

Wokutch says, 'The culture of an organization – its basic beliefs and values concerning people -- is what drives safety excellence. Organizational attitude determines whether safety initiatives succeed or fail. Concern for safety is integrated into the production system. Individual craftsmen and line managers take primary responsibility for ensuring the workplace is safe and healthy.'

In an organization that exemplifies a culture of safety, management values the health and well-being of people, believes that accidents are preventable, and isn't shy with their philosophy. They eschew quick fixes, promote informal and constructive communication and avoid judgment of feedback. Employees are rewarded and reinforced rather than disciplined and coerced. Approaches that produce safety are 'built into' the mission and standard operation procedures. Passive safety is replaced by an active safety culture.

In his article, "Stepping Up To Organizational Safety Excellence," Larry Hansen wrote 'For an organization to advance to the next level, they must discard traditional beliefs and approaches and undergo a radical change. Lasting excellence will not result from safety programs forced upon the organization, but only when safety is fully accepted as integral to the organization's mission, and as a strategy critical to the success of business objectives.'

The most successful teams don't need special committees, forced accountability or high-handed supervision. Pressuring them to perform isn't necessary. From the president and the stock holders all the way to the newest hire, success is woven into the fiber of their organization. These teams are clearly different and the difference is in their values, processes and programs. The difference is in their winning culture.

## How Does Winning a Gold Medal Relate to Safety in Your Organization?

by Randy Snow

There aren't many experiences in life that compare with winning a gold medal. To participate on a team of athletes that is blended into a cohesive unit that performs at the highest level brings unbelievable gratification.

But every team going to the Paralympics proclaims that they are going to win the gold medal. But only one team does. Each year it seems a few of the same teams consistently position themselves near to the top.

One of these teams is the men's wheelchair basketball team from Canada. Not only did they win the gold medal at the Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia, in 2000, they duplicated this incredible accomplishment four years later, in Greece in 2004.

So what's the difference? What is it about the Canadians? How do they continuously place themselves above all the other teams that have the same basic goal, talent and plan? The difference is culture.

Culture comes from the top, which in this example is the Canadian Basketball Association. To the C.B.A., there isn't anything supplementary about wheelchair basketball. No separate programs needed - no special budget, no pressure from the outside. If it's basketball in Canada, wheelchair or not, then winning is integrated into the production of the product and woven into the fabric of their values.

Excellence to the Canadians is generated by focusing on what drives high performance – culture and leadership. As the legendary coach of the team Dr. Mike Frogley says, “A gold medal is a result of doing things right.”

So how does this relate to safety in your organization?

Management in each organization proclaims that safety is a top priority. Each employ safety officers, establish safety committees and conduct safety training. And just like the Paralympics, each team is *going to* win the gold medal but most fall short. Statistics show that time and time again, certain organizations are always at the top of lost time accidents.

So if safety programs are a common denominator to organizations that both fail and succeed, and the organizations that do succeed arrive there consistently, what is the difference?

In Professor Richard Wokutch's book, *Worker Protection, Japanese Style*, he observed that Japanese safety records were much better than records in the United States, but the safety programs were very much the same. These findings suggested that safety programs weren't the differentiating factor – culture was.