



United Technologies Division Achieves Breakthrough Safety Performance through Safety Culture Initiative

The Culture Change Consultants' Safety Culture Change Process was implemented at Hamilton Standard's 6000-employee facility. Its goal was to create a union-management partnership for the first time in 56 years. The implementation resulted in breaking through safety plateau to new injury lows.

In the early 1990s, in response to demands from a new management team led by CEO George David, United Technologies determined to improve safety. Hamilton Standard, an aerospace manufacturing division in Windsor Locks, Connecticut concluded that they could achieve breakthrough safety performance across their 6,000-person site through developing a strong partnership between the company and its union, the International Association of Machinists. Since joint union and management efforts had a history of failure at the company, that meant a culture change had to be faced and achieved.

A joint union/management task force was formed in 1995 to find an outside consultant to help them with this newest effort. They brought in four of the leading proponents in the field to make presentations and selected Culture Change Consultants - for a variety of reasons. In addition to being impressed with CCC's record at improving safety at comparable facilities, management expected that improved culture would benefit them in other key areas, such as quality, productivity and customer service. For the union, it was a question of having an equal place at the table. Culture Change Consultants stressed that the whole project was based employee participation and empowerment.

How much work needed to be done was apparent at the first Guidance Team meeting. Instead of taking the typical half hour or hour to establish the ground rules for the team, they needed a day and a half to work out a modus operandi - a reflection of how little trust there was between labor and management. The meeting was conducted more as a negotiation than a collaborative effort, with the consultant as mediator rather than facilitator. A subsequent perception survey administered to more than 3,000 individuals, from all levels of the organization, indicated the vast cultural gap between the two sides.

Working out these issues became the first order of business. A meeting of 30 supervisors and union representatives broke up when a union speaker felt disrespected. Eventually everyone came back to the table. The first team meetings were also marked by suspicion. For every Guidance Team (one for each division), made up of managers, union reps, and safety professionals, there would be a number of Grassroots Safety Teams, made up entirely of hourly workers - assisted by a management and union coach.

Following the results of the survey, Culture Change Consultants worked initially on trust building. Gradually, as the teams got past procedural problems and began to take control of safety issues, suspicion began to subside. Each division formulated its own mission statement. The one from Windsor Locks Operations is typical: "We, the Union and the Company, are jointly committed to creating a safety culture built on trust, caring and open communication and to provide guidance and resources for the Grassroots Safety Teams in a way that raises safety and health consciousness to a level that eliminates safety hazards and prevents injuries in our workplace and at home."

Eventually, there would be five Guidance Teams providing oversight for 17 Grassroots Safety Teams - engaging the attention of approximately 250 people at any one time. These teams quickly became the heart and soul of the safety process at Hamilton Standard, responsible for every safety issue from lighting and rails to developing a near-miss program. Their success was soon supported by the numbers. From 1995 to 1997, the LWCR went from 18.8 to 5.17, total recordables went from 6 to 4.3 and LWIR went from 1 to .68. When the company merged to form Hamilton Sundstrand, much changed - including the management team - but the safety teams remained inviolate. Now, eight years later, they are still going strong.



Both union and management had their expectations fulfilled. Injuries and illnesses have been reduced, as well as accompanying costs. Union got their seat at the safety table. According to local president, Mark Bond, "In 56 years of joint initiatives, this is the first one that has worked, and it has made other joint efforts a whole lot easier. We couldn't have done it without Culture Change Consultants."