

Safety **mis**Communication

How to create a positive,
sustainable safety culture

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Who We Are

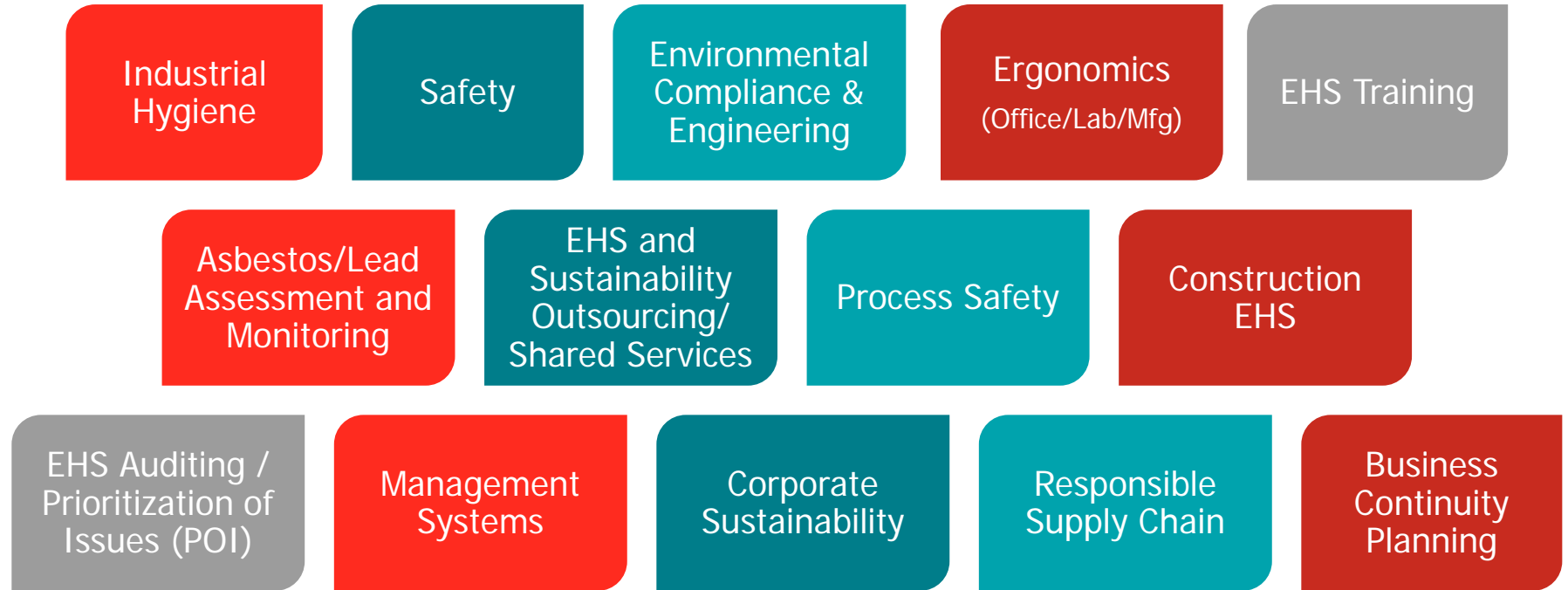
EHS Services and Solutions

- Founded in 1990, we provide a comprehensive range of strategic, management and technical consulting solutions.
- Our consultants can design and implement environmental, health, safety and sustainability programs for organizations of all sizes in all industries.

About BSI

- British Standards Institution, est. 1901
 - Developing standards to
 - improve performance
 - reduce risk
 - achieve sustainable growth
- 72,000 customers in 150 countries

EHS Services and Solutions - Key Service Areas



About the Presenter

James E. Tarpinian, MS, CHP **Tarpinian Consulting Services**

- Owner and Principal Consultant at Tarpinian Consulting Services
- Previously served in executive-level ESH&Q positions for the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory at Stanford University, Battelle Memorial Institute, Brookhaven National Laboratory, and Bechtel
- Active in professional organizations including leadership positions in the American Board of Health Physics, American Academy of Health Physics, and the Health Physics Society
- Recipient of Elda Anderson Award, William McAdams service award, Joyce P. Davis memorial award and the Fellow Award from the Health Physics Society



What we are going to talk about today

- Why this is important
- Good intentions are not good enough
- How to avoid the “sound byte” trap
- First steps for building a safety culture
- How to avoid drama in the workplace



Two sets of documents are taped to the left side of the door. The top set consists of two pages of text, and the bottom set consists of two pages, one of which contains a diagram or schematic.

A document is taped to the door, partially obscured by a vertical yellow and black striped hazard strip.

**Hazardous Waste
90-Day Accumulation Area**
DANGER
Unauthorized
Personnel
Keep Out

**NO
SMOKING**

**NO
PCBs**

CAUTION

**RADIOACTIVE WASTE
ACCUMULATION AREA**

No Trespassing
By Order Of The
United States
Department of Energy

SECURITY AREA
PROHIBITED ARTICLES
• Firearms
• Explosives
• Ammunition or Munitions
• Dangerous or Hazardous Materials
• Alcohol
• Drugs
• Weapons
• Tools
• Firearms
• Explosives
• Ammunition or Munitions
• Dangerous or Hazardous Materials
• Alcohol
• Drugs
• Weapons
• Tools

NOTICE
SECURITY BADGES
SHALL BE WORN
CONSPICUOUSLY
ABOVE THE WAIST
WHILE IN SECURITY AREAS



Communication is Multidimensional

*When we try to communicate about safety
we must be mindful of the difference
between*

*what we **say**,*

*what we really **mean**, and*

*what our audience actually **hears***

What we say:

“Our goal is zero accidents”

What we mean:

“We don’t want anyone to get hurt”

What they hear:

“We don’t want you to make mistakes”



What we say:

“Safety is a condition of employment”

What we mean:

“We have rules to keep everyone safe and we expect you to follow them”

What they hear:

“If you get hurt you will be fired”



Worker Exits Vehicle While it is Running

Root cause: Management's expectations related to a driver exiting a vehicle were not clearly documented and consistently communicated to all levels of employees



A Word About Discipline

- Whenever safety and disciplinary processes are discussed together the message turns fearful (e.g. “Safety is a condition of employment”)
- However, discipline should be considered for intentional violations or when there is significant potential for harm
- The rules should be clear and well understood
- How we manage human error is critical to creating a “Just Culture”

What we say:

“We hold people accountable”

What we mean:

“We want ownership for fixing the problem”

What they hear:

“We punish people for making mistakes”



Contractor Damages 24" Transite Cooling Water Pipe During Soil Excavation

Root cause: Failure to implement proper work planning



Damaged
Pipe
Couplings

**Contributing cause:
Oversight less than
adequate**

My definition of “Accountability” : Owning and fixing the problem

Taking ownership means being responsible for:

1. Response
2. Recovery
3. Lessons learned



Management’s reaction to mistakes is key to creating a “learning culture”

What we say:

“Safety is everyone’s responsibility”

What we mean:

“Safety is a shared responsibility”

What they hear:

“If everyone is responsible, then no one is responsible”



What we say:

“Safety is our number one priority”

What we mean:

“We build safety into everything we do”

What they hear:

“We don’t really mean it”



In Review....

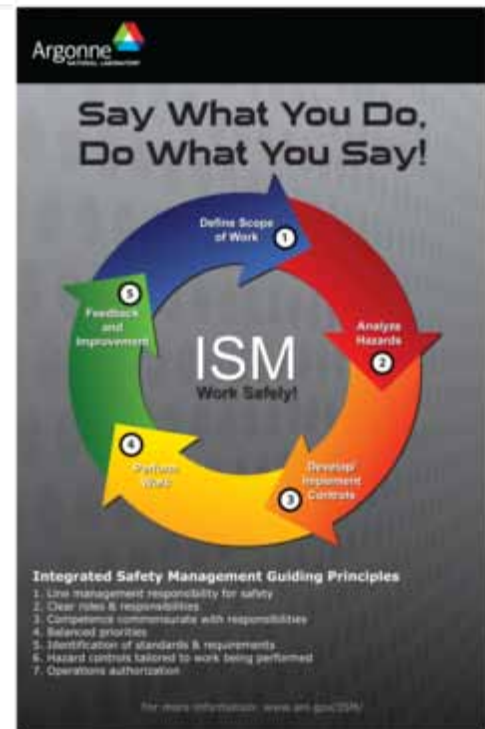
What we say	What we mean	What they hear
<i>Our goal is zero accidents</i>	<i>We don't want anyone to get hurt</i>	<i>We don't want you to make mistakes</i>
<i>Safety is a condition of employment</i>	<i>We have rules to keep everyone safe and we expect you to follow them</i>	<i>If you get hurt you will be fired</i>
<i>We hold people accountable</i>	<i>We want ownership for fixing the problem</i>	<i>We punish people for making mistakes</i>
<i>Safety is everyone's responsibility</i>	<i>Safety is a shared responsibility</i>	<i>If everyone is responsible, then no one is responsible</i>



Do you have any other examples like this?

Please submit them and we will review them at the end of this webinar.

*A fundamental key to excellence in safety communications is Leadership...
...what we **do** speaks much more loudly than what we **say**.*



What leaders do (and we are all leaders)

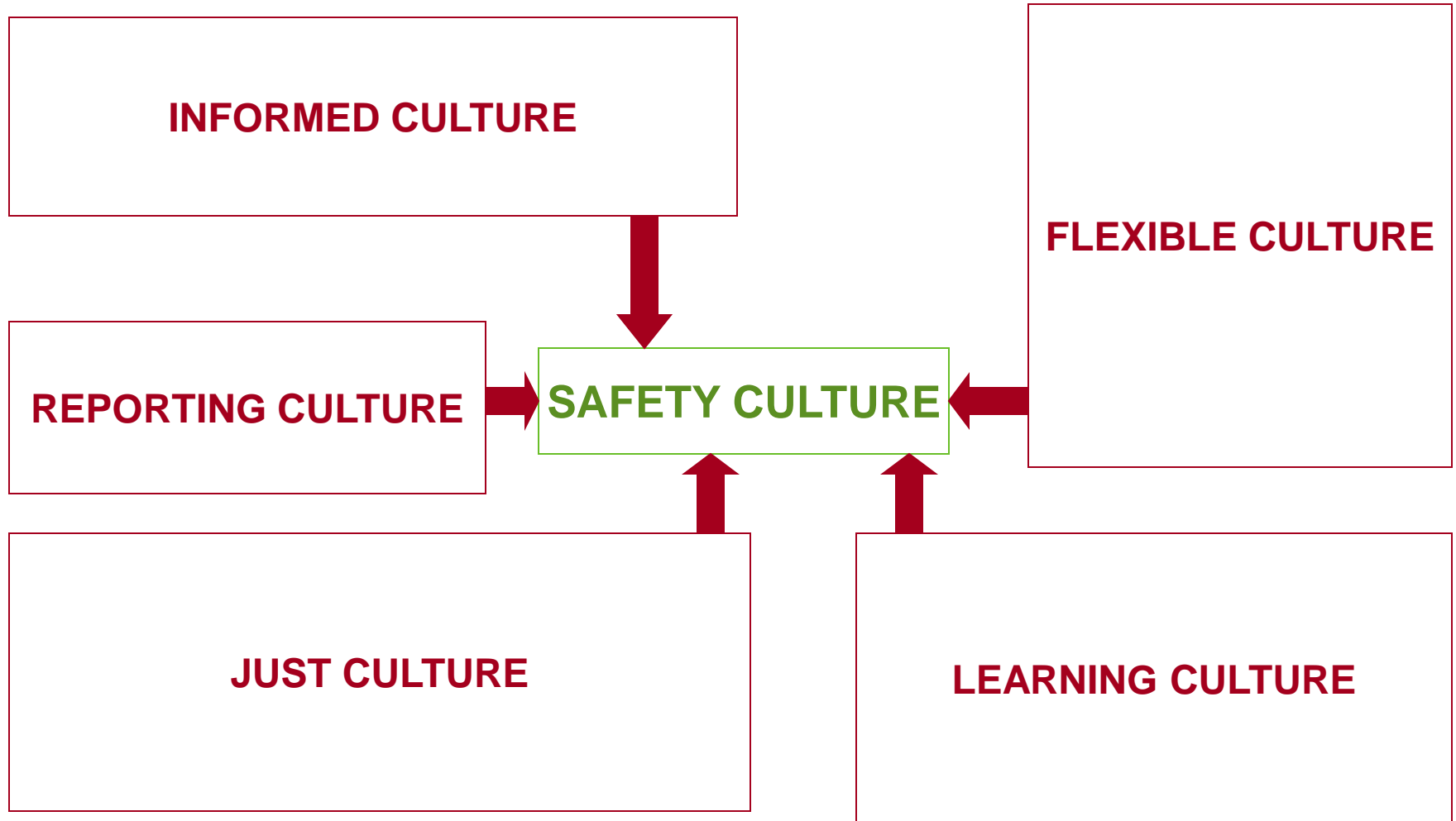
- As leaders we must state and reinforce our expectations
- To build trust we must do what we say, say what we mean
- Don't rely on "safety sound bytes"
- Encourage and recognize people for demonstrating ownership for safety

A Sound Byte That Works

We don't want safe employees...

*...we want safe **PEOPLE!***

Safety Culture Components*



*Based on Reason (1997) The Components of Safety Culture: Definitions of Informed, Reporting, Just, Flexible and Learning Cultures

Obstacles to a “Just Culture”

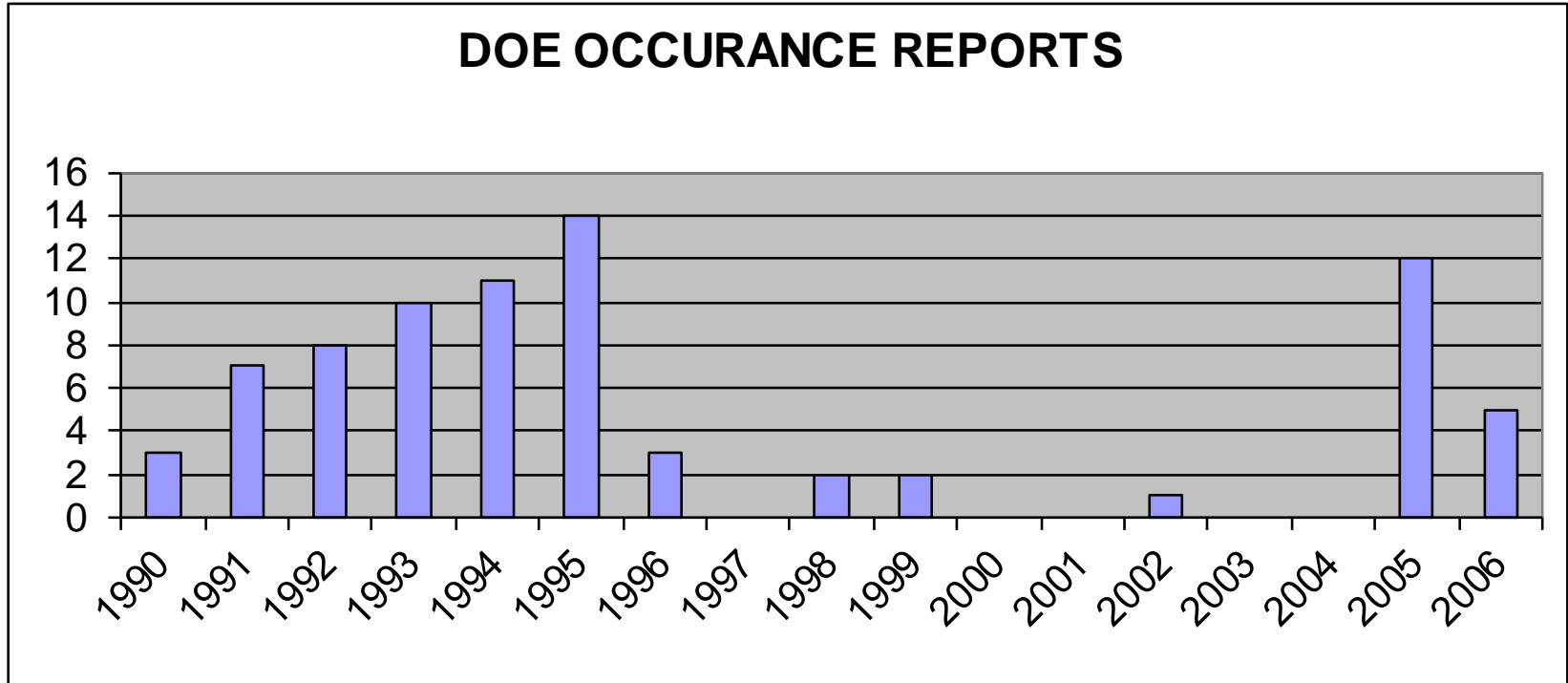
- “Just” means different things to different people
- Implies that we believe the workplace can be made to be consistently fair (i.e. a noble goal but unrealistic)
- Many managers believe they already have it

Where to Start: “Learning Culture”

- Easier to integrate the message into the workplace culture than “Just Culture”
- Views accidents and errors as providing opportunities to learn rather than providing opportunities to punish
- Appeals to creativity and problem solving skills

First steps must be to create a “reporting culture” of openness and healthy self criticism in order to build trust

Fear Drives Reporting Underground



Obstacles to a “Reporting Culture”

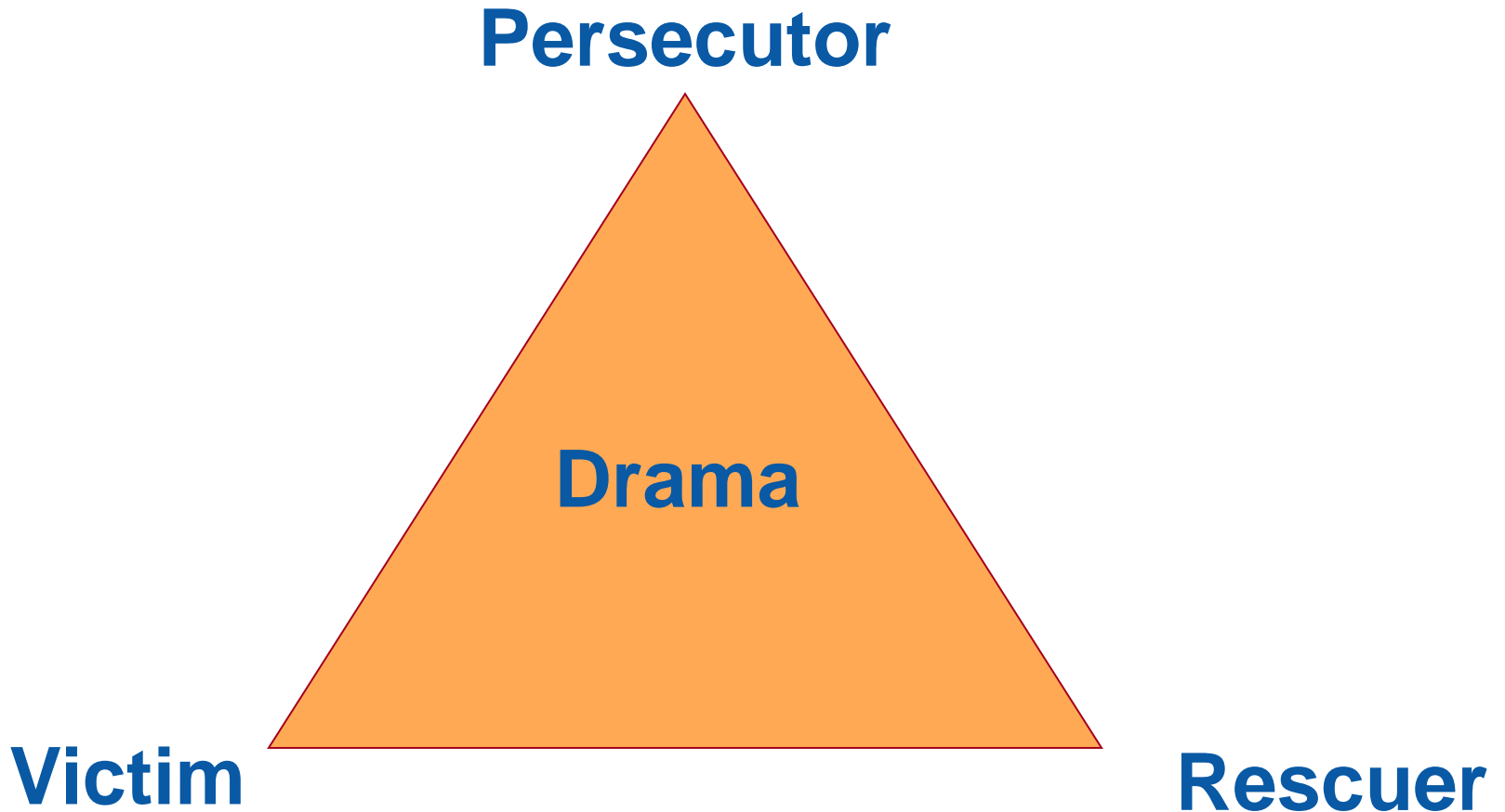
- Our culture is not naturally self-critical
- Reporting of events is not the default
- People don't want the attention
- Fear of being shut down
- Fear of losing control
- Worry about being “second guessed”
- We punish people for doing the right things
- We reward people for doing the wrong things
- We engage in the **“drama triangle”** stifling problem solving, proactivity, and creativity



What other obstacles are there to creating a Reporting Culture?

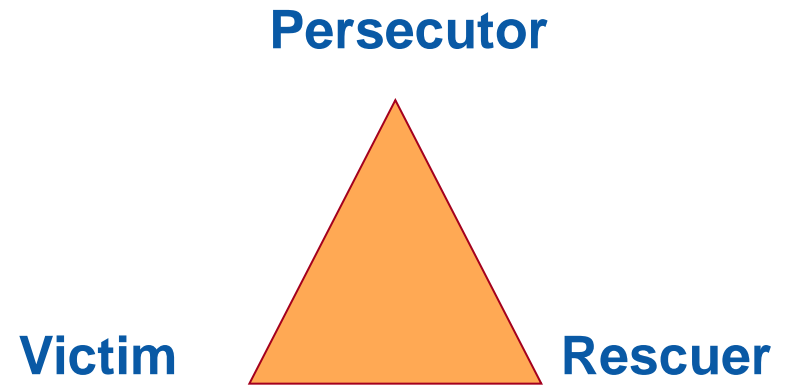
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Drama Triangle*



** Tools for Conscious
Leadership & Responsibility,
Dan Miller & Associates*

Drama Triangle



Some examples:

“That guy should have known better”

“Training/procedure inadequate”

“Its not our fault - Safety stopped the job”

“Don’t worry about your deadline – I will take care of it”

Achieving a Reporting Culture

Leaders must state and reinforce their expectations for reporting events and conditions

- Create an atmosphere that values reporting
- Treat mistakes as opportunities to learn, not opportunities to blame and punish
- Create and publish leading metrics for identifying and reporting events
- Celebrate and reward “stop work” actions and self reporting

How do we change the culture?

A fundamental key to excellence in safety performance is.....

...everyone takes their ***full share*** of responsibility – no more and no less.

“Don’t get mad – get curious”

When something goes wrong (or when you discover a mistake)

- Stay out of the Drama Triangle
- Ask why they thought it was okay at the time
- Find out how much is owned by the organization vs the individual
- Own your part of the problem

How to avoid the Drama Triangle

Don't

Get mad

Immediately seek solutions

Rush to judgment

Jump to conclusions

Ascribe motive

Inject speculation

Seek to place blame

Ask why until you find a
"who"

Do

Get curious

Define the problem in terms of the
organizational needs

Consider all possible points of view

Stay objective

Believe people are trying to act in
what they think is the best interest of
the organization

Only report the facts

Seek to understand why they
thought it was okay at the time

Do a root cause analysis:
Ask why five times (or more) to
discover organizational weaknesses.

Key Messages

- Safety is a shared responsibility and everyone must do his or her part
- We cannot eliminate all mistakes - our goal is to reduce their frequency and severity
- In order to learn from our errors we must encourage and reward open reporting
- Work to establish trust
- Don't punish people for making honest mistakes
- Don't rely on "safety sound bytes"
- Do what you say, say what you mean

Key References

“Tools for Conscious Leadership & Responsibility,”

Dan Miller & Associates, <http://www.dan-miller.com>

“Managing the Risks of Organizational Accidents,”

James Reason

“Roadmap to a Just Culture: Enhancing the Safety Environment,” Global Aviation Information Network,

Questions?

Submit using the **Questions** box in the webinar control panel.

A **link to the webinar recording** and slides will be sent to all attendees.

Please help us by **completing the short webinar evaluation** sent to you after today's event.





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