

Commitment

Commitment: the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity etc.

This is at the heart of achieving a sustainable change in culture. It is a *dedication to a cause* – in other words it is about really wanting it to happen because it is important to us – it is something we value.

Commitment is also an essential element of leadership. If you want your team to follow your direction they need to trust you and see that you are committed to and truly believe in the direction you are leading them.

Commitment needs demonstrating to the team. That might be through giving up time, putting in additional effort or spending a bit of money. Equally, you will demonstrate commitment through showing an interest, engaging with people, explaining the reasons behind your chosen direction. Recognising that the most effective form of communication is not through the words that we use but through the behaviour we display, we demonstrate our true commitment to the cause through our actions, our personal behaviours

Being prepared to engage with the team, listen to their concerns, giving them a voice also shows commitment. We often hear managers proudly proclaim that they have “*an open door policy, come and see me any time!*” That sounds great, but recognise just how hard it can be for someone to climb to the hallowed ground of the top floor, walk down that long corridor with many other managers looking suspiciously out of their own *open doors* and finally run the gauntlet of the protective PA to even reach the open door! This is a terrifying prospect to some. If these managers were out in the workplace a bit more often, initiating the conversations they wouldn't need an ‘*open door policy*’.

Making a commitment is one thing; sticking to it is something else entirely. Just look at the atrocious failure rate of most New Year resolutions: 25% of people abandon their resolutions after just 1 week; 60% don't get beyond 6 months. Writing down your commitment is a strong motivator and really helps you to get to the next level. Sharing that commitment with others even more so, particularly if you ask someone to hold you to account. This might be at an individual level but just as valuable as a team, unit or business. This is why a stated and well publicised Safety Vision is so useful. Putting pen to paper (remember when we used to do that?) also prevents goals from being too vague, it helps give a clarity of purpose.

At the end of a safety engagement we suggest wrapping up by eliciting a simple commitment. Usually to continue to work safely or occasionally committing to adopt any behaviour change that has just been discussed. We don't need a signature; we just need a few words that *seal the deal*. This provides no true guarantee but it will almost certainly be harder for someone not to either stick to the safe behaviour or adopt the change, simply because they have said they will. At the very least they will be thinking about their commitment and the behaviours recently discussed which is one of the key outcomes we were trying to achieve.