



Score your safety culture

In *Managing the Risks of Organisational Accidents*, Dr James Reason argues that 3 ingredients are vital for driving a company's safety engine, all of them the purview of top managers: commitment, competence and cognisance – the 3 Cs. But managers come and go. This is a fact of life.

So how does a company maintain a commitment to safety in the face of personnel turnover, volatile market forces and economic reality? James Reason suggests that this is where an organisation's safety culture comes into play!

Dr Reason states that 'A good safety culture is something that endures and so provides the necessary driving force.'

To find out if your organisation has or is well on its way to having a good safety culture, Dr Reason prepared this checklist.

Health warning

High scores on this checklist provide no guarantee of immunity from accidents or incidents.

Even the 'healthiest' institutions can still have bad events. But a moderate to good score (8–15) suggests that you are striving hard to achieve a high degree of robustness while still meeting your other organisational objectives. The price of safety is chronic unease: complacency is the worst enemy.

There are no final victories in the struggle for safety.

www.tc.gc.ca/CivilAviation/SMS/menu.htm
Source: This checklist was reproduced with permission from Transport Canada.

Checklist for assessing institutional resilience

Scoring:			
Yes = This is definitely the case in my organisation (scores 1)			
? = 'Don't know' 'maybe' or 'could be partially true' (scores 0.5)			
No = This is definitely not the case in my organisation (scores zero).			
	Yes	?	No
Mindful of danger: Top managers are ever mindful of the human organisational factors that can endanger their operations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accept setbacks: Top management accepts occasional setbacks and nasty surprises as inevitable. They anticipate that staff will make errors and train them to detect and recover from them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Committed: Top managers are genuinely committed to aviation safety and provide adequate resources to serve this end.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regular meetings: Safety-related issues are considered at high-level meetings on a regular basis, not just after some bad event.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Events reviewed: Past events are thoroughly reviewed at top-level meetings and the lessons learned are implemented as global reforms rather than local repairs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved defence: After some mishap, the primary aim of top management is to identify the failed system defences and improve them, rather than to seek to divert responsibility to particular individuals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health checks: Top management adopts a proactive stance toward safety. That is, it does some or all of the following: takes steps to identify recurrent error traps and remove them; strives to eliminate the workplace and organisational factors likely to provoke error; brainstorms new scenarios of failure; and conducts regular 'health checks' on the organisational process known to contribute to mishaps.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Institutional factors recognised: Top management recognises that error-provoking institutional factors (under-staffing, inadequate equipment, inexperience, patchy training, bad human-machine interfaces, etc.) are easier to manage and correct than fleeting psychological states, such as distraction, inattention and forgetfulness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data: It is understood that the effective management of safety, just like any other management process, depends critically on the collection, analysis and dissemination of relevant information.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vital signs: Management recognises the necessity of combining reactive outcome data (i.e., the near-miss and incident reporting system) with active process information. The latter entails far more than occasional audits. It involves the regular sampling of a variety of institutional parameters (scheduling, budgeting, fostering, procedures, defences, training, etc.), identifying which of these vital signs are most in need of attention, and then carrying out remedial actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff attend safety meetings: Meetings relating to safety are attended by staff from a wide variety of departments and levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career boost: Assignment to a safety-related function (quality or risk management) is seen as a fast-track appointment, not a dead end. Such functions are accorded appropriate status and salary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Money vs. safety: It is appreciated that commercial goals and safety issues can come into conflict. Measures are in place to recognise and resolve such conflicts in an effective and transparent manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Interpreting your score

- 16–20 So healthy as to be barely credible.
- 11–15 You're in good shape, but don't forget to be uneasy.
- 6–10 Not at all bad, but there's still a long way to go.
- 1–5 You are very vulnerable.
- 0 Jurassic Park.