



## On-Track for Safety Offshore

### Overview

There are high stakes for teams working offshore; safety measures can save lives and the environment. Technip wanted to drive a safety culture alongside improving performance, so they engaged their senior offshore team members (Captains, Chief Engineers, Offshore Construction Managers, and their deputies) on vessels globally.

Psychology formed the basis of an intensive development programme, essential to fostering a high-performance generative safety culture.

### Challenge

TechnipFMC plc, a global oil and gas company that provided complete project life cycle services for the energy industry, was the client for this intervention.

Technip operated in often harsh and extremely safety-critical environments across the globe. As an organisation they aspired to become a reference company across the Oil and Gas industry for safety. The client had a firm commitment to strengthening and developing its approach to safety leadership and performance, in what was a challenging oil extraction and supply climate. Technip's aim was to develop a culture within the organisation where everyone would be responsible for safety, and proactive in this regard, where leaders facilitated and encouraged others to work to their full potential.

### Exceptional Circumstances

Traditional approaches to developing a high-performance culture had to be re-evaluated, to address the unique demands of Technip's operating environment. By its nature, conventional on- or near-the-job training delivery methods were not viable or accepted by the workforce. For example:

- Harsh and remote working environments, from Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico
- Limited, and often interrupted, communications with shore
- Large and diverse international crews, having varied levels of English language ability
- Each individual's work was of a highly technical and specialised nature
- All work carried out had significant potential to impact their client's business, and the environment
- Demanding offshore shift patterns were in place (12-hours on and 12-hours off)
- Extended stays away from home, typically up to four weeks at a time, meant individuals lived, worked and slept with their team, often in confined environments on vessels
- Varied educational backgrounds needed consideration, as promotion was based on technical expertise and experience offshore rather than past academic achievement, and many individuals had not received a traditional formal education

- Employees perceived time onshore as a leave period, thus onshore training was an intrusion on family-time, before the next shift

One experienced Trainer who had worked with this group commented: “this was the most difficult group I have ever worked with, due to their initial and inherent reluctance to engage.”

## A Generative Approach

Embrion, a consultancy which brings the science of psychology to the practice of business performance and safety, worked with Technip. From client meetings and safety research, they proposed a more generative safety culture needed to be developed. This would reinforce Technip’s credentials, reputation and commitment to both safety and personal development across the entire organisation. (A generative approach entails an organisation setting very high standards and attempting to exceed them. Teams use failure to improve, not to blame. With a generative approach, management may be more fully aware of what is really going on, because the workforce would have means and opportunity to tell them.)

## Approach

Initial meetings with the client established key objectives and surfaced the issues referenced above. Further research and reviews followed to create clarity for the Consultants. Based on their findings, it was agreed that a pilot Programme would be developed.

The pilot used two groups of three Participants, representing one vessel’s management team and their respective back-to-back colleagues. Accounting for the environment, the Programme was based around a non-formal classroom process, informed by psychological research into key safety leadership behaviours, drawing on multiple training methods. The focus was on encouraging Participant engagement with learning content.

Following the pilot, independent evaluation and interviews with the Participants, Coaches and Trainers were used to gather feedback. This was used to develop the final version of the Programme, prior to launch. Changes were made to set the group size, resulting in cohorts of nine Participants, representing three vessels per cohort. Changes were also made to the content and length of the Programme, so that it was delivered over a six-month period.

## Approach Taken

Based on the Pilot Programme, multiple learning methods were used:

- Pre-course, a 360° questionnaire was completed for all Participants. The TRANSFORM 360, a behavioural safety leadership questionnaire, was designed through research into safety leadership

The aim of the 360° process was to assist Participants in reflecting on their leadership and how others perceived them. (Many of these leaders were responsible for teams of up to 100 individuals.) Each person received a personal report and developed a coaching plan

- Three classroom sessions were delivered, of 12 hours each. The content was based on psychological elements supporting safety leadership and high performance. Each element was introduced with a film or media clip to engage Participants. Discussion of personal experiences was encouraged, while business and psychological insights were shared
- Action Learning Sets were established in groups of three, with initial training for the group, and encouragement to run the sessions during offshore periods, so Participants could help each other learn as a team

Action Learning Sets offer a structured method enabling small groups to address complicated issues, by meeting regularly and working collectively. These can be especially useful in supporting learning and development at professional and managerial levels. Scheduled sessions typically opened with members sharing their progress, followed by individual members respectfully offering feedback or seeking input on a relevant challenge

- One-to-one Coaching was delivered by phone-links to Participants offshore. The aim was to support learning transfer and help individuals remain focused, on personal goals they had set during the Programme, whilst working offshore
- Workbooks were provided for individuals to create personal goals. These could be derived from the classroom sessions, learning sets or coaching, for attention on the job. Individuals tracked their own progress, which was supported during learning sets and coaching sessions
- Work-based projects were assigned, on a topic agreed with the Onshore Vessel Manager. The aim was to personalise learning, support the application of learning to real-life issues, and encourage engagement

At the end of the Programme Project presentations were filmed, and shared with the Managing Director and Human Resources Manager, with the intention that ideas would have potential for wider application across the fleet

- An Institute for Leadership & Management (ILM) Development Award was offered, to encourage engagement and completion of the work-based projects

This composite learning experience resulted in a Programme that worked, with individuals remaining committed throughout, even when working remotely.

Individuals' self-awareness was increased through the 360° process; their engagement was increased with the evidenced-based learning content delivered; their personal application of learning was encouraged through work-based projects; and they were supported and challenged in learning sets and personalised coaching sessions. Ultimately, they also had the reward of participating fully, by achieving an ILM Award.

## Outcome

The evaluation process included a number of review methods, from simple end of session questions to formal Participant evaluation and independent review.

### Participant Input

Overall, the Programme was well received by all Participants, from the pilot group through several subsequent cohorts.

At the end of the classroom learning for each Programme, Participants were invited to engage in a simple five-minute exercise. They wrote their comments about the Programme on post-it notes and placed them on flipcharts under three headings: "Stop," "Start," and "Continue."

This allowed Participants to provide an instant reaction evaluation on the Programme, echoing the importance and value of seeking feedback throughout the Programme.

At the end of each coaching session, Participants were invited to provide feedback on the coaching process, responding to questions such as:

- What did you find most useful?

- What did I do that helped you in...?
- How has the session moved you closer to your goals?
- What could I do differently to make the coaching session even better next time?

These questions provided focused, actionable, evidence-based feedback.

## Participant Feedback

The second stage of feedback collection was done with evaluation forms. These were emailed about two weeks after completion of the Programme. Participants responded by email or post and could do so anonymously if they wished. These evaluations offered an opportunity for both quantitative and qualitative feedback to be collected.

The Feedback from all Participants was positive, despite some Participants' initially strong reluctance to engage. Comments included:

- "I noticed a dramatic change in how I communicate with others and feel more in control"
- "One of the best courses I have attended in twenty years offshore"
- "I felt unsure regarding how I would benefit from the course when initially told that I was to attend. However, I was surprised to find I thoroughly enjoyed it and I am using the knowledge gained on a day-to-day basis. I have noticed a dramatic change in how I communicate with others and feel more in control. I am definitely a better manager of people and more confident, motivated and approachable manager"
- "I think this is a very good course that is 'smart' in as much as it provides the candidates with clear and specific goals which can be measured whilst providing a learning experience for the individuals involved. It also provides the company with tangible worthwhile results"
- "Earned our respect. We attend many courses where the Trainers have very little in common with us i.e. from factories. The Trainers had planned and executed operations where failure was not an option and planning and execution had to be faultless. Similar to many tasks we are called upon daily to execute"
- "I enjoyed the course. I feel the skills learned will help me to improve both as a manager and a leader. Since the course I have made myself more available and visible to the team. I wish I had done this course 20 years ago"
- "The course was interesting and well worth attending. Skills not commonly used during the course of my work were beneficial. Follow up coaching sessions were very helpful"

## Evaluation Forms

Thirdly, the client's own evaluation confirmed that the Programme was adding value and meeting their commitment to creating a generative safety culture.

This, in turn, led to the client renewing the contract for training of subsequent cohorts.

Finally, in addition to a traditional evaluation form, an independent evaluation process using qualitative interviews with Participants provided insights into the Programme. The researcher appointed was an Academic, based in a university. The review helped provide an independent perspective on the Programme content and design. Comments from Participants to the independent researcher included:

- "The Programme was totally organised for us"



- “[It] helped me to stop and think about what I am doing”
- “It encourages you to think about what you’re learning and try them out”

Comments from various evaluations led to changes in content and design that subsequently helped further tailor the Programme.

## Acknowledgements

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