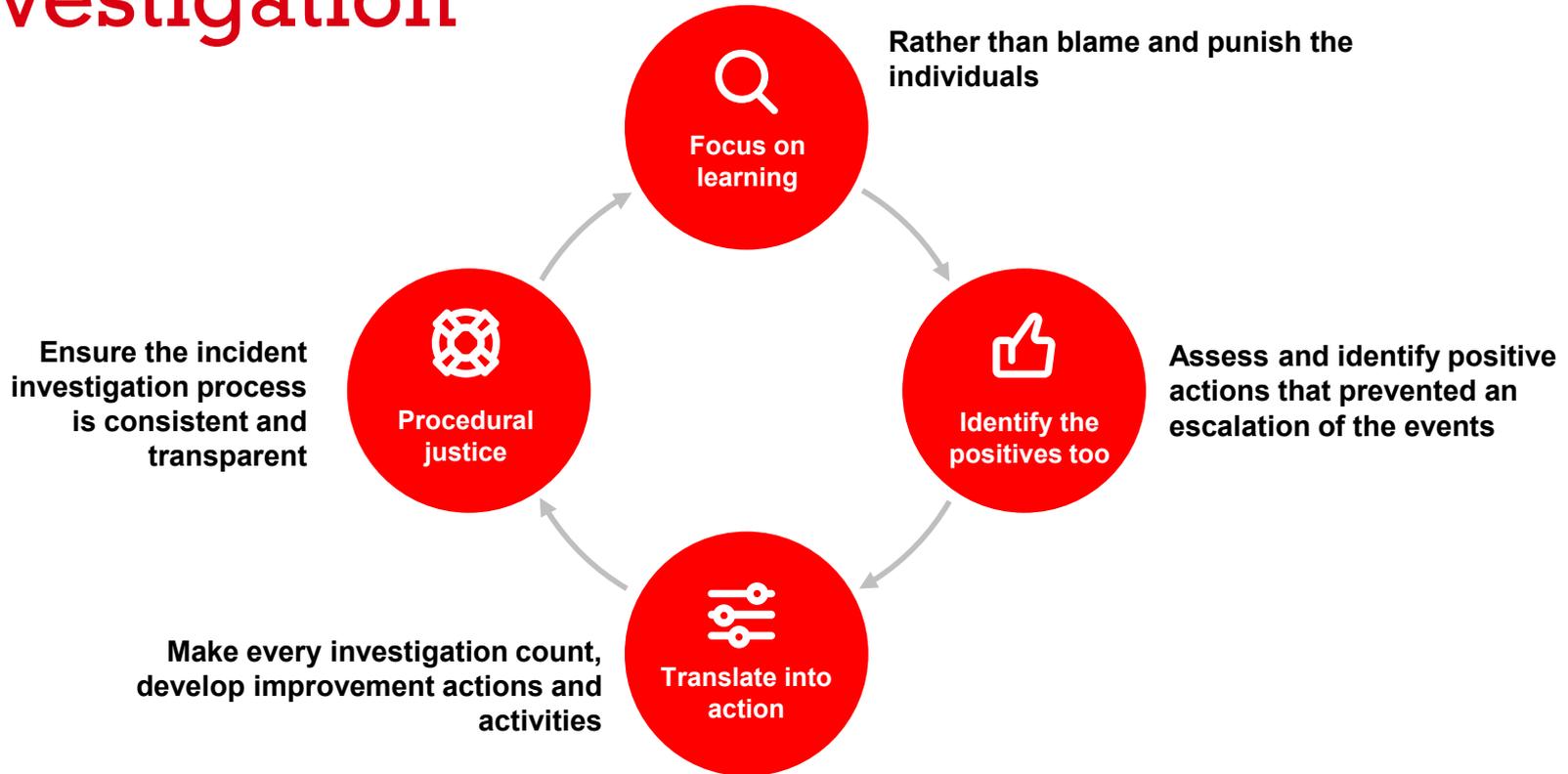
Willing to and not afraid of asking questions

**As a leader, I do not
know everything and
can learn from my
team**

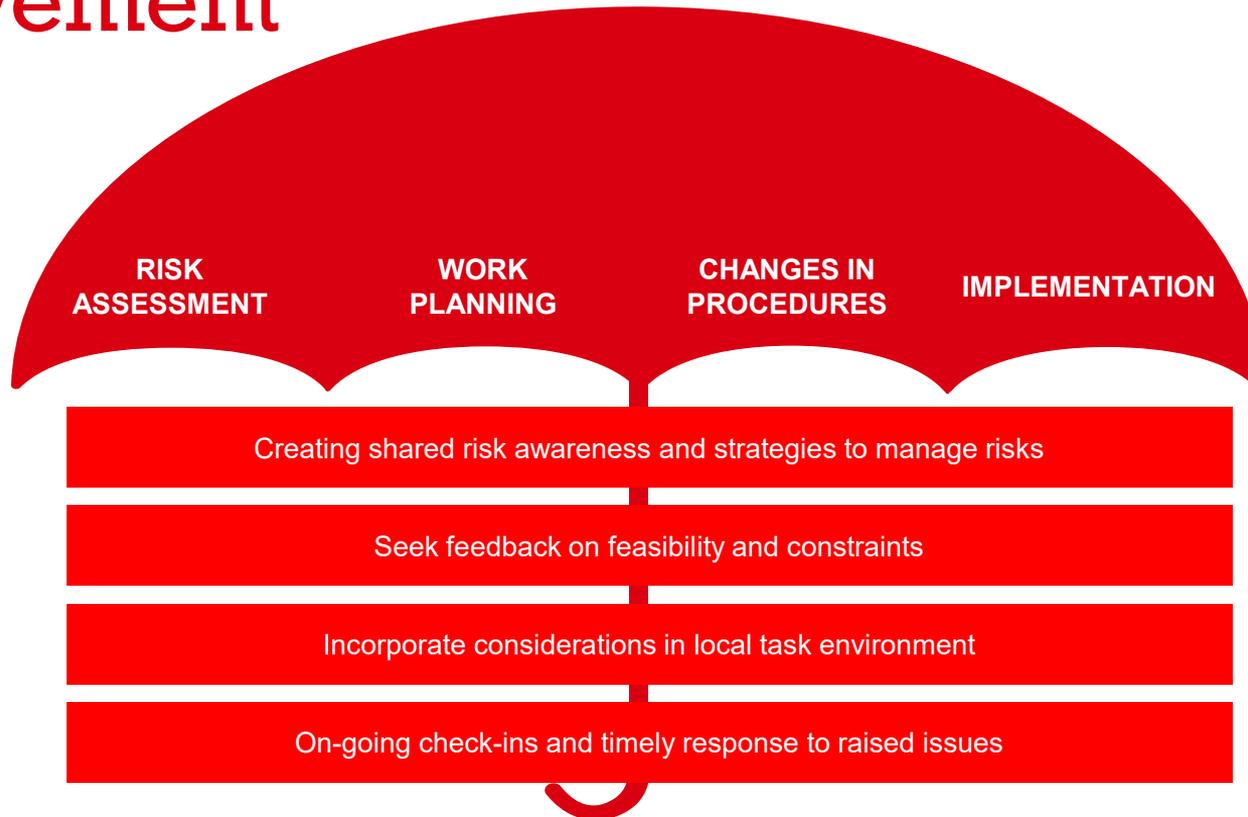
Authentic

Flexible

Investigation



Involvement



Why might young
workers be less likely
to voice safety
concerns?

A word on young workers

- **An at-risk group**
- **Factors promoting voice among young workers:**
 - **Affective commitment**
 - **Organisational identification**
 - **Supervisor openness to/interest in voice behaviour**
 - **Creative thinking and application of diverse knowledge**

References

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- Hu, X. & **Casey, T.W.** (2021). How and when organisation identification promotes safety voice among health care professionals? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*.
- Tucker, S., & Turner, N. (2015). Sometimes it hurts when supervisors don't listen: The antecedents and consequences of safety voice among young workers. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 20(1), 72.

Questions?

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