High Reliability Organisations

CLASSIC EXAMPLES OF HROs

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL
Air traffic controllers play a "high stakes three-dimensional chess game" every day.
—USA TODAY

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS
"Flight operations at sea is the closest to the "edge of the envelope"—operating under the most extreme conditions in the least stable environment..."
—GOVLEADERS.ORG

NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS
"With nuclear power, the high energy density makes the potential hazard obvious..."
—WORLD NUCLEAR ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

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Definition

A *high reliability organisation* (HRO) is an organisation that has succeeded in avoiding catastrophes in an environment where normal accidents can be expected due to risk factors and complexity.

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5 common traits of HROs

- Be sensitive to operations

- Be reluctant to accept simple explanations for problems

- Have a preoccupation with failure

- Defer to expertise

- Be resilient

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Be sensitive to operations

- Leaders and workers are constantly aware of how processes and systems affect the organization.

- Pay close attention to operations and maintain awareness of what is or isn't working.

- Drive organisational awareness through improved communication and data sharing.

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Be reluctant to accept simple explanations for problems

- Resist broad excuses - too busy, lack of training, worker "stuffed up"

- Dig deep enough to find the real source of a particular problem

- Identify potential reasons for poor performance, and continue to ask questions until you find the specific source of the problem

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Have a preoccupation with failure

- Think of ways that work processes might break down

- Employees are encouraged to share their concerns for potential failures, near misses etc.

- Maintain a level of chronic unease

What does chronic unease look like in practice?
Jodi Goodall

Brady Heywood

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Defer to expertise

- Listen to people who have the most knowledge of the task at hand (it might not be the boss!!).

- If leaders don't listen to staff about processes and operations, it is practically impossible to develop a culture of high reliability.

- The best place for conversations between leaders and workers is in the work area, not in the conference rooms.

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Be resilient

- Be prepared to respond to failures and continually find new solutions.

- Improvise or quickly develop new ways to respond to unexpected events.

- You might experience failures, but resilience and swift problem solving prevents catastrophes.

- Set specific and measurable goals.

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Handy tips

- Spend more time in the field
- Check and test effectiveness of risk controls
- Challenge everything (particularly procedures)
- Identify critical controls
- Check your messaging
- Reporting of all near misses, failures etc.

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How do you feel about things at your workplace?

- Do you feel safe at work? What would your workers say?
- Do you have open and frank discussions about hazards and risks?
- Are all system failures thoroughly investigated?
- How do you feel about the level of direct supervision?
- WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG ?????

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