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| CLIMATE WORKSHOP |
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| **Presenter Notes** |

# AIM

The aim of this workshop is to have a group discussion about creating a climate in which everyone feels empowered to raise concerns, ask questions and speak up. In order to create this climate, this workshop will help participants to understand the concept of psychological safety, the various levels and factors which enable or inhibit such a climate.

# how to use the workshop pack

The workshop pack has three documents you can use:

* The presenter notes: these contain practical preparation tips as well as the script for the slides.
* The support slides (PPT): these will allow you to introduce the workshop and to explain the concepts which will be treated during the workshop.
* The workshop documents: these are to be distributed (digitally or in print) to the participants. They contain a brief explanation of the concept which are treated as well as all the discussion questions of the workshop.

Obviously you can customize the slide pack with examples of your own project for instance. We don’t however recommend to blend in extra messages which have no direct link with the GSTO22 theme as this can compromise/dilute the main message to send and insights to be required.

Please note that the slide pack is intentionally quite brief. It is only an introduction to the workshop and the concepts. The core is the interaction during the workshop. This is where the added value of the entire exercise is created.

# Preparing for the workshop

The workshop is primarily intended for the project team (project management, technical office, construction management), but you could invite subcontractor or client representatives if you think this could add value to the discussion.

The workshop questions at the end of this guidance document should not be seen as a checklist. Instead, they should be seen as questions to start meaningful discussions on critical success factors.

Since a climate is something which exists between people who create it, you can’t “install” it by using documents or a system for instance. A climate is something which needs to be continuously cultivated by human interaction. How a person does that, depends largely on the preferences and style of interaction of that person. The result of the workshop should therefore not per definition be an action list leading step by step to the highest level of psychological safety. It’s far more important to understand the concepts and to apply them during team interactions and interactions with subcontractors.

To fully understand and master all concepts, we strongly recommend to read the BESIX Field Guide to Subcontractor Engagement. For this workshop the section on climate is key.

Pease not that the BESIX Field Guide has an entire chapter which treats the elements of psychological safety in depth. In the section “Leadership Toolkit” you will find additional techniques to further sharpen your skills.

# Script slides

Slide 1

When showing the title slide you can welcome the participants to the workshop and speak about the critical role subcontractors play in our business. You can also explain why we’re specifically talking about “engagement” and not just “management”. If you need inspiration, the BESIX Field Guide on Subcontractor Engagement has a section called “The context of subcontracting”.

Slide 2

Tell the group that to create engagement with out subcontractors, we need to work on three challenges: Systems, Motivation and Climate.

Slide 3

Tell the group that this workshop will be focused on Climate.

Slide 4

People need to feel comfortable speaking up, asking (even naïve) questions, and disagreeing with the way things are in order to create and develop ideas that make a real difference. This doesn’t mean that everyone needs to be “nice” all the time. For people to learn, ask questions, raise issues, admit mistakes and suggest ideas we need a climate which lowers social friction (interpersonal risk taking) and increases intellectual friction (speaking up and learning). We call this psychological safety.

The definition of psychological safety might be quite simple at first sight, but it’s important what kinds of behaviors we actually mean with this.

In practical terms, psychological safety:

* It is about respect and permission for candor, not just about mutual trust.
* Is about the freedom to share thoughts, not saying anything you want at any time.
* Is about expressing concerns, not letting your emotions go as you please.
* Is about creating a space where people feel supported, not a space free of any inner discomfort.
* Is about taking measured risks after considering possible scenario’s, not taking risks and hoping for the best.
* Is about considering everything, not tolerating everything.
* Is about allocating tasks and coaching when needed, not taking a “laissez-faire” approach.
* Is about giving respect and permission and asking accountability in return, not writing out a “blank cheque”.
* Is about raising standards together, not lowering them to what is accepted to be “comfortable for everyone.”

Setting high standards and making “zero compromise” alone is not sustainable and without investing in psychological safety, it will even have an adverse effect on safety performance as not only learning opportunities are not seized, but also mistakes are being covered up.

Slide 5

Expecting everyone to feel instantly engaged and empowered to raise issues, contribute with ideas and to admit and learn from mistakes isn’t realistic. Psychological safety doesn’t happen by magic and it doesn’t happen overnight. It is a journey with incremental steps that yield incremental wins. And a journey can only be successful when you have a map.

Even though the four stages are incremental and build on each other, this process should not be seen as per definition linear. Inclusion Safety is the foundation on which the rest of the stages build. This is a stage which will (or should) be common for all our subcontractors. The next stages can be “staggered”. Meaning that for instance on technical level you will be comfortable with granting Contributor Safety (for example with a highly specialized subcontractor), but in the field of health and safety, the same subcontractor will “only” be granted Learner Safety.

Psychological safety is not just about mutual trust. As the graph shows, the level of psychologically safety is determined by a combination of respect and permission.

Tell the group you will now explain what these different combinations per level mean in practice.

Slide 6

Inclusion Safety means respecting a subcontractor as a team member and giving permission to interact with us not merely as an “executor of works” but as part of the team leads to the absence of (the threat of) social harm. This in its turn leads to more trust and candor.

For health and safety this is important because it will lay the foundation of what we want to achieve: engaging our subcontractors.

Slide 7

With Learner Safety, we create a learning process with low social friction and low emotional expense. This requires levels of respect and permission that go beyond inclusion safety because the learning process itself introduces more interpersonal risk, more vulnerability and more exposure to social harm. With Learner Safety, you must put yourself out there to ask questions, solicit feedback, float ideas, experiment, make mistakes and even fail.

Learning and growth are motivators for people to engage. But what is the direct and practical link between learning and health and safety? The answer lies in how we defined “health and safety”: it’s not the absence of adverse events (incidents, accidents, near-misses), but the presence of capabilities.

It is common knowledge that accidents don’t happen “out of the blue”. They’re never acts of God. If you look at just about any accident that would happen on a project, it is always preceded by a number of smaller events with a similar causal path. Before a load falls during a standard lifting operation because the slings used were compromised for instance, typically you will see already weeks to months before the event observations of dangerous situations and near-misses (incorrect use of slings, use of damaged slings, slings which are used without being formally checked, …). This is what we call weak signals and it’s these weak signals which we need to detect in order to lower the probability of an adverse event occurring. Failure or making a mistake isn’t an exception, it’s an expectation. This might seem counterintuitive, but it’s really not when you understand that failures are learning opportunities. We need to create an environment where people can fail or make mistakes in a safe manner, before the failure or mistake becomes the cause of a mishap.

Slide 8

Inclusion Safety is given by choice. Learner Safety is granted. Contributor Safety on its turn is an earned privilege based on demonstrated performance. It means that our subcontractor is no longer seen as a liability, but as an asset, a net contributor delivering a positive return on investment. In this stage of psychological safety value creation and performance are central concepts.

Obviously we’d like our subcontractors to fully master the execution of their activity. But merely pursuing this this is not enough. Because the nature of our business is complex and dynamic – think of changes in planning or methods, coactivity and last minute adaptations to the actual execution of works – we also need our subcontractors to be able to respond to adaptive challenges. This increases directly the level of health and safety performance as “improvisation” becomes a process which can happen in a more controlled manner. Innovation should in this stage be understood as “reactive”: being able to deal with and manage change in a safe manner.

Slide 9

Challenger Safety is the place where respect and permission intersect at the highest level. It is the “stage of the brave”: a climate in which exploration and experimentation without any fear happens. It’s where challenging the status quo and disruptive thinking happens. It is fairly simple to explain what Challenger Safety is, but it’s far more difficult to create it. For any leader, this stage is what some organizational psychologists would call the ultimate cultural quest.

“Challenging the status quo” and “disruptive thinking” are emotionally loaded concepts which might sound very dramatic. But in fact Challenger Safety can be visible in modest, but brave acts. Think about a worker who at a certain moment felt confident and empowered enough to suggest a solution which improves the safety of his workstation. The workstation was not intrinsically unsafe, so you can’t say this was an adaptive response. The solution suggested by the worker was also quite simple, so again no disruption there. The fact that at a certain point, he stepped outside of his “job” and started to think creatively to improve a situation is what was disruptive. Challenging the status quo was done by challenging his role and responsibilities.

Slide 10 (optional)

This is an optional slide. If you don’t have the BE SAFE program implemented in your organization and you don’t have – at this time – the means to implement it, you can skip this slide. If you do have it implemented, it’s a great opportunity to boost the program. If you don’t have it implemented yet, this would be a great opportunity to advertise the program. In order to have the program fully implemented (with Ambassadors), ideally you need to be in the first stages of your project. If this is not the case, you can still get trained on how to apply the BE SAFE principles yourself as a team.

BE SAFE was initially developed as a Behavioral Based Safety program, but in the mean time we’ve notice it does much more than just “correct behaviors”. We’ve seen that it has the potential to stimulate a climate of high psychological safety as well. By applying objective feedback, positive correction and psychological rewarding, respect and permission are given and trust is created. We’ve seen that projects where not only Ambassadors are active, but also project teams themselves apply these principles during their interaction with subcontractors, are successful in creating such a climate.

Very practically: applying objective feedback when we for instance see a team not respecting a Life Saving Rule is highly effective. Not only because instead of judging and “punishing”, we chose for dialogue, but also because through asking questions, we identify the underlying reasons for a certain behavior. Addressing these underlying reasons is much more effective than explaining the Life Saving Rule again and making the workplace “safe” before the activity can continue. This is an “ad hoc” solution and you will need to repeat the exercise over and over again. Trying to identify underlying reasons in order to tackle those is not only a more durable approach (you will less likely need to repeat the exercise because the underlying reason has been addressed), but it also creates mutual trust because respect and permission are given. By doing so, a climate is created in which workers are more likely to speak up when they encounter a problem the next time. This is how setting high standards and investing in psychological safety can look like in practice.

Slide 11

Tell the participants that you’ve been talking long enough now and that you’re curious about the thoughts and ideas the group has on the subject (your role will change here from presenter to moderator).

Invite the participants to take their workshop sheets and tell them you will now as a group have a discussion and exchange of ideas on how we can improve the process of subcontractor management in order to boost engagement.

Tip: in the Leadership Toolkit section of the Field Guide you can find a number of tips and cues to invite participation and interaction.