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## WILLIAMS' APPROACH TO IMPROVING SAFETY CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE



### Pilko & Associates Grey Paper

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### INTRODUCTION

Striving for zero high potential incidents and advancing the safety culture, Williams is in the process of performing a consistent, Franchise-by-Franchise series of cultural assessments and Life Critical Procedure document reviews. The culture assessments will help improve safety leadership, employee engagement, transparency and overall alignment. Nearing the half-way mark on the initial Franchise assessments, we are already enjoying company-wide improvements that have exceeded our initial expectations:

- Process safety incidents are down 70 percent since 2017.
- Safety system activations are down 22 percent in the past year.
- Number of LOPC events has dropped significantly.
- High potential near-miss to incident reporting ratio has increased five-fold to 12:1.
- Overall near-miss to incident reporting ratio has increased from 0.75:1 to 25:1.
- Safety leadership development and employee engagement are improving.
- A Safe Work Management (Life Critical) Mobile Application has been implemented company-wide.

This approach has been so effective for Williams that I want to share our experience and learnings through this Grey Paper so that others might consider using a similar methodology to drive safety culture improvement in their organizations.

### WHY DID WILLIAMS EMBARK ON THIS JOURNEY?

Williams had a strong desire to reduce high potential incidents and injuries and to better understand the Life Critical Procedure compliance and Safety Culture gaps that need to be addressed. We wanted to broadly engage with our employees on safety and use the key learnings from this engagement to not only improve their management systems, but also strengthen our safety leadership and culture. We expected that such an effort would strengthen the social aspect of ESG by making Williams an even better, safer place to work.

We also recognized, particularly with our highly distributed operations, that we needed to have a much clearer view of the approach employees take to Life Critical Procedure compliance when no one is looking and to more deeply understand why Life Critical Procedures are not being followed in some instances. We needed to feel confident in answering the question "How do we know" Life Critical Procedures are being followed or not?

### A CONSISTENT FRANCHISE-BY-FRANCHISE APPROACH

At the onset, Williams and Pilko & Associates collaborated to establish a governance structure and approach to assess Life Critical Procedure compliance performance at each Franchise. We've found that disciplined, consistent execution of both the governance structure and the approach are key to the effectiveness of this process.

#### Structure

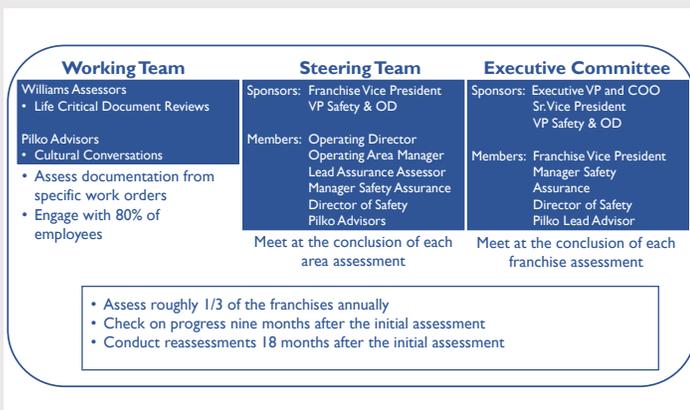
The governance structure is comprised of three teams that execute and oversee the process. The Working Team consists of the Williams compliance assurance resources and the Pilko advisors conducting the cultural conversations. The Steering Team meets at the conclusion of each Operating

Area assessment and includes the Franchise Vice President, the Vice President of Safety and Operational Discipline as sponsors, with the operating area leadership, safety and assurance leadership, and the Working Team.

The Working Team presents the assessment findings to the Steering Team and answers any questions presented. At this stage, both Area and Franchise leadership can begin to formulate a plan to address their improvement opportunities.

At the conclusion of each Franchise assessment, the Steering Team meets with the Executive Committee to share the overall Franchise results, with a roll-up provided for each of the Operating Areas. The Executive Team sponsors are the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, the appropriate Operating Area Senior Vice President and the Vice President of Safety and Operational Discipline. At the conclusion of the results overview, the Franchise Vice President presents the Franchise improvement plan, which focuses on having all improvements in place and working within 12 months. Figure 1 below illustrates the governance structure.

**FIGURE 1: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PROCESS**



## Approach

Each Franchise assessment employs a consistent approach, starting with a kick-off meeting where the Working Team briefs the Franchise Vice President, operations director, area operations managers, Vice President of Safety and OD,

and safety staff on what to expect. The Franchise Vice President then sends out an e-mail to his/her entire organization, showing support and sharing the importance of this process. The VP e-mail also asks that every participant be completely candid during the cultural conversations with Pilko.

The assessment process is comprised of two parallel work streams:

- A broad, in-depth document review by a team of Williams Assurance Specialists
- Cultural conversations with 80 percent of the Operating Area workforce (including operations, technical, projects) by a team of Pilko advisors

With the advent of COVID-19, both of these work streams have been conducted virtually, using Microsoft Teams for the cultural conversations and electronic transmission for the document reviews. The virtual approach to both work streams has proven to be effective and will continue beyond any COVID-19 related restrictions.

The work streams are described in more detail below:

### Document Review Process

The Williams Assurance Specialists request a wide variety of Life Critical Procedure documentation associated with specific work orders pulled from the maintenance planning system. The specialists attempt to select work orders that will likely provide a representative sample of each of the Life Critical Procedures. It is important to request the documentation from specific work orders, rather than simply pulling documents to capture instances with no documentation.

The specialists do a great job of first capturing each instance of missed documentation, then carefully reviewing all of the documents that are provided. They compile the number of documents reviewed, the number of administrative errors (for example, cases where a checkmark is missed on an otherwise well executed document) and the number of performance errors (those errors that could compromise the quality of execution of the Life Critical Procedure).

The ability to pull this information has significantly improved with a Williams transitioning to a Safe Work Management mobile application that enables all franchises to use a uniform and consistent system that stores all data in one centralized location. Moving to this new application has significantly improved compliance, efficiency and consistency and eliminated hundreds of thousands of pieces of paper.

The working team leaders then meet with each Operating Area franchise and provide a summary score card with the Executive Steering Team that is broken down by franchise with a simple green, yellow, red format that resonates with all involved. Please refer to the **Executive Steering Team Meetings** section and Figure 2 later in this Grey Paper for more detail.

### **Cultural Conversations**

As mentioned earlier, the Pilko advisors conduct cultural conversations with 80 percent of the employees in each Operating Area franchise. While a much smaller sampling would provide enough data for Pilko to provide accurate feedback to Williams leadership, this large sampling gives Pilko the opportunity to engage with and influence a significant portion of the workforce to help jump-start the needed culture changes with real-time coaching and advice.

While the specific questions asked during each conversation vary, Pilko is very careful to set each person at ease by first getting to know them better and by assuring them that the interview will be held confidential. Pilko advisors work hard to ask open ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer and will selectively dig in with more detailed questions to learn more based on the content of the conversation. They are also quite persistent in asking that each person interviewed has their camera on, which creates a more comfortable environment. Being able to watch the body language while talking with each individual is an important element of the interview. With an 80 percent sampling of employees, the Pilko advisors have the ability to probe so as to learn as much as possible about management system opportunities to improve the process.

The interviews are kept anonymous and the Pilko advisors never attribute a specific finding or quote to a specific individual, as each participant is assured that the conversations are confidential. The Pilko advisors also capitalize on opportunities to provide coaching moments during these conversations in an effort to catalyze culture improvement one participant at a time.

In many cases, Pilko advisors conduct informal meetings with specific Area Leaders to help them understand their individual strengths and opportunities and offer advice on approaches to consider that will help improve performance.

At the completion of the conversations with each Operating Area, Pilko develops a green, yellow, red score card for each Operating Area franchise based on their progress toward Best Practice on the **8IGHT DRIVERS®** deliverables for Leadership, Culture, and Competency. To assure consistency, the Pilko advisors first conduct an internal review of the scores, then review the basis for each score with Area Leadership. In some cases, scores are adjusted up or down based on these reviews; but in every case Area Leadership comes away with a clear understanding of their strengths and opportunities with alignment on the scores.

### **Steering Team Meetings**

Formal Steering Team Meetings are conducted at the conclusion of each Operating Area Assessment. The Williams Lead Assessor presents the data with specific non-compliance information in the Steering Team meetings, while the Pilko Lead Advisor shares the scorecard and specific findings and quotes. With the communications that take place prior to each Steering Team Meeting, the meeting discussion reveals no surprises. As a result, these meetings tend to be highly collaborative, with the area and franchise leadership seeking advice from the Williams Safety Leadership and the Pilko advisors.

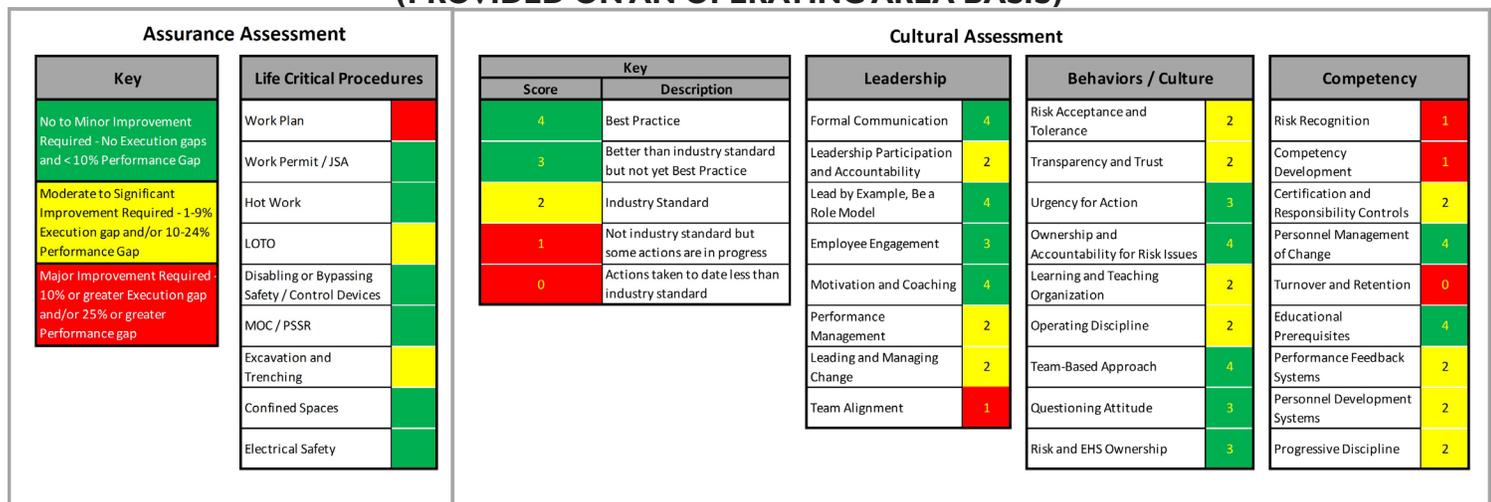
### **Executive Steering Team Meetings**

Roughly two weeks after the conclusion of each franchise assessment, the Executive Steering Team

convenes. The Manager, Safety Assurance presents a summary of the findings for the franchise as well as the scorecards. An example scorecard is shown below in Figure 2. The Pilko Lead Advisor provides summary commentary highlighting key opportunities and strengths from the cultural assessment scorecard. Most importantly,

throughout the company, even though half of the Franchises have not yet been through the process. These achievements are the result of increased commitment, stronger leadership, improved employee engagement and better overall safety management system changes that benefit all of the Franchises and through excellent

**FIGURE 2: EXAMPLE SCORE CARD  
(PROVIDED ON AN OPERATING AREA BASIS)**



the Franchise Vice President presents the action plan geared toward resolving all noted deficiencies within 12 months.

### Reassessment

Nine months after the conclusion of the assessment, the Steering Team does an informal check-in discussion with Operating Area Franchise Leadership to learn of the progress made to-date and to determine if any further support is needed to assure a successful reassessment.

A formal reassessment occurs 18 months after the conclusion of the initial assessment, with a smaller sampling of documentation and employees. The focus of the reassessment is on the prior six months, as each franchise is given a year to fully implement their improvements.

Williams is committed to conducting these assessments in all of its Franchises over a three-year period. As we near the half-way point, the corporate improvements shared at the start of this Grey Paper are being enjoyed

sharing of lessons learned across the Franchises. With each new assessment, the Working Team is seeing more and more evidence that many of the observed best practices are already underway – a very encouraging sign!

### Critical Success Factors

Any successful process must have a number of key elements in place to work effectively. While some of these Critical Success Factors may have been mentioned earlier, they are worth repeating.

- Williams had a clear business case for change with strong senior leadership commitment and support. Because of the strong senior leadership commitment, the alignment from the top of the house to the front line is growing every day.
- Williams has established a **“Commitment to Zero”** mindset in their approach to Life Critical Procedure Compliance and serious incidents.

- The high level of sampling has significantly improved employee engagement, including much higher participation in company-wide employee surveys.
- This process has allowed for coaching moments that have improved leadership and employee behaviors. In some cases, the process has identified cases where people were not a good fit for the roles that they had been asked to play.
- The process of frequent team reviews at the operating area and franchise levels provides specific, actionable information that provides the basis for improvement.
- The collaborative and supportive approach used by the Working Team, the Steering Team and the Executive Steering Team has built a foundation of much stronger trust and transparency – a key to effective risk management in any organization.

## **Conclusion**

The Key Takeaways to keep in mind are:

- A comprehensive safety culture assessment program can glean valuable insights into employee perceptions, behavior, and management system effectiveness.
- Strong support of the program from Senior Leadership is critical to program success.
- Safety Culture is dynamic and changes over time; continuous monitoring is critical.

Beyond the bottom-line results shared at the start of this paper, I'd like to conclude with a few of the "soft" benefits that we are enjoying as a result of this process.

- In order to build a strong safety culture, one must first develop strong safety leadership. Through this process and some of the resulting actions, our safety leadership is strengthening at every level within our franchises. As a result of the stronger safety leadership, we are benefitting from significant safety culture improvement across the company.
- The high level of employee engagement strengthened through this process is improving transparency. Our actions in response to our learning is improving trust. This process is also reinforcing the need for our leadership to maintain this high level of engagement beyond each assessment.

- The stronger safety leadership is leading to clearer, more consistent two-way communication, resulting in much better alignment and far fewer blind spots in the organization.

With the hard and soft benefits that we've enjoyed and the expectation of further gains to come, I'd recommend this process to any organization – particularly those with highly distributed facilities where a strong safety culture is an absolute must to ensure that employees and contractors consistently do the right thing, even when no one is looking! You will then be able to confidently answer the question: "How do I know my employees are following Life Critical Procedures?"

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



**Mark Cluff** serves as Corporate Officer and Vice President of Safety and Operational Discipline team at Williams. In this role, he is responsible for leading the Safety, Security, Operational Risk, Pipeline Integrity, GIS/Asset Management, and Continuous Improvement

teams. Mark joined Williams in 2015, as a manager in the Asset Reliability & Performance group. Prior to Williams, he worked as a senior operations leader for DuPont. In that role, he led operations for high hazard operating plants at various DuPont manufacturing facilities. He also worked closely with various community organizations and other businesses that interfaced closely with the DuPont manufacturing sites. Mark has 20+ years of experience in the Chemical and Oil and Gas industries. In addition to working at DuPont for 15 years, he has also worked for ExxonMobil and interned with The Dow Chemical Company.

Mark has volunteered with the Tulsa Food Bank, Backpacks for Kids, Broken Arrow Neighbors and is an Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America. He is also actively involved in his community and his local church organization. He led the 2017 Williams Tulsa Area United Way Campaign. Mark received his Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering at Brigham Young University with an elective emphasis in Operations Management. Mark and his wife Carol reside in Oklahoma with their 2 sons and 4 daughters.