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Growing a safety culture

How improving attitudes to safety helped Blakey Pacific boost productivity and reduce injuries

Phil Taylor, CEO, BLAKELY PACIFIC

► Our issue

Over the last 10 years Blakely Pacific's injury rates had come down significantly as we improved our health and safety systems, processes and training. But despite this, we found we were still having occasional "dumb" accidents – where people did what seemed to be odd things.

Workers seemed to be focused on getting the job done, and at times weren't thinking about doing it as safely as they could. Complacency was creeping in.

That led us to start looking at the **safety culture** that existed in our crews – that is their attitudes and commitment to safety. Safety culture is important because that's what determines the way things get done on the job when no-one is looking.

► What we did about it

In 2014 we began using the **Safety Culture Tree** – a process that unpicks what crews really think about safety, and stimulates ideas for improvements. The **Safety Culture Tree** was developed by specialist health and safety psychologists, Leading Safety, with the support of ACC and input from the industry.

The process starts with a survey, where workers rate their crews on 12 areas critical to safety. These areas include things like whether people cut corners when no one's looking or are comfortable speaking up when something's unsafe.



The survey involves one-on-one confidential interviews with the forestry facilitators who run the process. This avoids literacy issues and helps ensure individuals can speak frankly. The foreman does the survey too – but he's not around when the crew answers it.

Aggregated results for the whole crew are sent back to the workers, foreman, crew owner and forest manager in the form of a graphical report. The scores in the report provide a snapshot of each crew's safety culture. Any of the 12 critical safety areas requiring action are flagged red or orange – making it easy to identify what requires attention.

We've done the survey with eight logging crews, five silviculture contractors, three roading and trucking companies, and the Blakely Pacific team. What this told us was that – while we already had high-performing crews, contractors and staff – there was room for improvement.

As part of this process, we hired two experienced forestry safety facilitators who went through the reports with each crew and helped them pick one critical safety area to work on. The facilitators then helped the crew come up with ideas for improvements and create an action plan.

On a regular, "as needed", basis, the facilitators check in with the crews on their progress. When a crew gets one issue sorted the facilitators help them work on the next one.

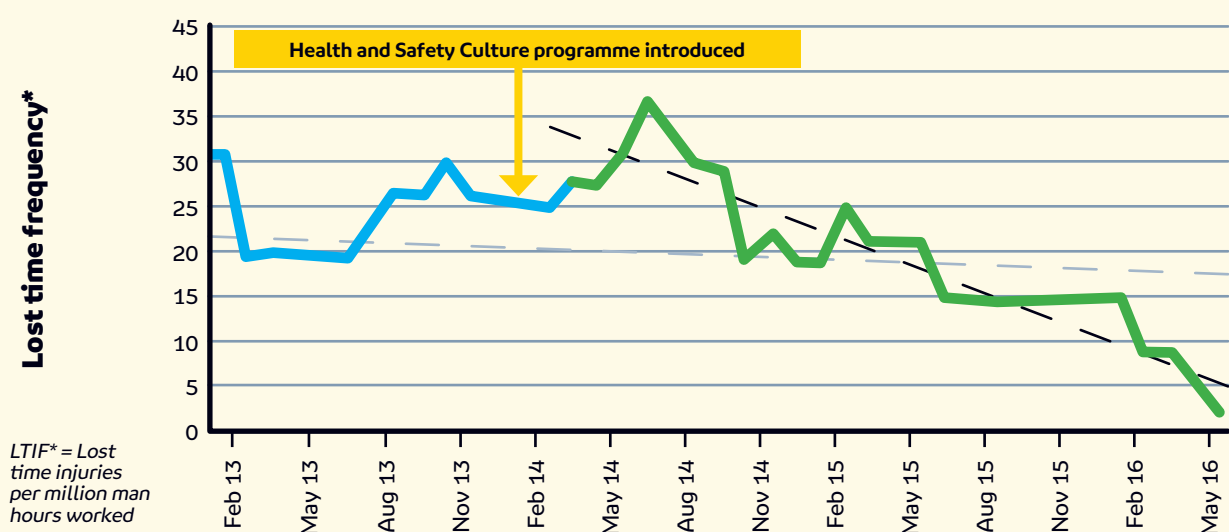
I've been astounded by how many improvements have been made and the ideas the crews have come up with.

For example, one crew realised it was short-circuiting its morning tailgate meeting because this was held around the utes out in the elements, so was very uncomfortable. The workers suggested the boss get a container – which he did – so they now meet in an environment where they can focus on what's being said. That's led to better tailgate meetings – and a much safer, more productive working environment throughout the day.

Another contractor struggled with his paperwork. So he now digitally records all the RT messages given and received about health and safety during the day.

We've seen a significant, and sustainable, downward trend in our lost-time injuries over the last two years.

► Injuries have reduced



Blakely Pacific's injury rates have continued to fall due to a range of initiatives, including the *Safety Culture Tree*.

► The payback

We've repeated the **Safety Culture Tree** survey with a number of crews and the results have shown a clear improvement in attitudes towards safety. Crews have really bought into the process – they're engaging and coming up with new ideas all the time.

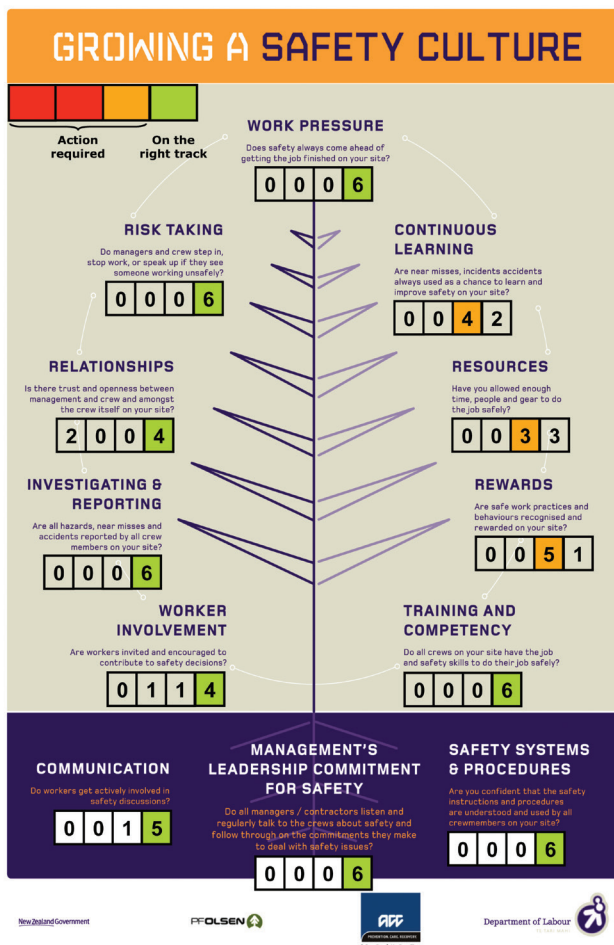
Interestingly, in some cases the second survey showed a few areas where we seemed to have gone backwards. (See example below.) For me this highlights that changing your safety culture isn't a straight line journey and it doesn't have a finish line. You've got to keep working on it.

We've seen a significant, and sustainable, downward trend in our lost-time injuries over the last two years (see graph). And while the **Safety Culture Tree** isn't the only health and safety initiative we've undertaken over this period, I'm sure it's contributed to that improvement.

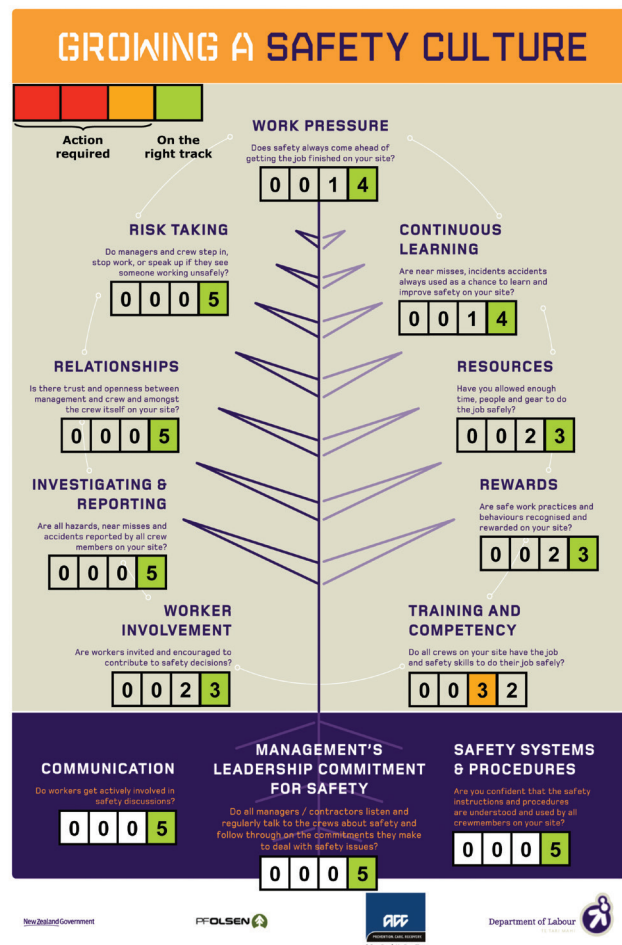
The payback from this investment has also included lower turnover, better incident reporting and increased productivity. We're doing more loads a day because the safety improvements the crews have come up with have also boosted planning and efficiency.

As a result, this work has added value, rather than costs, to our bottom line.

► Example of crew results BEFORE doing Safety Culture Tree



► Example of crew results AFTER doing Safety Culture Tree



► Find out more

Watch the video case study at www.safetree.nz

Find out more at enquiries@fisc.org.nz

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You are the key

► About Blakely Pacific

Founded in 1993, Blakely Pacific owns and manages forests in the South and North Islands. Its forest products, primarily radiata pine and Douglas-fir, are sold in New Zealand and throughout Asia. It is a subsidiary of Seattle-based Port Blakely Companies, a family-owned business established more than a century ago.



► About www.safetree.nz

Safetree.nz is an online one-stop-shop with free health and safety information and resources for people working in forestry. It is run by the Forest Industry Safety Council (FISC), a partnership between government, industry and worker representatives.