

SafetyFocus

Issue

01
2014

Quarterly Journal on African aviation safety - vol 4



IN THIS ISSUE:

- Low cost carriers cutting corners on safety?
- Aviation English - role of communication in accidents
- Standardising airport markings using ACI Handbook
- Tailwind - if birds don't land downwind, should we?



Hearts & Minds

One of the most interesting slides in our Safety Management System (SMS) courses has been the matrix that describes the characteristics of a safety culture. It provides answers to questions such as:

- Is safety information hidden or actively looked for?
- Are messengers shouted at or trained?
- Are new ideas crushed or welcomed?

When I ask a class where they think their organisation is on the 'ladder of safety maturity', fierce discussions and lots of giggling often follow.

Professor Patrick Hudson has given us the five maturity levels of safety cultures. His work features in probably every course on SMS in the world. He speaks of safety cultures evolving from pathological to reactive, calculative, pro-active and finally to 'generative'. It is the answers to questions like those above that largely determine where an organisation really is in terms of its safety culture.

Over past five years or so, the African region and ICAO have been working hard on deploying SMS across the continent. Many of the 'usual suspects' such as safety managers and government inspectors have been trained. As a next step, organisations are now sometimes organising their own internal SMS courses for the not-so-usual suspects such as Human Resource Manager and PR staff and the Foundation helps them with that. SMS manuals have been drafted and approved. With our SMS courses, we support such processes.

However, a crucial time lies ahead in which we have to stop SMS manuals gathering dust on a shelf in a CAA office or at an operator. Now it's time to take the next step which means people from across an organisation (including its critical outsiders) have to make SMS a personal thing. They all have to take SMS into their hearts and minds.

Based upon 20 years of academic research, oil company Shell developed a toolkit to help take safety management to a personal level. It consists of a range of tools and techniques to help the organisation involve all staff in managing safety as an integral part of their business. Collectively, these tools and techniques are known as - you may have guessed it - the Hearts and Minds Toolkit.

The toolkit works to change peoples' attitudes and habits so they behave safely. It provides practical techniques to help people learn to intervene to stop unsafe behaviour. The Hearts and Minds toolkit is being successfully applied in both Shell and many other companies around the world.

Shell gracefully allowed the Foundation to integrate its Hearts and Minds tools into its courses. The AviAssist Foundation is very grateful to Shell for that support. The Foundation uses Shell's Hearts and Minds materials to engage in discussions on safety culture during our SMS courses. The visual card exercises that are based on the toolkit always lead to heated discussions on how an organisation's culture feels personally and how it is (hopefully) growing and maturing. And now I've come to one of the best things of the Hearts and Minds tools: it transforms SMS as an abstract system into a personal discussion on how the safety culture feels personally. Because changes have to be made at the individual's level.

For that reason, the safety pledge cards that the Foundation nowadays uses in its events have it printed across the back: 'Only you can target safety'

Tom