

Interview with Dave Walls – VP HSE.

Introduction

Meta-LUCID engaged with Transocean NRS division in Q4 2008 as part of a series of workshops to help align and accelerate the performance of the senior management team. Below is an abridged version of an interview conducted with Dave Walls during November 2011.

What was the situation prior to engaging Meta-LUCID?

Following the merger of GSF and TO in November 2007 we needed to bring the two teams together and align into a single coherent and effective unit. We needed to agree what was most important, define goals, objectives and how to achieve these. The enlarged senior operational management team, some 20 shore based managers and 15 OIMs got together for an offsite strategy planning session. This management team was responsible for 15 rigs with an offshore workforce of approximately 2000 people. When planning the session we felt that a motivational speaker would go down well with the team and maybe provide us with a different perspective.

Jim Steele (Consultant, Meta LUCID) did a great job. We spoke with him at length on how we could develop his ideas around mind-set and skill-set and incorporate them into development of our people to elicit high performance both with management and individuals. Hitherto much of the development work had been based on technical and management skills.

An initial workshop was developed in conjunction with Meta-LUCID around these concepts and was delivered to our management team as part of the investment we were making in getting the team to a highly effective unit.

What had not worked before to address this situation?

I don't think we had tried anything that "hadn't worked". We had built an effective team and we were simply looking to become better. We realised that we needed to try something different and complementary to our team's current knowledge and skill levels. Considering mind-set, mental toughness/resilience, values and beliefs was new to most people. Meta-LUCID's knowledge and insight opened us up to new possibilities and approaches.

In our opinion it was a vital element in our drive to perform consistently at a high level.

What did you need to achieve and why?

After the merger it became apparent very quickly that the two companies were closely aligned in terms of our values. We had a unique opportunity to capitalise on this alignment and bring something different to the table. As it was new to everyone (as opposed to one “half” of the company) it was accepted more readily than it may have been if it was new to only some people. There was an “excitement” within the team that we had an enormous amount of talent and we just had to find a way to unleash it. We knew this would happen but we wanted to facilitate an acceleration of the process too. Because of the merger half the team did not know the other half and we realised we had to “fast track” the familiarisation process.

We needed to hit all the critical metrics that are vital to Divisional success. These are known to all divisional management teams. As far as we were concerned the integration or “harmonisation” of onshore and offshore staff was key too. There was too much “them” and “us” thinking and not enough trust. Sounds simplistic but we needed to engage everyone, and effectively. People became networked, re engaged and aligned to common goals. We want people to know that we needed to move ahead and to think, act and communicate better. We all had to believe “we are in this together”. There was a willingness to do things differently and to try something new. Notwithstanding always in a safe environment.

What were the critical success factors to the initiative/plan?

In all frankness, we didn’t think that way. We just knew it was a journey. Of course we had data on cultural/climate surveys from DNV and HSE (on 5 rigs) to tell us that there were some challenges. One of those (challenges) was a huge disconnect between offshore and onshore.

Equally important was the involvement of the OIMs and having them take part in the pilot workshops we had developed with Meta-LUCID. We asked the OIMs, “should we roll these workshops out to the all supervisors?”. There was an absolute yes, and clear ownership from the OIMs from that moment.

It would be fair to say and remiss of me not to mention the role that Meta-LUCID played. With everything else going on at this time with harmonising our management systems and the activities that comes with mergers, the collaboration with Meta-LUCID in developing the material for the workshops was an important factor for us. Ensuring the material was developed (and managers trained in delivery and facilitation) as such that we could deliver the workshops with our own management team was key to the success of the workshops.

How did you measure your success?

A real indicator for me, besides what you pick up informally, was the anonymous cultural surveys which told us that we had raised the level of trust between offshore and onshore and that we (divisional management) understood the challenges faced by the offshore supervisors. We also got feedback that people thought it was real progress that onshore management understood that mistakes and errors are made unintentionally and that unplanned events are not always down to competence and training.

Just recently (early 2011), I asked for a follow up survey. And initial responses suggest that we have bridged the gap. Also we saw a decrease in number of incidents on rigs over the same period. Whether there was a correlation.....I am not sure. But with a distinct movement/difference in the cultural climate, this has made the whole investment worthwhile, and has got past the “them” and “us” mindset. We now have much more open communication.

Looking at a hard metric for knowing if we have achieved improved results, is a tough one. But the impact at the rig level, more importantly with the crews, there was a real benefit in the common use of language and models like GROW and 1 to 10. I am sure if you ask any of the managers, they will say it was worthwhile and meaningful. A definite WIN.

What did you learn during this journey?

Firstly, people need to feel valued and it's how you communicate that and, more importantly, what you do, that will be looked at by others. We have good people throughout our organisation. It is management's job to set them up to succeed. There is no “them and us”. Either we all win or nobody wins.

How to better communicate with people on “non-technical” topics. Adjusting the message to different audiences but within a best practice framework. Also, what was really helpful was that the materials were designed in a way that it was easy for people to connect with; we avoided jargon and academic/management speak.

What next?

I am not sure about the folk at NRS, but I am sure they are being resourceful. For me, personally, and with my new role it is to have a world class process safety. And a component part of process safety is human factors and human reliability (human beings cannot be 100% “reliable” all of the time. We need to consider the affect human error may have on technically demanding processes). In 2012 I would like to get management in TO talking about human error, human reliability and the part that plays in risk assessment and incident investigation. I believe this is a critical element in managing major accident hazards. People, how they think and what they believe in that makes them do what they do and, sometimes, they do things they didn't intent to do!

We need to make high performance and management of major hazards a mind-set. We need to become disciplined in our approach and execution. It's not only about good processes and procedures and a highly trained workforce, it also requires the right mind-set.