

The WHO in Safety II - Notes from Safety II in Practice Workshop – October 2020

This presentation focused on exploring who are the people who implement safety too and do we understand their work as done in the context of human centred design of safety two solutions.

One point in the discussion was that Safety II is not something that one can implement but rather its self-reflecting practice. This position however, does not address the question of senior HSE leaders who ask: “What can I do with it? Or “How can make a difference with safety II?” and may lead to dissatisfaction or dismissal of Safety II ideas and tools.

Perhaps, one factor contributing to that situation is how we talk about Work-as-Imagined (WAI) and Work-as-Done (WAD). The WAD typically refers to the activities at the sharp end, i.e. what the frontline workers do and is typically contrasted with the blunt end of managerial and administrative work (WAI). However, this dichotomy is limiting as it does not prompt us to understand the WAD and performance variability of managers and leaders at different levels of hierarchy and across different functions in an organisation.

Trying to put ourselves in the shoes of senior leaders, and utilise human-centered design methodology, we reviewed a hypothetical scenario of a vice president of a safety department, in an international industrial company, managing 500 safety specialists operating in 50 countries supporting hazardous operations with 50,000 employees. This VP wants to implement safety II and asks what they should do exactly?

This leads to a question, if we as a group of advisors and promoters of safety II, understand what are the daily challenges constraints and pain points of such senior leaders and what are their needs regarding safety II tools and solutions? What is their specific role in the implementation / rollout / application of safety II?

Furthermore, there are other people who influence safety, including regional directors, site managers or team leaders. Each of them asks what they should do to implement safety II.

What about leaders in operations including vice presidents, directors, managers and team leaders? What should they do?

And the engineering department? What should they do?

Answering those questions may help companies to truly embrace safety II and turn it into solutions that will increase the “ability to succeed under varying conditions”.