GLOBAL FOOD SAFETY RESOURCE® PRESENTS:

SUPPORT YOUR EMPLOYEES & BRAND WITH
A STRONG FOOD SAFETY CULTURE

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION
BY AUSTIN WELCH

In 1906 Upton Sinclair published "The Jungle," a novel exposing the horrid conditions of Chicago's meatpacking industry. He mailed a copy to then-President Roosevelt and, before the year was over, Congress drafted and passed the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act.

Stories, like what Sinclair shared with the world, are drivers of change. They educate in a way that is uniquely human, accessing both the primal emotions within our brain while also motivating us to think critically about how the narrative applies to our own life. Similarly, the collection of stories within this eBook have been, and will continue to be, drivers of change.

Over the past few years, I have sat through myriad webinars that discussed "what" food safety culture is and "why" it's important. At this point most of us know what it is, and most of us know that it affects our companies. So, what now?

We need tools, strategies, and real-world experience to guide us on this culture journey. We need the stories that will provide the hard-won knowledge necessary to move the culture conversation and practices forward.

Therefore it is paramount that every one of us contribute every day to advance this topic of culture. Talk to employees in different departments, build coalitions, design new training, develop behavior-based metrics, and continually refine on the fly.

2022 hasn't shaped up to be any better than 2021, or 2020. Peanut butter recalls are back in the news and a whistleblower from one of the largest baby formula manufacturers in the US led to a recall so massive that the richest country in the world was forced to import emergency shipments from other countries.

Stories are drivers of change

I 100% believe that all these issues could have been avoided if a healthy food safety culture had been in place. Almost every single element of food safety comes down to people, and the way people behave is the culture that defines their organization.

On top of the ongoing recalls our industry is suffering from what has been called the Great Recession. Employee retention, or lack thereof, is literally putting some organizations out of business. Organizations are realizing that their employees require more than just a paycheck, they want empathetic leadership, to do work that they feel is important, and can learn and grow within their field.

All of this comes back to culture, traversing the complex human contribution to food safety and ultimately, organizational resilience. Food safety culture is no longer a fringe topic, it is the critical element that will separate out those that will thrive from those that simply cling to survival.

This collection of articles will provide you with the tools and knowledge necessary to continue your own culture journey. Don't just read them once, keep coming back. Because as you advance your own culture, the information in here will take on a new meaning as you continue to learn and grow from your own hard-won efforts. And hopefully, you will share with us your own story.

Stories are drivers of change

1
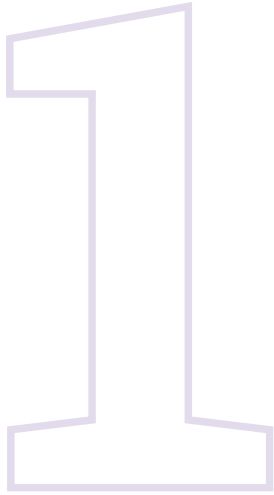
ARTICLE BY JUDY SEBASTIAN

HOW TO BLOW THE WHISTLE ON FOOD SAFETY ISSUES

The impact of whistleblowing is a long-lasting one. By definition, a whistleblower is an individual who "reveals something covert or who informs against another." In my opinion, a whistleblower is someone who demonstrates courage, fairness, transparency, and feels morally obligated to do the right thing – even if it means being the only voice in the room that speaks up. To someone who is new to blowing the whistle, it can feel overwhelming if you are unsure what your rights are, or if others within your organization have chosen to remain silent out of fear of retaliation.

Whistleblowing, as an idea, is not a novel one. It is however, steadily gaining momentum as a movement. A plethora of case studies on whistleblowing has demonstrated how speaking up can pave the path to reforming existing policies, changing operating procedures, enhancing the safety or security of the community, and reinforcing one's trust in the power of ethics and compliance.

> " Professionals can contribute to improvements in food safety culture through whistleblowing, regardless of the professional title they hold. "

Recent whistleblowing cases in the food industry have made us all the more aware of the necessity of speaking up when there is dangerous or illegal behavior occurring. Examples include retired USDA food inspector Phyllis McKelvey who brought to light both worker and animal harm or federal meat inspector Jill Bauer who filed complaints regarding the New Swine Inspection System. This article will explore how food safety professionals can contribute to improvements in food safety culture through whistleblowing, regardless of the professional title they hold.

GRIEVANCES AND WHISTLEBLOWING ARE NOT THE SAME THING

Some professionals may confuse a grievance, such as working with a "difficult" manager or employee, for blowing the whistle. A great starting point is to identify whether you're addressing a personal grievance or need to address a situation that has the potential to harm others. A few examples of scenarios that call for whistleblowing include reporting a theft, fraud, social injustice, criminal offences, discrimination in the workplace, etc.

It's a good idea for organizations to include their policies and procedures on whistleblowing as a part of the new hire onboarding program. This approach lays the foundation for new employees and helps them see that the company values integrity and transparency.

CO-CREATE A CULTURE OF SPEAKING UP

One area I emphasize on while helping clients build their Food Safety Management System (FSMS), is to co-create a culture of safety along with their employees. We often assign physical safety to the description of food safety, which in turn causes us to lose sight of an equally important aspect – emotional safety. If it isn't safe for employees to speak up, the organization will be filled with silent bystanders. According to a study conducted by Harvard Business Review, men get credit for voicing solutions but not problems. Women, however, get recognition for neither. Leaders who are passionate about creating equitable workplaces, ought to zoom in on their team dynamics. It is also worth revisiting the choice of vocabulary.
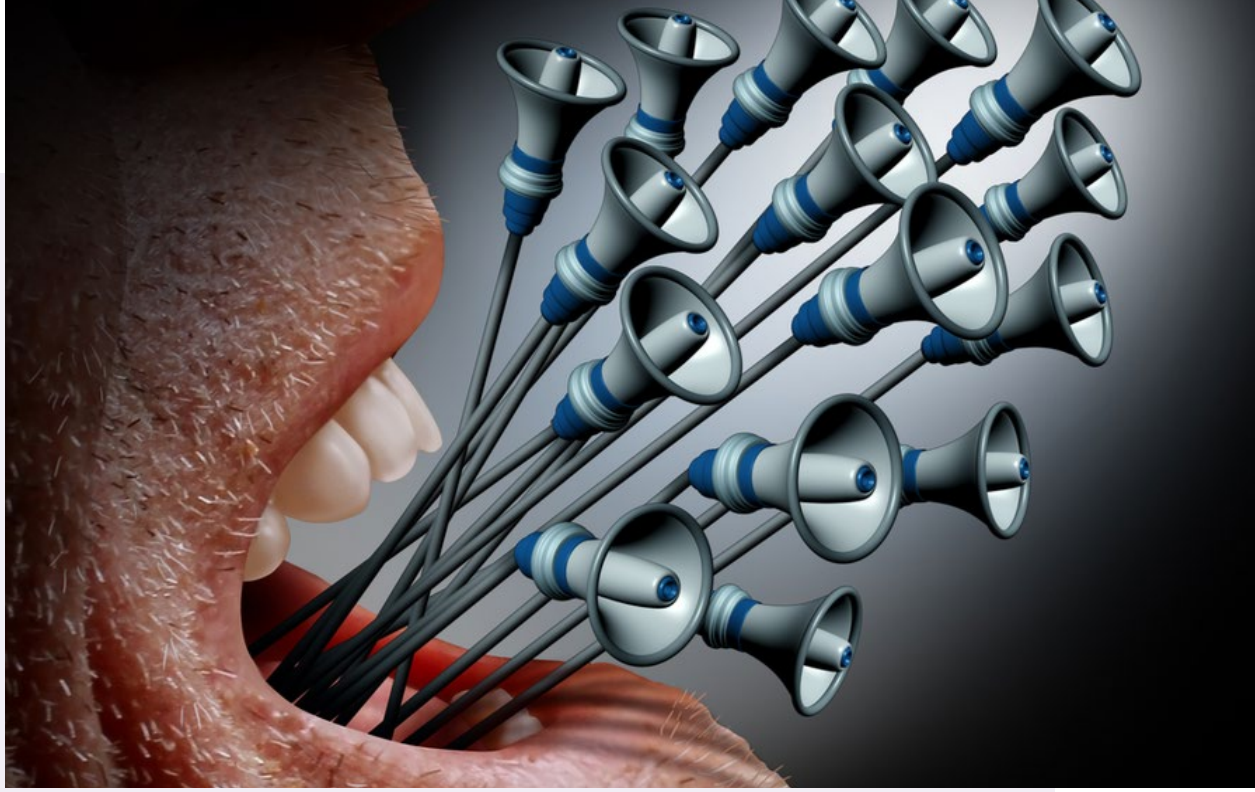
For instance, I've come across 'good catches' and 'near misses' being used interchangeably. 'Good catch' encourages people to participate in fostering a culture of safety, and to be a part of a shared cause. Here's something worth trying with your teams – have them list out 'good catches' of the week or the month and share their lists with one another. On occasion, it has been known to spur a mild sense of harmless competition, but the deeper impact was that team members held themselves, and others, accountable.

THE TIME TO SPEAK UP IS NOW

Sudarsan Muralidharan, a Dubai-based Food Safety Manager in the aviation industry, briefly describes why 'good catches' can be time sensitive. He explains, "The airline industry is a time bound one and everything works literally like a clock. The global food supply chain is a complex one that requires stringent safety controls and monitoring. Sometimes, us auditors are ridiculed for raising non-compliances if the personnel involved in food preparation do not wash their hands thoroughly. Today, almost a year into the pandemic, hand washing for 20 seconds has been endorsed by the World Health Organization, with an emphasis on the duration of hand washing."

Should there be a time when you may have to blow the whistle, it is a good idea to speak with a trusted professional, while maintaining the confidentiality of the organization and the individuals involved. Remember to prioritize your safety (especially mental health) and try to check in with yourself – it can feel daunting at times. Know your rights and exercise them well.

2

EMPATHY KEY TO BUILDING A STRONG FOOD SAFETY CULTURE

Is employee behaviour aligned with better food safety outcomes? Unquestionably the answer is, "Yes!" but it comes packaged along with a range of other important variables, such as policies, procedures, systems, food safety training, compensation and many other elements that are at work within a food organization.

Without a doubt, the task of continually adapting to changing demands from external forces, and food safety standards and regulations, is a stressful part of a management or leadership role. What about associates and workers? Can they be expected to change behaviours and adapt quickly?

> " *In the workplace, organizational behaviour is often driven by circumstance and can also be tied to motivation and skill.* "

In the workplace, organizational behaviour is often driven by circumstance and can also be tied to motivation and skill. It is important to recognize that the elements behind behaviour are not always negative. Many workers entering the marketplace are well ahead of the learning curve with regards to the use of applied technology, and they feel frustrated by working conditions that are behind the times and burdened by many discrete operations. The worker is not always at fault when deadlines are missed, poor quality product is produced or losses occur from scrap and rework imperatives. Continuously blaming them can be a demotivating factor that can negatively affect food safety outcomes.

DISRUPTIVE FORCES SHOW UP

Organizations are currently experiencing some exciting and challenging times, with disruptive forces showing up in everything from technology to new business models, emerging demographics and the race against time. Systems, processes and even job roles and titles are changing to respond to new global markets. Now, more than ever, establishing a strong, unified corporate culture that includes food safety can help employees navigate through the demands of change.

An organization's culture is its soul. It contains deep-rooted values and beliefs which are not always documented but transpire into the tone in which people interact and get things done. The GFSI technical working group described culture as "shared values, beliefs and norms that affect mindset and behaviour toward food safety in, across and throughout an organization.

INFLUENCING POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS

Since not every person is motivated by the same things, managers who empathize and get to know their employees have greater success in influencing positive behaviours toward a food safety culture. There are many theories and strategies on organizational behaviour, well worth learning for knowledge in this social area. Human behaviour is complicated and does not always align with the rigidity of compliance in food safety. But people can embrace change when they are engaged, adequately trained and supported through decision making. Improve the employee experience and the results will surpass your expectations.

Consider the following elements as a starting point for incorporating positive behaviours:

1 Empathize and interact with an understanding of the values that drive behaviour.

2 Recognize the underlying process, risk and product limitations and look to improve them.

3 Facilitate collaboration and feedback for better decision making and alignment.

3

ARTICLE BY DR BRITA BALL, PhD

ENERGIZE YOUR BRAND WITH A STRONG FOOD SAFETY CULTURE

What if "food safety" were part of your company's brand and your employees consistently reinforced that message through their behaviour? What if it isn't, and they don't? A brand is more than a tradename and logo. It becomes an image people have of your company, products or services and it lets customers know what to expect.

> " *A brand is more than a tradename and logo* "

Abela & Co., a well-known food service company in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), is a great example of a company that has built food safety into its brand. It gives a clear message about its brand to employees and customers, and Nancy Nouaimeh, the company's assistant vice-president of quality, safety and performance excellence, says the food safety culture at her company is so strong, that employees resisted change when management wanted to increase focus on quality, health and safety. Firms that have developed a strong food safety culture excel in three areas:

PURPOSE

The decision to develop and implement a food safety management system is more likely to be supported when it fits strategically with a company's mission, vision and values. "Food safety is embedded in the Abela & Co. mission statement," Nouaimeh says. "And it is the first item on the agenda at management meetings." That means issues and metrics are discussed and decisions are made considering all factors, the most important of which is food safety.

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

At a company that has built its brand around food safety, senior leaders through to middle managers lead by example by showing that food safety is a high priority. In addition, effective internal communication builds and maintains a food safety culture.

External communication ensures two-way communication with customers; promoting the brand and getting customer feedback to meet changing needs shows the company cares. And adequate resources help get the job done effectively, efficiently and safely. Nouaimeh says a company survey showed that while supervisors thought resources were a barrier, managers actually identified time as an issue.

WORKSITE COMMITMENT

Effective training ensures employees have the skills and knowledge to do their jobs and be accountable for food safety. International cultures influence employee perceptions of acceptable practices and language can sometimes represent a barrier. Nouaimeh says that Abela & Co. delivers training in several languages so employees can understand their responsibilities.

There are other factors at work, as well. Committed supervisors are an essential link between a company and its employees. Supervisory leadership ensures employees follow food safety practices, coaches and corrects them when needed, and encourages them to take initiative. Committed employees support each other to follow food safety practices, knowing how important it is to protect the customer and the company brand. An outbreak or recall can cost people their jobs.

A strong, positive food safety culture can help keep a brand strong. For companies that don't get it right, a foodborne illness outbreak can cost millions of dollars in direct costs, and damage or even destroy a brand. Some companies don't survive. Others turn around.

REPAIR AND REBUILD

Jack in the Box Restaurants survived the 1993 outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 which sickened more than 600 people and killed four children in the USA. Jack in the Box reviewed and made major changes to corporate food safety priorities, then implemented HACCP at all its restaurants. Senior leaders took strategic steps following their outbreak and have, to date, prevented another crisis.

Contrast this with Chipotle Mexican Grill, which had six outbreaks across the USA in 2015 before corporate leadership made changes to reduce food safety risks. The stock price plummeted. After three years and several more outbreaks linked to poor temperature control and employee practices, the food safety culture at Chipotle still needs improvement. The firm brought in a new CEO in 2018 who is working to instill a new culture, bring in customers and rebuild the tarnished brand.

4

ARTICLE BY LAUREN SOLAR

KEY TO STAFF RETENTION IN RESTAURANTS IS TO IMPLEMENT A FOOD SAFETY CULTURE

The food service sector has a high staff turnover rate, with industry estimates suggesting that fast food workers leave at a rate of up to 150 per cent. The costs of training new employees can be prohibitive, but the cost of not training employees properly can be astronomical: outbreaks of foodborne illness, allergen awareness, shutdowns, sanitizing, recertification, public relations and marketing to restore the company's reputation, higher insurance premiums, possible lawsuits and court costs.

"I prefer to focus on employee retention, instead of thinking of it in terms of staff turnover," says Dickson Dsouza, a hospitality consultant who has worked around the world. "It is always a challenge to retain talent and at the same time, ensure that the end product is good, safe food that is served well."

" When they understand how important their jobs are, it helps them feel good about what they do. "

The good news is that some of the best practices for staff retention and those for building a good food safety culture are strikingly similar. One of the first steps is to start at the top. Every level of management, from the frontline supervisors to the CEO, must be following the same food safety protocols. This equity is a powerful tool in staff retention. "Employees are looking for consistency, that the messages that management is giving are consistent in word and deed," says Dr. Brita Ball, a food safety specialist, trainer and facilitator.

Another key step in food safety culture is to explain the why: why food safety is so important and what the possible consequences of an employee's actions are. "Some people do really well when they understand that they have a critically important role to play, that the work that they do is important because they are keeping people safe. When they understand how important their jobs are, it helps them feel good about what they do," Dr. Ball explains. When employees feel good about what they do, they are less likely to leave.

Training new employees and refresher training in food safety are also key to building a strong food safety culture, but they can also be great staff motivators. Deanna Zenger, Project Manager of Succeeding at Work, a program developed by Food Processing Skills Canada, says that employers were surprised by the willingness of employees to educate themselves on their own time, not at work. "The employees felt inspired that their employer thought enough of them to provide this [education]. What a winning combination that is!" She adds that comments from participants in Succeeding at Work revealed that "these employees now want to go further in the company, they want to stay with the company, and they understand their job better."

Kathy Knutson, food safety author and independent contractor with US-based online food safety training company ImEPIK, agrees. "What really needs to happen is a lot more training throughout the year, refresher training… building in training and messaging about food safety every chance you can. It's a large burden on the food industry to do that. But that's the trade-off. How else can you be confident that your employee is going to make a good decision when faced with a food safety issue?"

However, that training is a solid investment. Training shows employees that their employer is invested in them and builds employees' confidence and satisfaction in their work. Leveraging this necessary training to motivate employees, either through financial incentives or peer recognition and promotion, is a great way to retain staff.

Strong communication is another building block of food safety culture. "In a good food safety culture, each employee is going to feel confident speaking with their peers and their supervisor," Knutson says. "The focus should be on making sure employees feel they can easily talk to any other employee, no matter what their level, about questions they have." Communication can also build a work environment where people feel that they are truly part of a team and are comfortable in their position. Staff retention and food safety culture should go hand in hand. When a company invests in one, they will also be investing in the other. It's a win-win situation.

5 KEY TO MAINTAINING FOOD SAFETY DURING THE PANDEMIC IS CLEAR COMMUNICATION

As 2020 unfurled, so did the optimism, confidence and motivation of people around the world. Leaders from various countries were gearing up to make 2020 a year worth remembering; it was supposed to be the year professionals exchanged success stories in the field of science, technology, medicine, culture, supply chain, and other avenues. Instead, we are faced by the unpredicted and unplanned reality; the beginning of a new normal due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With fluctuating numbers of reported COVID-19 cases, it is challenging to predict when the "curve will flatten" and stay that way. Everyday activities have been impacted, and certain businesses have been forced to close their doors indefinitely. In the United States alone, it is estimated that the "Coronavirus related job losses could total $47 million, and the unemployment rate may hit 32%". Food safety-related activities for suppliers, distributors and consumers have been impacted as well. From entry level associates to executives, food industry professionals are learning how to work closely with other functions, such as IT, logistics, transportation, healthcare, and to some extent, relief workers. Here are some ways to manage food safety in the pandemic age, with a human-centric approach.

SET UP A FLEXIBLE CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

Considering the human-to-human transmission pathways of COVID-19 and how some individuals can remain asymptomatic, the proactive approach to setting up an emergency response or crisis management team would be to ensure that it is a flexible one. This can be achieved by nominating members across functions, departments and varying levels of management. Having a healthy mix of team members from operations and senior leadership would enable the team to consider multiple facets of the business, while executing a plan of action. It would be an added benefit to the business to ensure

that all data pertaining to the crisis management strategy is housed at an easily accessible virtual location. This would also save support team members valuable time when trying to stay up to date while filling in for core team members.

ESTABLISH THE EMERGENCY CHAIN OF COMMAND

In the event that crucial business decision makers are impacted, have a documented emergency chain of command with clear communication channels already established to ensure that designated individuals are authorized to fill in.

REVIEW EXISTING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The difference between a calm and a chaotic response to a crisis lies in how communication works within an organization. A few key points to consider when developing a crisis communication strategy are:

A Ensure the language is simple, clear, inclusive and to the point. Pay close attention to tonality and the choice of words. A little-known fact is that Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's infectious disease epidemiologist, corrected the usage of the term "social distancing" to "physical distancing". Unfortunately, it is the former that caught on, and is still widely used in communications around the world.

B Have a well-defined message for the associates, middle managers, senior leadership and customers. Consider adding notes such as which team or department to contact in case the employees are contacted by the press or customers.

Apex Food Consultants, a Dubai-based food safety consulting firm, helped its clients develop a customer journey map to identify key food safety touch points. The organization's founder and Managing Director, Ms. Alphonsa Sebastian explained, "It was important for us to develop focused risk management communications for specific audience groups. For countries like the United Arab Emirates, which is home to over 200 nationalities, communication strategies need to overcome linguistic barriers. It also isn't uncommon for customers to use messaging apps like WhatsApp to communicate directly with their suppliers. Hence, we had to consider developing social media communication strategies as well."

> 66 *The difference between a calm and a chaotic response to a crisis lies in how communication works within an organization* 99

MINDFULLY MOVE TO ONLINE SYSTEMS

Transitioning to online systems can be a tedious task for most businesses. Begin with systems that are critical, such as online payments, and gradually work towards other areas, such as virtual audits. Although these are trying times, we have a chance at working together towards a common goal. In my opinion, 2020 will certainly be the year worth remembering, because of the lessons we have learned together as a race.

6

ARTICLE BY LISA JO LUPO

CONSUMER TRUST CAN BE EARNED EVEN IN A PANDEMIC, HERE'S HOW

Striving for perfection is an ideal goal in business. But in doing so, it is essential to face the reality that, in the world in which we live, absolute perfection is just that: an ideal. Risk is an inevitable part of the day-to-day processes and production of the food industry. But it is how you mitigate that risk and communicate any imperfections that do arise that engenders consumer trust and builds your reputation.

This past year has been a surprising one when it comes to patterns surrounding consumer trust the global food industry. One may have expected that trust would have devolved, due to the shortages, highly publicized COVID-19 illness issues, and the many and varied challenges the industry faced. But according to an array of studies, just the opposite was true:

March 2020: According to Morning Consult, a global data intelligence company, distrust is rippling through the country, and it is particularly potent when it's concerning major institutions and concentrations of power. Today, less than a quarter of Americans have little trust in their neighbours or labels on food packaging.

May 2020: One-third of survey respondents said they have a more favorable opinion about the safety of packaged foods since COVID-19's impact according to Food Insight; 78% are somewhat or very confident that the food they are buying is safe.

September 2020: Grocery, food and beverage, and financial services topped the Ispos list as best industry adopters of recommended COVID-19 precautions.

December 2020: Consumers are more trusting in the food industry because of the COVID-19 pandemic with farmers and retailers seeing the biggest rise, highlighted by AZTI.

The COVID-19 pandemic could be seen as the height of imperfection for all industries, but it carried particular risk for those considered "critical infrastructure" which includes the food industry. In fact, the food industry was particularly impacted as it not only had to add significant consideration for the safety of its workers, it also had to continue its essential and all-consuming focus on food safety.

So how did consumer trust increase despite so many challenges? First, was likely the fact that food recalls actually decreased in 2020. Fewer recalls mean fewer negative media and social media posts and less incitement of adverse perceptions.

But there also could be a facet of transparency and positive communication generated by the industry itself that has helped increase trust. Take, for example, the finding by Ipsos that grocery, food, and beverage were considered to be best industry adopters of recommended COVID-19 precautions.

When a crisis occurs, rapid response is key. Although few (if any) businesses were prepared for a crisis the size and scope of the pandemic, most adapted quickly to put new measures into place and prominently communicated those actions to reassure customers.

> *Food suppliers were reaching out to consumers on dedicated webpages to detail the steps they were taking and assure consumers of the continued safety of their foods.*

Throughout the food chain, food suppliers were reaching out to consumers on dedicated webpages to detail the steps they were taking and assure consumers of the continued safety of their foods. And suppliers were dedicating their time to provide resources to the industry to enable their continued adaptation to and communication of the evolving crisis. Just a few examples are:

Dole: *Per the CDC and global public health experts, there is no evidence that [food] can transmit the virus. However as per FDA guidance, and in accord with [FSMA], we strictly enforce good hygiene practices (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often), and wear protective equipment at all times in our plants and operations.*

Smithfield Foods: *Employee Health and Safety Amid COVID-19: We have implemented aggressive measures to protect our employees' health and safety while safeguarding America's food supply.*

Panera: *Panera is here to help provide good, wholesome meals during this challenging time, and the health, safety and overall well-being of our family, and yours, is always our top priority. Read about the latest decisions and updates from our team as we respond to the COVID-19 crisis and continue in our mission to safely serve you.*

United Fresh: *In these unprecedented times, we've created this resource to help the fresh produce industry and supply chain partners address commonly asked questions, and resources that can help keep you and your business informed.*

The world is not perfect; risks exist, and crises will occur. As the COVID-19 pandemic – and numerous multi-state recalls through the years – have shown, such crises can decimate businesses that are not prepared or able to manage them. In fact, with social media able to spread misinformation about a crisis in minutes or seconds, it is critical that companies have a robust crisis management plan, take the right steps right out of the gate, and provide accurate communication. This can help to mitigate risk and protect your reputation.

7

HOW ENCOURAGING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY PREVENTS DISASTER

In March of 1977, the small airport on the island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands was cloaked in heavy fog. A KLM 747 had to make an unexpected landing due to a bomb scare earlier that day. Now with the all-clear, the crew was anxious to get back in the air and keep their scheduled arrival time.

As the pilot lined up the aircraft for takeoff, the First Officer radioed back to the tower to verify clearance for takeoff, but he was cut off by the Pilot with a curt: "We're going." Moments later, appearing through the fog, was the broad side of the Pan American 747 blocking the runway. The KLM flight tried to lift off but ultimately ripped through the center of the Pan American plane and then exploded into a massive fireball. 583 people perished in the crash. It is still considered the worst accident in the history of civil aviation.

> " *As food safety professionals, the empowerment of our people to speak up when they witness potential risks is a critical tool we can all develop* "

So what does this have to do with food safety? One lesson from this accident is that if the cabin crew had simply spoken up and said "Wait for clearance," the entire disaster could have been avoided. But why didn't someone say that? Both the Flight Engineer and the First Officer seemed to have reservations about the clearance for takeoff. Speaking up would not only have saved the lives of those passengers, but also their own.

As food safety professionals, the empowerment of our people to speak up when they witness potential risks is a critical tool we can all develop. We often hear phrases like, "If you see something, say something." But the reality is a bit more complex than just sharing bumper-sticker wisdom. There are myriad reasons as to why people won't speak up when they witness something potentially harmful. Thankfully, we can boil these reasons down into two categories. These are essentially the "gatekeepers" to intervention.

The first question that we need an affirmative answer to is: Does this situation require action? If there is ambiguity around a situation (which there is majority of the time) we tend not to feel confident about intervening. We want to know that we have all the facts before jumping rank.

Therefore, to help employees reaffirm that the situation does indeed require action, have them ask themselves:

1 Would this potentially harm a consumer or myself?

2 If our client saw this, would they be upset about it?

3 Does it violate the organization's stated values and policies, your personal values, or even the law?

If they can answer "yes" to any of these, then the goal is to have a food safety culture that empowers them to speak up. The second question we ask ourselves is: Is it my personal responsibility to speak up? This is where psychological safety comes in. Psychological safety is defined as "a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes." It is our responsibility, as proponents of a strong food safety culture, to create an environment where people feel empowered to answer yes to both of those questions. Developing psychological safety is not something that can be achieved through annual training. It is an integral aspect to food safety culture strategy that requires consistent development and reinforcement. Here are some tips to help develop an empowered team that will consistently speak up:

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH SPEAKING UP ISN'T JUST TOLERATED, BUT REWARDED

The saying goes, "What gets rewarded, gets done." If all rewards go towards production quantity or speed, then the behaviour you will receive will focus on those objectives. Rewards can be a lot more than just financial; It can also be associated with public accolades for speaking up. This serves a dual-function; it reinforces the behaviour in the person speaking up while proving to the rest of the team that maintaining a sharp focus on safety will be rewarded.

INTERNAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF NEAR-MISSES AND RECALLS

Employees need to see that mistakes happen, that no one is perfect, and that leadership will be forthcoming about that reality. If leadership shows the humility to admit they aren't perfect, it is much easier to create an empowering environment where an employee can admit to an error. Bringing an issue to the forefront should not be seen as a failure, but as an opportunity for improvement.

HAVE EMPLOYEES DEVELOP AN INTERVENTION STRATEGY SO THEY CAN PRACTICE HOW THEY WILL INTERVENE WHEN THE NEED ARISES

Just like any other skill or habit, speaking up requires practice. Look into developing education and training to help employees overcome internalized fear around intervening, and pre-planning how they will speak up when the need arises. Having employees that are empowered to communicate, from the C-Suite to the frontline, is the best means of preventing unsafe products from hitting the shelves. Consistently reinforcing that food safety is everyone's responsibility will create a line of defence that is necessary within an increasingly complex industry. Regardless of your role in a company, if something doesn't appear safe, you need to say something.

" It is our responsibility, as proponents of a strong food safety culture, to create an environment where people feel empowered "

CONCLUSION

We hope this compendium of articles on food safety culture inspires you in your business and workplace to own the conversation on food safety and create an environment where every individual feels comfortable speaking up and sharing food safety concerns.

We have read about how every chain of the workforce is essential to ensuring the safety of our food system and that when one of those chains breaks, there can be disastrous implications. Some of the elements require soft skills like trust, compliance and listening, while others require the very tangible skills of training, practice, repetition, and an environment that enables and supports food safety. Innovations in handwashing, monitoring, tracking help with enforcement, while simple fixes like signs can be a great boost to remind staff. Of course, there are new and novel ways of passing along viruses, as the pandemic has taught us, and it is essential that we remain ever vigilant.

Above all, communicating the importance of food safety and sharing best practices and concerns is how to build a culture. We look to our readers and our community as one of the greatest sources of knowledge on the future of food safety and food safety culture.

Together, we can make food safe.®

GFSR®

Global Food Safety Resource wishes to thank all of our contributing experts whose voice has been the basis of developing this eBook as a resource for the food industry.

Global Food Safety Resource Centre Inc.

globalfoodsafetyresource.com

403-1400 Kingston Rd, Toronto, Canada, M1N 1R1

1-888-437-7395 x 105