



Four strategies for building a strong safety culture



Summary

Good faith is a currency that's difficult to build and easy to squander. It is the foundation upon which all healthy business relationships are built. When it comes to workplace safety and health programmes, good faith — the sincerity and honesty that builds real trust between workers and management — can be the key element that transforms your safety programme from a binder full of onerous rules and policies into a way of life and an integral part of your corporate culture.

Around the world, organisations are navigating rising operational complexity, increasingly distributed workforces, and a sharp regulatory focus on proactive risk management. International bodies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and regional regulators consistently highlight the same truth: strong safety culture is the single greatest predictor of safer, more resilient, higher-performing operations.

As global supply chains evolve, intelligent risk management platforms like Avetta's provide the visibility and alignment today's multinational workforces need, enabling teams everywhere to be truly ready to work.

This whitepaper gives safety leaders a practical blueprint for strengthening safety culture in complex, multinational environments, with actionable steps that can be applied across industries, workforces, and regulatory systems.

You'll learn how to:

- Measure safety
- Talk safety
- Model safety
- Reward safety

Measure Safety

To strengthen safety culture in a global environment, the journey starts with understanding how you measure safety — and what those measures really tell you.

It's always important to know where you're starting from so that you can determine what your goals should be. Should you be working to support a safety culture that's already strong? Or do you need to build a strong safety culture from the ground up? Collecting some key safety metrics will help you make that assessment, give you an idea where you should start working, and enable you to demonstrate that a strong safety culture is good for business.

International occupational safety and health practice emphasises the transition from performance and incentive approaches that focus on lagging indicators — such as injury and lost-time frequency rates — toward approaches that prioritise leading indicators of safety performance.

Leading indicators measure proactive safety activities and behaviours (e.g., hazard reporting, inspections, training completion, corrective actions) and are recognised for their role in preventing harm and strengthening safety outcomes. This global shift reflects the understanding that lagging, outcome-based measures alone do not effectively predict or drive future safety performance, and that incentive schemes should be aligned with proactive safety engagement to reinforce positive safety culture and behaviour.

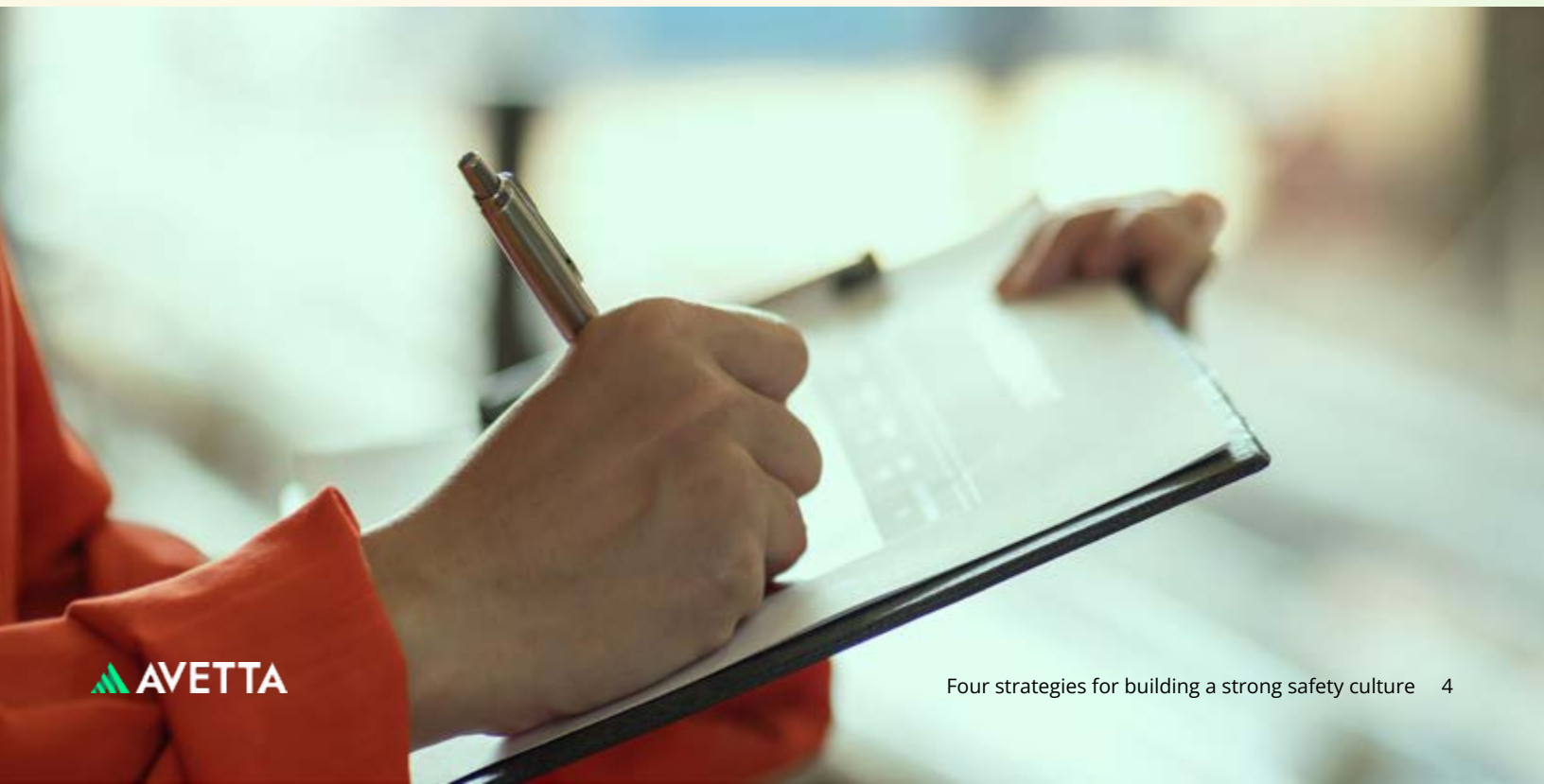
Organisations that systematically track leading indicators — especially across contractors and cross-border operations — often see measurable reductions in serious injuries and fatalities.

You can use leading indicators to measure and track the business impact of your safety programme.

Your safety programme

The most basic way to assess the strength of your safety programme and track its impact on your business is to track and analyse trends directly connected to the programme, including:

- **Training.** What is the percentage of actual participation in training, as compared to expected participation? Are they passing written and practical tests?
- **Periodic inspections.** Inspections are an important tool for identifying issues and dealing with them before they have an impact on safety. What is your percentage of scheduled vs. completed inspections?
- **Near-miss reporting.** Near misses are a critical tool for identifying potentially deadly hazards, but workers won't report near misses unless they feel that management can be trusted to address them without blaming and punishing the workers.
- **Closing of action items.** If you closely track the amount of time it takes to respond to, resolve, and close reports of hazards generated by incident reports, job hazard assessments, inspections, and audits, you'll have a good idea how effective you are at resolving safety issues.



Workforce engagement in safety

Companies with a strong safety culture report high levels of worker engagement in safety. How can you measure workforce engagement? Keep track of:

- **Safety communications.** Do workers report safety concerns to their supervisors, and are those concerns dealt with?
- **Safety committee activities.** What has your safety committee done lately? An active safety committee is a good indicator of a strong safety culture.
- **Observed safe behaviours.** When you walk through your facility, do you see workers following safe work rules? If you're seeing high rates of noncompliance, workers have not internalised safety as a company value.
- **Third-party certifications completed.** Third-party certifications may be completed by the facility or by individual workers; the number of safety-related third-party certifications is a measure of worker commitment to the programme.

Management commitment to safety

Leading indicators that will tell you how committed your leadership is to safety include:

- **Responsiveness to worker suggestions.** What percentage of safety suggestions from workers (including suppliers) are actually implemented by management?
- **Participation in safety initiatives.** Are managers participating in safety training, critical design reviews, and other safety initiatives?
- **Workforce ratings of management personnel.** Does management generally get high marks or low ones when it comes to safety issues?
- **Third-party certifications completed.** Third-party certifications may be completed by the facility or by individual workers; the number of safety-related third-party certifications is a measure of worker commitment to the programme.

End results

If your leading indicators are weak — workers don't participate in training, management doesn't consistently respond to worker concerns and suggestions, and nobody can remember when the safety committee met last — your safety culture is probably not yet mature, and your lagging indicators (metrics that show the end result of your safety efforts) will probably be poor as well.

When you begin making a determined effort to strengthen your safety culture, your lagging indicators will enable you to make the business case for your programme. A strong safety culture also strengthens the resilience and performance of your extended supply chain.

When contractors and suppliers are consistently aligned to your safety expectations, you reduce variability, minimise operational risk, and create a more reliable network of partners who are ready to work. This helps turn safety culture into a shared advantage across every tier of your supply chain.

Studies of lagging indicators in companies with a strong safety culture have shown benefits that include:

- **Reduced reportable injuries**
- **Reduced employer liability and associated insurance costs**
- **Improved project quality**
- **Increased project return on investment**
- **Improved worker retention**
- **Improved ability to attract new workers**
- **Stronger financial performance**

When organisations operate across dozens of sites and multiple markets, each location will inevitably sit at a different stage of safety culture maturity. Different regulatory requirements, workforce compositions, operational models, and on-the-ground realities shape how quickly each site can advance.

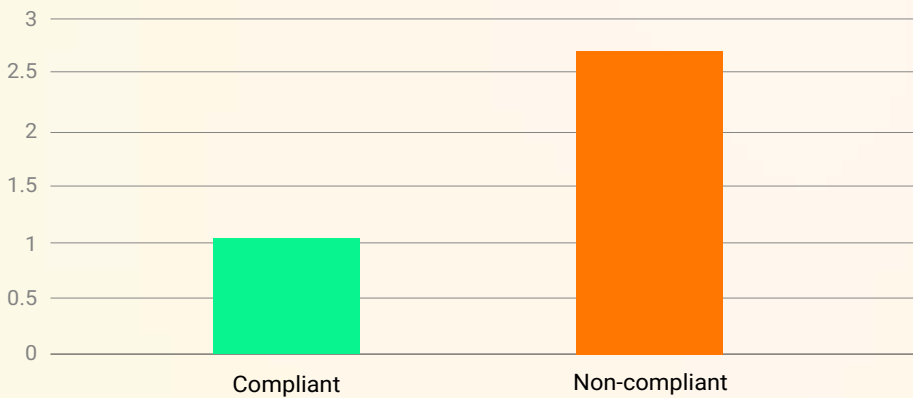
Variation isn't a sign of weakness; it's a natural feature of global operations. What matters is establishing a clear, organisation-wide path for improvement, with shared expectations and a realistic timeline that allows every site to progress toward the same standards.

For global organisations operating across multiple jurisdictions, consolidating these indicators can be challenging.

Avetta's intelligent supply chain risk management software provides a single view of training completion, audit scores, document validity, and leading-indicator performance across every supplier and region, helping global teams measure what matters with clarity and consistency. It provides HSE teams with real-time visibility, supply chain consistency, and the confidence that every contractor is ready to work, no matter where they operate.

For example, Avetta data shows that companies with compliant suppliers have a 62% lower fatality rate than those with non-compliant suppliers (on average from 2021–2024).

Fatality rate for Avetta clients with compliant vs. non-compliant suppliers (per 100,000 employees)



62%
lower fatality rate

Measuring leading and lagging indicators will provide a useful long-term guide for setting safety programme goals and help you establish the business value of your safety programme.

But you don't have to wait until the numbers come in to start building a stronger safety culture. Two vital short-term steps you can take toward establishing good faith and strengthening your safety culture are to talk safety and model safety.

Talk Safety

In a strong safety culture, safety is part of the everyday conversation, as natural as discussions of how to improve productivity or reduce downtime.

Across regions, international standards and research emphasise that open communication, worker engagement, and psychological safety are core pillars of effective health and safety culture. Whether teams work in a single facility or across continents, safety must remain a shared language.

Here are some ways that you can reduce the feeling that safety is a distraction from or an obstacle to the real work of the company and integrate safety into general workplace discussions:

Eliminate the checklist

When you walk onto the floor, do you develop relationships with workers, or is it all about the checklist? Go out without your checklist, and strike up informal conversations with your workforce (including contractors and suppliers) about their jobs. Try to gain insight into hazards that need to be addressed by expressing concern for workers and asking them to identify situations in their workdays that could or did lead to an injury.

You can also demonstrate concern and commitment to the safety of the workers and their families by discussing how to implement safe work practices at home, not just in the workplace.

Listen

Perhaps it seems strange to put “listen” under the heading “talk safety”, but when the goal is to encourage a conversation, demonstrate sincerity, and build good faith, you’ll need to practice listening at least as much as — or more than — you talk.

Engage in active listening in which your part of the conversation is to ask questions that ensure that you have understood what the speaker is trying to communicate: “Do I understand correctly that you don’t always wear your hearing protection because the dispenser is too far from your workstation to be convenient?”

Be positive

Positive instruction is usually more effective than negative instruction. For example, which statement do you think would be more effective: “Don’t stack new shipments in the walkways,” or “New shipments can be placed at the end of aisle 2 until they can be broken down and properly shelved”? Strive to encourage safe behaviours rather than just discourage unsafe ones.



Do I understand correctly that you don’t always wear your hearing protection because the dispenser is too far from your workstation to be convenient?”

Talk face-to-face

Executive-level staff and corporate managers may get in the habit of communicating through e-mail and written reports, but this is indirect and fails to take advantage of live-group dynamics. Get people together in small, face-to-face groups, and encourage them to explain their concerns and observations about safety.

The same strategy can work with frontline workers and managers, who may be too busy to compare safety notes unless they are given a specific opportunity to do so.

Provide information

Workers need to understand “why”, especially when they are asked to do a job in a way that doesn’t seem obvious or necessary, or when they are asked to change the way they do things. For example, when you’re instituting a new control, explain to affected workers why they are being asked to change what they normally do, as well as what successful implementation will look like.

For multinational organisations, consistent communication can be difficult to maintain. By centralising documentation, worker credentials, and contractor status in one place, Avetta helps global teams maintain clarity and consistency, turning conversations about safety into shared understanding, not fragmented information.



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Model Safety

Workers and suppliers are always looking to see if their leaders are acting in good faith. Ask yourself, are you honest with your workforce? Do you do what you say you are going to do? Do you practice what you preach? When workers hear you say one thing and then see you do another, or when they see that there is one set of rules for them and a different, less demanding set of rules for management, it erodes their confidence.

Leadership behaviours are under increasing scrutiny as global stakeholders, from regulators to investors to employees to suppliers, evaluate organisations on their ability to operate responsibly. Strong safety culture is now considered a material ESG factor worldwide.



Thank workers who take time out of their day to speak to you, especially if they engage with you in a specific way, like showing you how they do their job or when they demonstrate safe behaviours and actions.

Those who lack confidence in their leadership are less likely to heed what their leaders say. Here are some ways you can model safety and develop the confidence of your workforce:

- **Be visible.** If you or your team are making regular visits to the shop floor, you'll gain their trust a lot faster than if you're nothing but a faceless memorandum, telling them how to do their jobs without ever having seen what they do.
- **Practice safe behaviour.** When you do go out into the workplace, follow the rules! Managers who fail to obey safety rules can quickly destroy a lot of worker confidence. It may not even be intentional — regional managers or visiting executives may not be aware of every safety rule that applies on the factory floor or worksite — but the damage will be the same. Always wear your safety gear, stay out of restricted areas unless you have appropriate training, and don't do things that your workers would be disciplined for. If they're not supposed to jump down from the loading dock, don't you do it either.
- **Remember your manners.** Good manners demonstrate respect for others. Learn workers' names and offer a friendly greeting. Thank workers who take time out of their day to speak to you, especially if they engage with you in a specific way, like showing you how they do their job or when they demonstrate safe behaviours and actions. Expect the same level of safety governance across your entire organisation, from the C-suite to full time employees and suppliers.

For global executives, visibility is one of the most powerful enablers of consistent leadership. Avetta provides a unified, real-time view of contractor readiness, safety performance trends, and compliance status across every region, helping leaders model the transparency and accountability they expect from others.

This level of transparency helps leaders demonstrate good faith in action, reinforcing the behaviours that teams model on site.

While you're collecting and analysing your safety metrics, establishing communication and modelling the kind of commitment you'd like to see will lay a foundation for strengthening your safety culture.

Reward Safety

Once you have some numbers in hand, you can add another strategy to your toolbox: rewarding safety.

Whatever you're trying to accomplish, remember this: The thing that you reward is the thing that you'll achieve. If productivity is rewarded, workers will prioritise that over other considerations. If profitability is rewarded, management will take what looks like the quickest path to financial gain. If you want safety to truly become a deeply valued, fully integrated part of your workplace culture, you'll have to find a way to reward it right alongside productivity and profitability.

Across markets, leading-indicator-based reward systems are now recognised as best practice for building proactive safety cultures, especially in complex, multi-tiered supply chains.

The process begins with measuring safety and connecting safety performance to business metrics as described above. It continues when you directly reward measured safety behaviours that are most strongly connected to business metrics. Targeted reward strategies for both workers and executives can strengthen your company's overall commitment to safety.

Safety incentive schemes need to focus on leading indicators and reinforce positive safety outcomes. Safety incentive schemes can have a negative impact on workplace safety if not designed effectively, especially in cases where they could be seen to be penalising staff for reporting injuries⁶.



Targeted reward strategies for both workers and executives can strengthen your company's overall commitment to safety.

A well-constructed programme will reduce accident rates, avoid regulatory censure, and build a stronger safety culture by rewarding actions that enhance workplace safety, such as:

- **Showing safety initiative.** Many programmes reward workers who actively make the workplace safer by participating on safety committees and suggesting successful workplace safety improvements.
- **Engaging in safe behaviour.** Employers that catch workers following safe work procedures can reinforce the behaviour by rewarding it right away. Even a simple “thank you” or “good job” can make a difference.
- **Achieving safety success.** Although lower accident and injury rates are the ultimate goal, the key to achieving them is rewarding the kinds of activities that lead to that goal, like achieving full compliance with safe work practices and procedures and passing safety inspections and audits.
- **Third-party certifications completed.** Third-party certifications may be completed by the facility or by individual workers; the number of safety-related third-party certifications is a measure of worker commitment to the programme.



Three Success Stories: EMEA, NORAM, and APAC

EMEA: Honeywell triples vendor compliance in 10 European countries

Honeywell needed to strengthen safety performance across suppliers in 10 European countries, each with different regulatory environments and documentation standards.

1. Measure safety

Honeywell unified supplier audits, documentation, and training verification through Avetta, giving HSE leaders one consistent way to measure safety readiness across all countries — something previously impossible.

Outcome: Visibility into vendor gaps and leading indicators, allowing targeted improvement plans.

2. Talk safety

With a single source of truth, Honeywell increased communication between HSE, procurement, and suppliers. Clear expectations and standardised documentation turned fragmented, country-by-country conversations into one shared safety language.

Outcome: Stronger collaboration and faster issue resolution.

3. Model safety

By holding suppliers to the same standards as internal teams, Honeywell signalled that safety was non-negotiable. Leadership reinforced this by using audit data to demonstrate transparency and good faith.

Outcome: Suppliers understood Honeywell's expectations were consistent, fair, and global.

4. Reward safety

As suppliers improved documentation, audit scores, and training completion, Honeywell strengthened working relationships and prioritised high-performing vendors — reinforcing the behaviours that led to safer operations.

Outcome: 3× increase in vendor compliance within 18 months.

NORAM: Summit Materials Strengthens Safety Culture, Increasing Compliance by 35%

Summit Materials needed to unify safety expectations across quarries, plants, and transportation networks, where inconsistent contractor data made it difficult to manage risk. To elevate safety across all operations, the team applied the four strategies outlined in this paper.

1. Measure safety

Summit consolidated contractor data, training verification, and documentation into Avetta, giving HSE and procurement teams one accurate view of contractor readiness across all sites.

Outcome: A 35% increase in contractor compliance, driven by clear, measurable performance insight.

2. Talk safety

With a unified source of truth, Summit improved communication between HSE, operations, procurement, and contractors. This turned fragmented, site-based conversations into a shared language around safety.

Outcome: Stronger collaboration and faster resolution of documentation and readiness issues.

3. Model safety

Leadership demonstrated transparency by holding all contractors to the same safety standards and using shared audit data to reinforce expectations across every job site.

Outcome: Contractors understood requirements were consistent, credible, and non-negotiable.

4. Reward safety

As contractors improved audit scores, documentation quality, and safe work behaviours, Summit prioritised high-performing partners, reinforcing the behaviours that lead to safer operations.

Outcome: A more dependable contractor network aligned to Summit's safety culture and operational goals.

APAC: David Jones Strengthens Safety Consistency across APAC Retail Operations

David Jones needed to improve safety consistency across retail stores, distribution centres, and contractor networks, each operating with different processes and levels of readiness. To create a more unified safety culture, their WHS team applied the same four strategies outlined in this paper.

1. Measure safety

David Jones centralised contractor documentation, onboarding, and training records through Avetta, giving WHS leaders one clear way to assess safety readiness across every site.

Outcome: Consistent visibility into contractor gaps and safety requirements, enabling targeted improvements.

2. Talk safety

Standardised onboarding and clearer communication helped unify safety expectations across employees, managers, and contractors—turning previously inconsistent, site-by-site conversations into one clear safety message.

Outcome: Improved engagement and reduced confusion across stores and supplier partners.

3. Model safety

Leadership reinforced accountability by applying the same safety standards to internal teams and contractors. Using shared data created greater transparency and strengthened trust across operations.

Outcome: Teams and partners recognised that safety expectations were fair, consistent, and actively upheld.

4. Reward safety

As documentation accuracy, audit performance, and training completion improved, David Jones strengthened relationships with contractors who demonstrated proactive safety behaviours.

Outcome: A more reliable, safety-focused supplier network that reinforced strong behaviours across every location.

Conclusion

Safety culture is built on trust — and trust is built on action

When you measure safety, talk openly about it, model it from the top, and reward it with intention, your organisation builds cultures rooted in trust — and trust scales across borders. In global supply chains, this shared culture becomes a competitive advantage: work starts on time, operations run safer, and teams perform with confidence.

That good faith will securely underpin a strong safety culture; and a strong safety culture is good for business. Good faith, then, is good business.

For companies with multinational operations and diverse supplier networks, intelligent work readiness is the key to making safety culture operational — and global. Avetta unifies compliance, prequalification, safety performance, and supplier alignment into a single platform, helping every partner in the supply chain work without worry and be truly ready to work.



Where readiness is reality

From building safer operations to
delivering trusted performance

[Schedule a consultation](#)





Discover Avetta's risk management platform to see how your teams can raise safety standards, reduce risk, and move from friction to flow.

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