



HARDWIRED INHIBITIONS

*Hidden forces that keep us from
speaking up in the face of disaster*



How often do
employees speak up
when they see
something that they
think is unsafe?



Employees speak up
only 39% of the time.

(2010 Study of Safety Intervention)
Read the Study in The Drilling Contractor
January/February, 2011



Stop Work Authority

Does it fix the problem?



Stop Work Authority

97% of respondents said that they were given the authority to stop work at their company.

(2010 Study of Safety Intervention)

Stop Work Authority

It only addresses one of the factors that inhibit people from speaking up:

Fear of formal punishment for insubordination or slowing productivity

Safety Intervention

Most employees take this responsibility seriously and believe that they *would* speak up,



An illustration of a person's head in profile, facing right. The head is dark grey. Inside the head, there are several interlocking puzzle pieces in various colors: yellow, green, orange, and purple. The background of the illustration is a solid orange color. The person is wearing a light blue V-neck shirt.

Safety Intervention

Most employees take this responsibility seriously and believe that they *would* speak up,

...but *in the moment* they often say nothing.

The “Context Effect”

What we think about, care about and remember is determined by the immediate context we are in.



The “Context Effect”

The *production* context is different from the *safety meeting* context.



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Hardwired Inhibitions

There are very real forces in
employees' production contexts,

...and employees are wired to
respond to these forces in
certain ways.

Hardwired Inhibitions

Production Pressure

It literally changes the way we see the world.



Hardwired Inhibitions

Unit Bias

We are wired to finish a given unit/task before changing what we are doing.



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Hardwired Inhibitions

Deference to Authority

We don't speak up *to* authorities, and we don't speak up *around* authorities.

Hardwired Inhibitions

Bystander Effect

The more people there are around, the less likely we are to speak up.



Hardwired Inhibitions

Even when there is no
production pressure, authority
figure or group inhibiting us,
*there is something else to keep
us silent in the face of disaster.*

Hardwired Inhibitions

The perfect storm of inhibiting forces:

Reactance

+

Social Incongruence

+

Confirmation Bias



Hardwired Inhibitions

The perfect storm of inhibiting forces:

Reactance

+

Social Incongruence

+

Confirmation Bias



Hardwired Inhibitions

Reactance

The urge to do the opposite of what someone else wants you to do



Hardwired Inhibitions

The perfect storm of inhibiting forces:

Reactance

+

Social Incongruence

+

Confirmation Bias



Hardwired Inhibitions

Social Incongruence

The bad feeling we get when we are “on the outs” or in tension with others



Hardwired Inhibitions

The perfect storm of inhibiting forces:

Reactance

+

Social Incongruence

+

Confirmation Bias



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Hardwired Inhibitions

Confirmation Bias

We are extremely good at
justifying what we have already
concluded.

Hardwired Inhibitions

Confirmation Bias

“No one else has said anything,
so it must not be that big of an
issue.”



Hardwired Inhibitions

Confirmation Bias

“He’s an experienced employee,
so he knows the risk he’s
taking.”



Hardwired Inhibitions

Confirmation Bias

“It won’t make a difference if I do speak up.”

An illustration of a human head in profile, facing right. The head is dark grey. Inside the head, there are several interlocking puzzle pieces in various colors: yellow, green, orange, and purple. The background of the illustration is a solid orange color. The person is wearing a light blue V-neck shirt.

Hardwired Inhibitions

Employees are rarely
“cowardly” or “heartless.”

Employees are human with
hardwired inhibitions.

Can We Be Rewired?

Just being aware of these biases
in specific situations goes a long
way.



Can We Be Rewired?

Nip It in the Bud

When employees are confident that they can intervene in a way that does not produce defensiveness or anger, they stop “reasoning backwards.”





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