

# Valuing People – Valuing Safety

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## Abstract

This paper has the express purpose of demonstrating the critical role of leaders in the Health & Safety journey, as we strive to eliminate permanent personal damage from the workplace. Leaders have to become informed of the critical role of personal & corporate values and the science of Health & Safety. Leaders must strive to demonstrate that they genuinely care for and are passionate about the well-being of their people.

So what is a 'value'?

A value can be defined as 'something of worth' to a person or group. Worth can be attributed to objects or artefacts. Worth can also be attributed to that which is important to us, such as other people, or attributed to that which we admire and strive for, e.g. respect, fairness, and honesty.

When values are expressed in these terms of respect, fairness and honesty, they are intrinsic to all social groups and people rapidly judge leaders against these values.

People will observe all leaders in their organisation and very quickly determine whether the leaders care about them (people are being valued) and whether leaders are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all, leaders and team members alike (safety is valued).

For leaders to genuinely value people, it requires that the leader genuinely values safety. Valuing people and valuing safety go hand in hand.

This paper will explore the difference between safety as a consideration or priority in task planning versus safety as a core value of the leader (a personal value) and the organisation (a shared value).

The paper will explore the theme that for leaders to walk the talk they have to have a 'talk'. Leaders desirably should talk about the shared values of the company and talk with conviction.

This, in turn, requires that the documented shared values of the organisation need to include 'the caring for and the safety of our people'.

In order to articulate these shared values, the leader should be able to articulate his/her own personal values and find the linkages and gaps to the organisational values and close the gaps.

The leader will then have a chance of talking about the shared values of 'caring for the health and wellbeing of' our people. But more is required of the leader if the 'values' are to 'live'.

Firstly, the leader has to be very knowledgeable and very informed about how people are damaged and what damages them at work.

Secondly, the leader has to then appropriately strategise the successful implementation of relevant critical controls.

If these two things do not occur, then expressions of care and concern for people will be shown to be hollow in the longer term. For example, when a person is seriously injured falling from a poorly designed access system that is known to be poor, the leadership will rapidly be judged as hypocritical (and justifiably so).

Thirdly, when damage occurs there is a unique opportunity to treat people involved in the situation with respect, dignity and care and not judge them inappropriately.

In essence, leaders need to understand their own personal values, be genuine in their concern for people, their welfare and be knowledgeable of what and how people are damaged so that management activity is relevant. Damaging occurrences are unique, though not desirable, opportunities to demonstrate the value of caring.

### **Introduction:**

The last 30 years of my professional life has been in the world of personal damage. It has been focused strongly on that which produces permanent damage, both fatal and non-fatal. Coming to understand something of the science behind why such damage occurs has been an essential part of the journey. Such understanding allows for increased opportunity on where to focus the intellectual, human and financial resources of a business. Take what might appear to be a simple example, a slip and fall incident. The science shows us a number of things. Firstly the critical interaction of the heel of one's boot with a potentially contaminated surface; secondly, the relationship of such an incident to the pattern of non-fatal permanent damage; thirdly, how to identify those locations with the potential for such an interaction and fourthly, how to identify, implement and maintain effective controls.

Leaders must obtain specific knowledge of the science of personal damage. They must become knowledgeable and then wise in the application of that knowledge. Their role will determine the level of knowledge that they need to develop. This strong scientific approach has to be coupled with passion and caring (loving) leadership, wherein that leader has a clear understanding of his or her own personal values, and the linkages (if any) to the stated corporate values or shared values of the business. The leader has to then live those values in the expression of their behaviours and also in the words they speak.

The 'purpose' or 'Mission' of Health & Safety activity must be to eliminate permanent damage to people. To do otherwise is to mistreat people. The 'Vision' for health and safety activity can be 'Zero Permanent Harm' vs. 'Zero Harm', but it is critical that leaders use that visionary position to motivate, inspire and encourage others whilst they embark upon the journey, or Mission of eliminating permanent damage to people. The Vision must not become a weapon; a tool to beat and denigrate people.

This paper will briefly introduce some aspects of the science of health and safety and then discuss the Values and their linkages to Health and Safety.

## The Science of Health & Safety

The Pareto Principle or the 80-20 rule, can be also described as the rule of the critical few. The rule is as equally applicable to the planning of construction, operational and maintenance activity as it is to the world of Health and Safety. It is applicable to the different categories or classes of personal damage.

Class I, damage permanently alters a person's life and includes fatal and non-fatal permanent damage. Non-fatal damage includes an upper level where the person does not return to work and a lower level where the person returns to work in a limited capacity, time or skill.

Class II damage is temporary in nature and the person fully recovers, be it in a day, a week or 6 months e.g. L.T.I

Class III damage inconveniences people and is minor in nature e.g. First Aid treatment.

There have been four snapshots of the damage to people from work, published by the Industry Commission (1995)<sup>i</sup>, the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC 2004)<sup>ii</sup>, the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC March 2009)<sup>iii</sup> and Safe Work Australia 2012<sup>iv</sup>. The four studies gave the 'baseline estimates of economic costs' of Class I and Class II damage to people. (ASCC 2009) for the years 1992-93, 2000-01, 2005-06 and 2008-09. NOHSC (2004) also estimated the cost equivalent of 'pain, suffering and early death'.

Table 1 summarises relative costs, in terms of Class I & Class II damage. These assessments do not include pain, suffering and early death. The four snapshots do not address Class III damage because it cannot be quantified at a national level. However, it will involve the largest number of damaged people albeit the least cost.

**Table 1 Percent distribution of the quantity of personal damage**

	<i>Without pain, suffering and early death costed</i>			
	<b>1992-93</b>	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2008-09</b>
Class I Fatal	1.5	3.5	3.3	5.3
Class I Non-fatal	80.5	88.5	88.0	85.2
Class II	18.0	8.0	8.7	9.5
<b>Cost \$ billion</b>	<b>\$20</b>	<b>\$34.3</b>	<b>\$57.5</b>	<b>\$60.6</b>
<b>2000-01 Goods and Services Exports \$132.8 billion</b>				
<b>2008-09 Goods and Services Exports \$198 billion</b>				

Table 2 summarises the situation for Class I non- fatal damage.

**Table 2 – Class I Non-fatal Damage**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Traumatic Fatalities per annum</b>	<b>No. of Cases of Non-Fatal Permanent Damage per annum</b>	<b>Cost of Class I Non-Fatal Damage as a Percentage of Total Costs.</b>	<b>Size of Australian Workforce (millions)</b>
1992-93	693	50,018 (137 per day)	80.5%	6.56
2000-01	410	48,900 per year (134 per day)	88.5%	9.09
2005-06	393	64,000 per year (175 per day)	88.0%	11.2
2008-09	400	85,800 per year (235 per day)	85.1%	11.93

\*Travel to work is included.

In 1992-93 and 2000-01, the Class I Non-fatal figures were 137 and 134 people per day.

Between 2000-01 and 2005-06, the workforce increased by 12% (ASCC<sup>iii</sup>) while the 134 Class I Non-fatal per day increased to 175 people, an increase of 30%.

Between 2005-06 and 2008-09 the Class I Non-fatal increase to 235 people per day (an increase of 34%) while the workforce increased in size by only 7.2%.

Non-fatal permanent damage to people is reshaping their lives (negatively) taking away from those people the dignity of work, causing them to lose the respect of others, and making shipwrecks of families. The cost in every way is born by the individual, the family and the community. The real cost is not born by the employer or the insurer. <sup>i, ii, iii, v</sup>

Non-fatal permanent damage is the Pareto Health & Safety issue, but we must not overlook the much less likely but extremely damaging fatal occurrences which have massive flow on effects.

This information on the size and relative cost of the various classes of damage, needs to set the Mission pathway / the Health and Safety journey i.e. the Elimination of Permanent Damage to People.

Coupled with this understanding of the overall size and cost of personal damage from work, and the relative importance of the different classes of personal damage, leaders must engage frameworks of thinking (models) which are multi-factorial and which use objective language and data to maximise our understanding of historical and future damaging occurrences. Leaders must move away from frameworks of thinking which polarise, isolate, create anger, mistrust and lost opportunities. Their thinking must be objective. An example of objective thinking as applied to a damaging occurrence is as follows. With respect to the attentiveness of a person involved in a serious incident, one could ask, 'What was the person attending to, not attending to at this time, in the incident sequence?', versus 'Why was the person inattentive?' One question utilises the concept of 'divided attention', the other 'inattention'. One line of questioning seeks to understand, whilst the other focuses on an appropriate person. This is just one example.

Finally we must understand that 'what has happened before will happen again.' There are patterns to the three classes of personal damage, and there are significant differences between the patterns of damage. In the world of science, patterns are part of the way in which understanding and relevances are noted. Patterns can be expressed in the form of taxonomies.

For example, you may be familiar with the periodic table in chemistry. It is a taxonomy in which the difference between successive elements in the table is one electron number. Pattern analysis or Taxonomy will tell us that a Pareto issue for Class I non-fatal permanent damage with respect to vehicles in the mining industry is jolt/jar imposed upon a steady state ride vibration. Pattern analysis (taxonomies) will tell us that the Pareto issue for Class I single fatality in the mining industry is heavy vehicles / over edges / embankments. The competent leader will be data driven, Pareto focused and will implement strategies that are about the elimination of Class I damage and the progressive reduction of Class II and III damage. That leader will strive to achieve that end and along the journey will inspire and motivate others towards the Vision of Zero Permanent Harm.

With this very brief introduction, as to criticalness of an appropriate knowledge base, the Author would like to turn your attention to leadership and values.

### Leadership and Values:

The author has been strongly influenced by a gentleman by the name of Karl Stewart, both through personal interaction and being accountable to him for several years. First let's consider a definition of values. The English language is a wonderful language. Words have different meanings to different people, nuances influence communication. The word 'Value' can be used as an abstract or concrete noun, an adjective in terms of a quality, and a verb in terms of an activity. Therefore with some humility the following discussion is proposed.

Some definitions of a value are:

- 1 That which has worth to a person (e.g. respect) or members of a social group;
- 2 The property assigned to something which makes it desirable, useful of worth and / or of merit.

Using the above definition of 'something of worth to a person or members of a social group', some authors suggest a set a six universal values which are the social construct of all groups of people.<sup>v</sup>

### CORE, UNIVERSAL VALUES

*This is a set of six 'values' which are essential properties of constructive social relationships. They can be adjectives describing behaviour: loving, trustworthy, dignifying, courageous, honest, fair, or they can be abstract nouns: love, honesty, trust, respect for human dignity, courage, fairness.*

To this list could be added words such as wisdom, generosity, kindness etc. This conversation about values is very open to interpretation and discussion. The author has asked managers in different parts of the world to articulate their personal values. Words such as 'education', 'community' and 'trust' were used, indicating the way in which the concept of Value is discerned differently by different people. Stewart and MacDonald state that 'each of the six core universal values can be thought as being on a continuum from positive to negative.' When a leader's behaviours are observed and a leaders words are listened to, the members of a group will assign a positive or negative assessment to one or more of the values. A leaders behaviours are probably more important than a leader's words, although both are important.

In this model the values are expressed as follows:

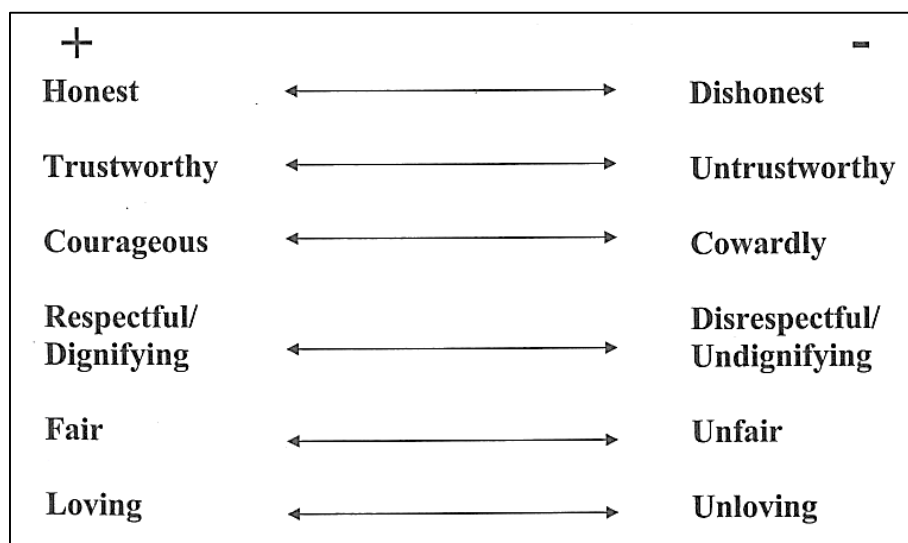
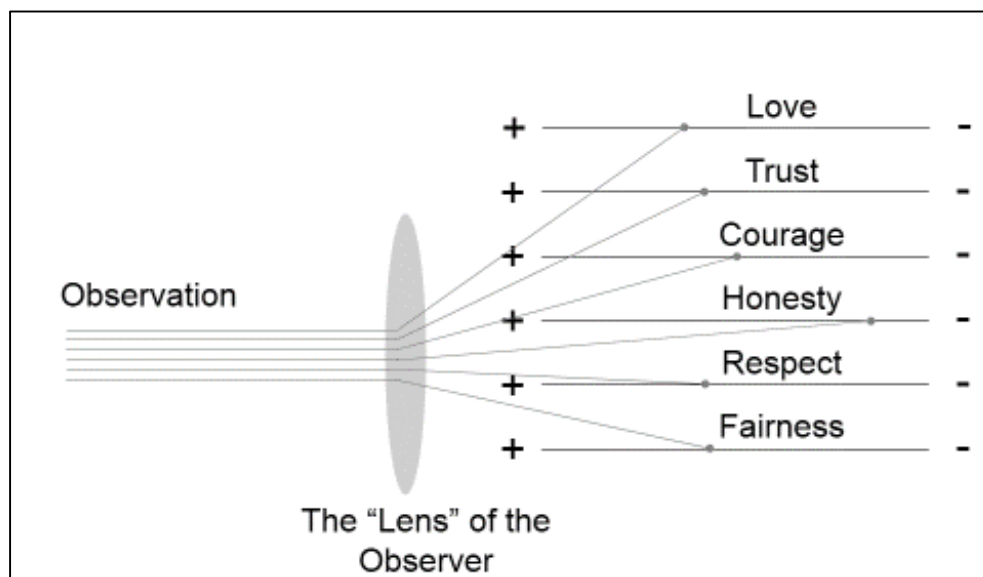


Figure 1.4 Universal Core Values. <sup>v</sup>

When a person observes a leader's behaviour, the leader is judged by the members of a group, against a particular value very, very quickly. For example, a leader's interaction with a team member may result in the team member very quickly arriving at an internalised statement 'That person does not respect me.' (a negative judgement against the value of 'Respect'.) Or 'They do really care about me?' (a positive judgement against the value of 'Love'.)

When the values are judged negatively, there is social disintegration. When the values are judged positively, there is social cohesion. People will pull together, the social energy of a group is harnessed in a common direction.

The following figure shows how a person observes through the 'lens of the logic of their story', when observing the behaviour of others and leaders in particular.



**Figure 2: Interpretation Lens 1.**

However few organisations express their values as succinctly, as honesty, trust, courage, respect (for human dignity) fairness and love, and then apply the continuum thinking. When leaders join an organisation the documented 'values' are often in place. They could be described as the 'Corporate Values' or the 'Shared Values' of the organisation. The leader cannot generally change them, but the leader can test the alignment of these published corporate values to their own values, so that they can give expression to the corporate values. An example of a corporate value, capturing one of the six universal values of honesty is:

*"We must be honest with our Clients and base project decisions of what is best for the project."*<sup>vi</sup>

Clarity by a leader of their personal values makes a significant difference, J. Kouzes & Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*<sup>vii</sup> have found 'the highest levels of commitment' are found where personal values are the clearest. They state,

*"Clarity about personal values was consistently more significant in accounting for positive work place attitudes and level of engagement than clarity around organisational values."*<sup>viii</sup>

In essence it is extremely important for leaders to come to understand their own values, what is important to them and determine whether alignment / misalignment exists with the corporate values. The leader must find clarity with respect to their personal values, examine the corporate values in the light of better understanding their own values and then 'walk the talk'. However, implied in the statement 'walking the talk', is that you have a 'talk' a set of words, a conversation etc.

It is absolutely essential that leaders speak to the values of the business, providing they are sound.

Leaders can seek opportunity in the life of their organisation where they can speak with passion about the corporate values. Such conversations on corporate values can be highly symbolic.

The corporate values must be made to live. Where those values capture statements the leader must be committed to the safety, health and welfare of people, the leader must be firmly committed to the safety of people. To that end, leaders must ensure that they themselves value safety, both personally and corporately. All too often, the corporate or shared values of the business are words on a wall. People rapidly judge inconsistencies between actions and published statements.

### Valuing Safety / Loving People.

As much as the words of honesty, courage, respect etc. can be expressed as values, so can the word "safe". 'Safe' is a value and can be placed on a continuum as follows:

+SAFE.....UNSAFE-

'Safe' is a 'Value'. Determination of 'safe' requires a value judgement. Different people observing / thinking about a situation where there may be potential for damage, arrive at different statements as to the safety or otherwise of the situation. This is a clear example that to judge something as 'safe' requires a value judgement.

Because perception of 'safe' requires a value judgement, a leader should not try to understand a damaging occurrence in terms of safe and unsafe. A value judgement must be assigned to ones observations and this is unscientific. The following figure can illustrate the thought.

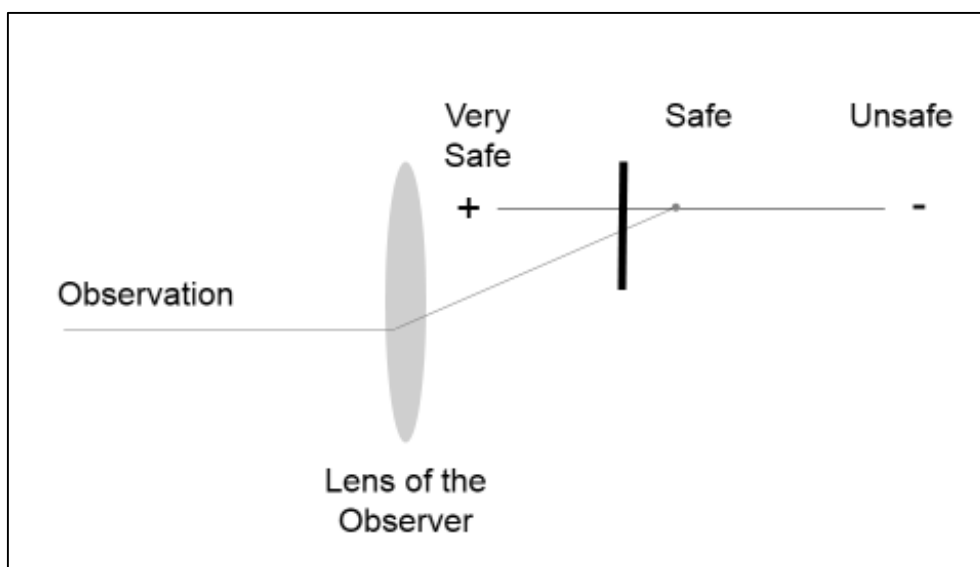


Figure 3: Interpretation Lens 2.

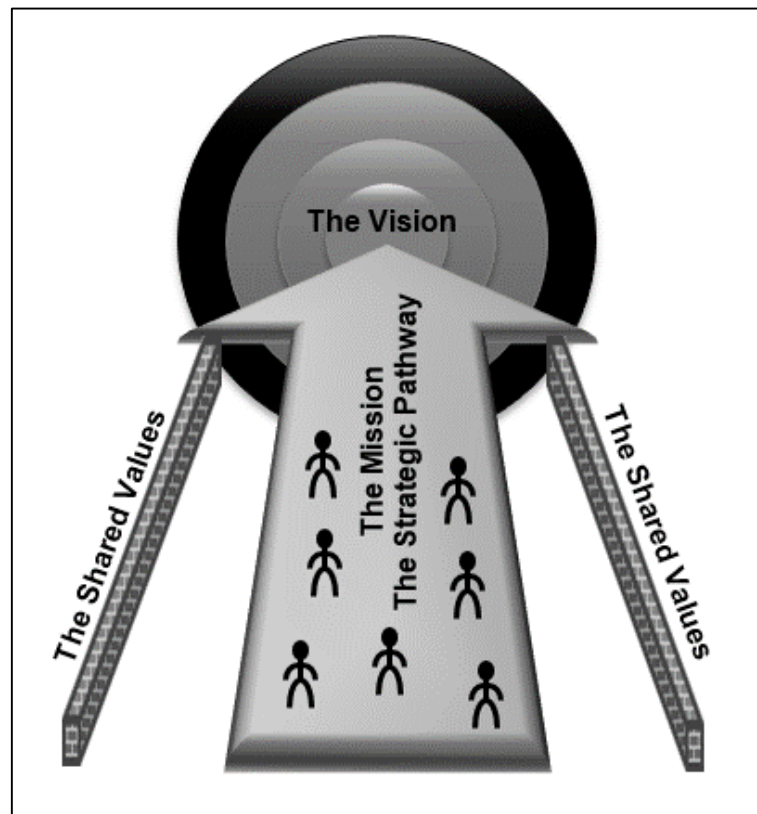
Companies often express the value of safety in their published corporate values. An example would be:

*“A belief in working safely and eliminating injuries must pervade everything we do. We are committed to safety because it is the right way to work.”* <sup>vi</sup> or

*“We value safety above all else.”*

In the above corporate value, “Safety” has now been elevated from a consideration during task planning to a Value. Values exist to help a group of people define the way they will behave and reflect their individual and leaders behaviours against the values.

The following figure is an attempt to represent how the shared or corporate values define the boundaries to the way organisations behave. While the strategic pathway may alter, the corporate values do not. Therefore, if ‘safety’ is a corporate value and defines the way in which work is done, you must first establish for yourself, ‘do you as a leader value safety?’ Or do you give mental and physical expression to it, because not to, will cause social disruption?



**Figure 4: The Strategic Pathway Model.**

There are acid tests that you can apply. What you really value can be reflected in how you behave when no one is watching, John Wooden states:

*‘That the true test of a person’s character is what they do when no one is watching.’*

This quote describes a person’s ‘behaviour’ and this is an important observation.

Therefore one could propose that the true expression of your values, is what you do when no one is watching. If this was to be applied to the value of ‘safe’, then you could ask yourself a range of questions and reflect upon your own behaviours.



For example:

- Have you equipped your home with smoke detectors?
- Do you respond to low underfoot friction surfaces by modifying the surfaces in your home environment?
- Do you drive and use a mobile phone at the same time?
- Do you ensure that there is earth leakage protection to all portable electrical appliances in your home & environment?

As leaders, you can establish your own question relevant to your own situation.

As a leader, safety must become a personal value if it is to become a living corporate value. The positive or negative assessment of the shared values by the members of the group will determine the group's culture, because culture can be defined as the "shared values, beliefs and behaviours of the organisations members."

It is the author's opinion that valuing safety is not independent of valuing people, and to value people is to love them. In Australian industry 'care' is a more socially acceptable word than love, but 'care' is not strong enough. Some would say that the difference between care and love is passion. But I think there is even more to 'loving' people than care & passion.

The following definition of leadership by Karl Stewart expresses one of the very strong qualities of love and that is to be "in service of others". He writes.

*"The leader is seen as member 'of the tribe' by his or her subordinates, a person whose behaviour will always be in the best interests of all the people of the tribe, a person on whom they can rely, always. Why would you not follow such a leader?"*

In essence, for leaders to value people, is to love them and be genuinely concerned about their well-being, and hence their safety. To value team members' safety, the leader must be knowledgeable about which Class of damage must focus their attention.

### **When it all goes wrong.**

When Class I damage occurs, both fatal and non-fatal, leadership is presented with a unique opportunity. There is opportunity to demonstrate behaviours such that the affected people and all members of the group, positively assess the values of respect, and love. Class I damaging occurrences are a unique opportunity for leaders to couple sound science with the shared values of the business and create an increasingly positive culture.

### **Conclusion.**

In conclusion, leaders have a tremendous challenge before them. They are being asked to be knowledgeable and wise with respect to the science of Health & Safety. They are being asked to reflect upon their own personal values and test the alignment to the corporate values. They are being asked to demonstrate leadership behaviours which will be assessed positively against the corporate values, by the members of the organisation. They are being asked to speak to the corporate values with conviction and passion.

However, leaders are human and they will fail from time to time. Failure provides a learning opportunity. Repeated failures may go to the issue of competency in the role. Regardless, leaders must forgive themselves and must forgive others when they fail. This will give the above collection of thoughts opportunity to take hold in the life of an organisation.

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- i Industry Commission, **Work Health & Safety, An Inquiry into Occupational Health & Safety, Vol 1: Report, Report No. 47**. Industry Commission, Australia, September 1995
  - ii National Occupational Health & Safety Commission, **The Cost of Work-Related Injury and Illness for Australian Employers, Workers and the Community**, August 2004, Canberra
  - iii **The Cost Of Work-Related Injury And Illness For Australian Employers, Workers And The Community: 2005-2006**, Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2009.
  - iv **The Cost of Work-Related Injury and Illness for Australian Employers, Workers and the Community: 2008-09**, March 2012, Safe Work Australia, Canberra
  - v McDonald, I, Burke, C., Stewart, K., **Systems Leadership, Creating Positive Organisations**, 2006, Gower Publishing Ltd., England.
  - vi **The Cementation Way**. A best for project manifesto. Cementation.
  - vii Kouzes, J., Posner, B., **The Leadership Challenge - How To Make Extraordinary Things Happen In Organizations**, 5th Edition, 2010, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, USA.
  - viii B.Z Posner and W.H. Schmidt, "**Values Congruence and Differences Between Ethics 12** (1992): 171-177. See also B.Z Posner, 'Another Look at the Impact of Personal and Organisational Values Congruency,' *Journal of Business Ethics* 97, no. 4 (2010): 535-541.