



Building a Psychologically Safe Workplace in Construction

Proven Tactics That Improve Safety Performance, Reduce Rework, and Keep Your Best People

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How Psychological Safety Solves Problems Facing the Construction Industry

- Reduces Communication Breakdowns
- Prevents Knowledge Silos
- Encourages Cross Trade Problem Solving
- Increases Productivity
- Promotes Innovation
- Decreases Costly Turnover



Action Step 1: Create Clear Channels for Speaking Up



Regular Feedback Sessions

- Create spaces where employees can share ideas openly and feel genuinely heard
- Ask "Can you tell me more" to encourage them give more input



Allow People to Speak

- In meetings let people finish speaking before you speak
- Use the 2 second rule before responding
- Encourage others to add their ideas



Practice Active Listening

- Listen to understand, not just to respond
- Give people you undivided attention
- Repeat back key points
- Ask clarifying questions



Action Step 2: Build an Innovation Culture

Job Site Meetings

- Create regular opportunities where you solicit input and ideas
- Listen when people speak up
- Ask "What can we do to make this site safer?"

Thank People

- If someone raises a concern, suggests an idea or proactively solves a problem, thank them
- Even if you don't use the idea, this shows you value their input

Share Information

- Share information openly and widely
- Keep people informed of changes and their impact on their work

Action Step 3: Turn Mistakes Into Fewer Callbacks and Rework

1

Create a Culture of Learning

View mistakes as opportunities for learning and improvement. Focus on what happened, now laying personal blame.

2

Acknowledge Efforts

Acknowledge employees' efforts and contributions, regardless of outcomes.

3

Positive Feedback

Provide specific and positive feedback to encourage growth and development.



Provide Training on Specific Action Steps



Pick a Weekly/Monthly Action Step

Identify and focus on a key area of psychological safety to practice across the project.

Toolbox Talk

Psychological Safety Improves Jobsite Health and Safety

Job Site: _____ Supervisor: _____

What is Psychological Safety
Psychological safety isn't just about one person or one action - it's the whole environment we create together on the jobsite. Like weather effects how we work, the crew's attitude affects whether people feel free to speak up. It means that people feel encouraged to raise concerns, propose ideas and share what they think without fear of being laughed at or put down, ignored or made to feel what they are sharing isn't important.

Impact on Health and Safety
Health and Safety is critical on any job site. It requires that everyone pays attention and has an acute awareness of those hazards that can cause both physical and emotional injury. If we "See Something", there needs to be enough psychological safety on the jobsite so that we feel compelled and comfortable enough to "Say Something". Psychological safety is the bridge that gets us from seeing something to saying something. Research has found that psychological safety can reduce workplace incidents by 40%.

Psychological Safety vs. Mental Health
Psychological Safety describes the environment, or the culture of the jobsite where one feels comfortable to share an idea or admit and own a mistake. Mental health or emotional health describes someone's state of mind. It could be someone being offended by graffiti being discriminated against, or distracted by an issue at home. Just being distracted for a moment on a jobsite is a hazard that can cause injury. A jobsite where there is psychological safety, you will feel compelled and comfortable to bring such a hazard to the attention of the field superintendent.

Psychological Safety Example
Everyone knows that the fall protection equipment should be carefully inspected by someone knowledgeable before being used. But both people who have the knowledge are out sick and work needs to get done. One of the crew members assures it will be ok and says, "don't worry about it". When there is sufficient psychological safety on the jobsite, someone will say something and possibly prevent a potentially catastrophic incident.

When we don't have psychological safety

- Everyone knows to avoid the steps on the second floor because they are loose, but no-one says anything.
- The missing barrier on one side of the elevator shaft isn't fixed for days.

When we do have psychological safety

- We are aware of our surroundings and possible safety issues for ourselves and others.
- When we make an observation, we stop and report it immediately.
- People feel safe to speak up.

Action Steps to Promote Psychological Safety

- Let people finish speaking without interruption.
- Any graffiti is removed quickly.
- Everyone gets a chance to speak in pull meetings
- When someone offers an idea, it is listened to in its entirety before someone responds

Toolbox Talks

Conduct brief, focused discussions to reinforce learning and create open dialogue.



Building Psychological Safety with Colleagues Through Open-Ended Questions

Discover how open-ended questions can help to create psychological safety which can lead to more effective solutions and improved communication.



Asking Open-Ended Questions to Improve Collaboration on Job Sites

Collaborating effectively on job sites requires open communication and a willingness to understand others' perspectives.



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Microlearning Videos

Use short, engaging video content to provide continuous learning opportunities on people's phones for easy access.

Build Momentum

1 Share Psychological Safety Benefits

Communicate the advantages of a psychologically safe workplace to employees across all organizational levels

2 Choose One Project

- Recognize that cultural transformation is gradual
- Implement one action step monthly: introduce weekly toolbox talks, use micro learn videos, start monthly team reflection sessions
- Show leadership engagement and support

3 Maintain Consistency

Taking small, intentional steps consistently helps companies gradually build an environment that empowers employees, improves productivity, and drives continuous improvement.

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