

Safety culture – What descriptors would others use to describe yours?

Every group has some type of safety culture – the good, the bad, and the ugly are certainly three of many possibilities. How would others describe the safety culture for your group or team? Well, let's start with some possible categories.

As part of a study, I sought out descriptors in the safety culture literature and I found 60. To be clear these are mostly one or two-words used to describe a safety culture (as opposed to definitions or examples). 60 seemed like a lot to wrap our brains around. So, I sorted them into one of four categories - positive, negative, neutral, and ambiguous. It helped, but it still wasn't divided up enough for our liking.

So, I further sorted them into subgroups of similar approaches or effects. Yup, that helped. Admittedly there was a certain amount of subjectivity to my final subgroupings. Other safety or risk professionals or researchers may make differing choices resulting in subtle changes within these subgroups.

Now, let's go back to my original question in the title to this blog – how would others describe the safety culture in your group? Try this – take a look through my list [here](#). I've ordered them first alphabetically, then by categories, and lastly by subgroups. I suggest you start by skimming the alphabetic list. Only then, perhaps look at the categories and/or subgroups.

Here's a good thought-starter. Choose just one to start. Then consider how strong of a rating you'd give it from 1-10 (I'm leaving out zero because it'd be non-existent and you should choose a different descriptor). If it has a greater value, assign it in the 6-10 range. And if it has a lesser value, rate it from 1-5. Then choose a handful of others and rate them, too. Then stop. Now consider how others would rate each for your lab, group, etc. Interesting, isn't it. You may want to use this exercise in your lab, office, or other groups or teams.

Jon (the bald-headed safety *culture* guy)

Coming next: *Leadership – what do we all want?*