



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



HR Manager Toolkit

Guide to implementing QA culture
training and food safety behaviours

About this toolkit

Purpose of this toolkit

This toolkit gives you structured guidance and practical tools to help implement and maintain quality assurance processes and culture. It gives you models, checklists, and best practices that can be customised to your unique company and team. It can also serve as a reference for continuous improvement and training new employees. Ultimately, this toolkit supports you to ensure consistency in QA processes, save time and resources, and improve the overall quality of products and services offered by the organisation.

This toolkit is part of a series, with a toolkit specifically for HR, QA Manager and Operations Manager roles.

Implementing QA after training modules

You can use this toolkit at any time, however, it can be used effectively in conjunction with the training course *Culture: Growing Dairy Exports*.

This course aims to build the skills and knowledge, characterised by interdependent whole of system thinking by participants that improves self-regulation of Australia's export dairy sector.

The 'Culture' course will provide knowledge and skills to support improved self-directed regulatory maturity and contribute to the maintenance and expansion of Australia's export dairy sector. The training emphasises the value to be derived from a proactive systems-based approach to the management of export regulatory requirements.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit give you a five-step guide packed with easy-to-use tips that you can tailor to fit your team's needs. The activities in this toolkit are based on behavioural science and organisational psychology, which allow you to put things into practice that are grounded in research.

It's all about making small changes that can lead to big shifts in how we do things. If you're already doing some of these things, great! Use this toolkit to check they're still working for you. The idea is to keep nudging along—regular, small reminders are better than one-off talks for making new habits stick. And since every team is different, we've included a bunch of different nudges so you can pick what's right for your crew. It's all about what works best in your world.

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This toolkit gives you useful information and practical activities to implement in your establishment. Once you've read the [5 step model](#) for culture change, you can jump between the stages and activities. This lets you choose the activities that are right for your team and organisation.

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Your role in culture

Why is QA important in the dairy industry?

Quality Assurance (QA) in the dairy industry encompasses a systematic set of procedures designed to ensure that dairy products consistently meet defined safety and quality standards. This preventative strategy is fundamental to public health, given the prevalence of dairy in diets worldwide. By meticulously overseeing every stage from production to delivery, QA helps the dairy sector uphold its reputation, secure consumer confidence, and mitigate risks associated with product recalls. Moreover, maintaining high-quality standards is pivotal for customer satisfaction, influencing both brand loyalty and the industry's long-term viability and market access.

Beyond simply meeting regulatory requirements, robust QA programs contribute to several key benefits for dairy businesses:

- **Enhanced brand reputation:** Consumers increasingly value transparency and trust when it comes to their food choices. Consistent high-quality products, backed by a strong QA program, build brand loyalty and foster consumer confidence.
- **Reduced costs and waste:** Proactive identification and mitigation of quality issues minimises product recalls, rework, and spoilage, leading to significant cost savings and improved operational efficiency.
- **Improved product consistency:** Consistent quality translates to consistent taste, texture, and performance, which is crucial for maintaining brand identity and customer satisfaction.
- **Enhanced innovation and development:** A data-driven QA approach provides valuable insights into consumer preferences and product performance, informing the development of new and improved dairy offerings.

How can HR managers embed a culture of best practice and food safety in their organisation?

HR managers can embed a culture of best practice in their organisations by integrating quality objectives into all aspects of the organisation's processes and by encouraging a mindset where quality is the responsibility of every employee, not just the QA roles and teams. This includes providing training and development to ensure that all employees understand the importance of quality and their role in achieving it. HR managers can also recognise and reward employees who adhere to quality standards, thereby reinforcing the value of QA within the organisational culture.

Section 1

HR Manager role in building culture

What is QA culture?

Culture is “how we do things around here”.

Culture is a social and group phenomenon that guides how people think, perceive, believe and act. It can be experienced through words and language, actions and typical behaviours. Culture is a shared belief system about what is considered normal and it guides decision making and how an organisation functions.

Culture is a living thing that is constantly changing and evolving. It requires constant and careful management.

Culture in an organisation represents an environment where all employees are not only aware of the importance of quality in their work but are also actively engaged in upholding and enhancing it. It is characterised by a collective commitment to quality standards and continuous improvement, where processes are designed to prevent mistakes and defects in dairy products. In a strong and mature culture, responsibility for quality goes beyond the QA team and becomes a shared focus, with everyone playing a part in delivering excellence. The focus is on customer satisfaction, regulatory compliance, and operational efficiency, fostering an ethos where high quality is the norm, not the exception.

Knowing your establishment's culture

Not all establishments in Australia's dairy industry are at the same level of maturity of managing Quality Assurance (QA), food safety and best practices as part of their culture. Every organisation is unique and is at different levels of maturity and readiness for change.

LESS MATURE	MORE MATURE
Higher risk of food safety incidents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More mistakes, costing time and money • Higher risk to your brand reputation 	Greater protection from food safety incidents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects consumers from foodborne illness • Protects your brand reputation • Protects your business from financial loss
Ineffective leadership	Top-down and bottom-up commitment and action
Lack of food safety plans and systems	Food safety plans and systems are built cooperatively and universally embraced
Reactive	Proactive
Reluctance to change	Continuous improvement
Lack of accountability	Everyone is accountable and there is greater trust
Poor risk management	Greater, better integrated risk management

Image from: Dairy Food Safety Victoria

It's clear that a strong culture improves food safety outcomes, strengthens compliance and reduces compliance cost, and improves business performance and reputation. But different organisations are at different levels of readiness for change.

Change in organisations on the "less mature" left-hand side of the spectrum are often driven by compliance and regulatory requirements, organisations in the middle are likely to be driven by reactive motivations such as needing to respond to an incident or audit, and organisations on the right-hand side tend to be driven by proactive management of culture change and embedding.

Reflection

What is your organisation's culture maturity level?

Understand what level of maturity your organisations is at currently will help you know which actions to take to achieve your desired future state.

Before you begin building practices and process in your organisation, it is worth identifying current gaps and opportunities.

ASK YOURSELF

- What challenges have we recently faced around QA and food safety?
- Are we mostly reactive or proactive to incidents?
- How has information around our organisation's stance and action been communicated?
- What do we currently have in place (plans, policies, practices, training, discussions)?
- Do we have leadership support and action?
- Who is accountable for QA?
- What psychological, social, and physical barriers are we facing in raising incidents?
- Is our organisation reluctant to change or embraces continuous improvement?
- What is the biggest area of improvement for our organisation?

Strong food safety and best practice requires a blame free culture

An important and often overlooked aspect of a strong culture of food safety and best practice is building a culture of trust and safety and moving away from a culture of blaming the person and rather blame the process.

The underlying psychology of a blame-based culture vs a blame-free culture is trust and psychological safety. Psychological safety is when an individual feels supported, valued, respected and able to speak up without fear. Psychological safety is important for all staff but is especially important for those from under-represented groups who are more likely to have experience of negative consequences and inequities

SIGNS OF TYPES OF CULTURE

Blame-based and unsafe culture

- Staff do not speak up, question things, or raise concerns for fear of negative consequences such as humiliation, lack of career progression, or loss of job
- People are blamed for mistakes
- Few people takes responsibility for making others feel safe, heard, respected and value

Trusting and safe culture

- Staff feel they can raise questions, ideas, concerns without fear of retribution, humiliation or other negative consequence
- There is genuine participation and contribution
- All staff feel valued and respected
- People can make mistakes and be supported
- Staff are confident to staff to give voice to their experiences
- Everyone takes responsibility for making others feel safe, heard, respected and valued

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

It's their fault, they should have done better!

I had no idea that was happening.

What were you thinking?

That won't work, wait and see!

This was a dumb idea in the first place?

I'm just going to do my job, it's not my responsibility.

I messed up.

I'm not sure how to do this.

How can I help you with this?

Can you help me with this?

Thanks for being honest with me.

Reflection

What is your organisation's culture type?

Trust and psychological safety can be sensed and heard in everyday workplace conversations.

ASK YOURSELF

- Is there finger-pointing, blaming and shaming individuals and teams?
- Do staff regularly speak up, question things and raise concerns?
- Can people make mistakes and be supported?
- Do staff feel valued and respected?
- Does everyone take responsibility for making others feel safe, respected, and valued? Or is it a few people or only specific roles?
- Is this culture consistent across teams or sites, or does it happen in specific areas?

Section 2

5 step model for culture

5 principles for building a strong QA culture

Here are 5 principles when implementing your QA culture initiatives.



Leadership-driven QA culture

Drive QA as a core organisational value through visible and consistent leadership commitment, where executive and managers lead by example in QA practices, resource allocation, and accountability.



Empowered and inclusive engagement

Foster an inclusive work environment where every employee is empowered to contribute to QA discussions, initiatives, and improvements, reinforcing their role in maintaining a safe workplace.



Open and positive communication

Establish open communication channels for reporting and discussing QA issues without fear, and reinforce positive behaviours through recognition and rewards, integrating safety as a continuous learning process.



Preventative and responsive QA practices

Develop a responsive QA strategy that includes thorough incident investigation and analysis, ensuring lessons are learned and integrated into future safety planning to prevent recurrence.



Ongoing safety education and learning

Implement continuous learning through regular safety training, development programs, and proactive safety checks such as audits and inspections to adapt to evolving risks and roles.

5-step model for nudging culture

As HR managers in the field of the dairy industry, supporting a culture of strong food safety and best practice is not just a regulatory mandate but a strategic imperative. This 5-step model provides a structured approach to creating and strengthening a culture of food safety and best practice. From selecting key influencers to champion the cause to celebrating each milestone, this model is a blueprint for embedding best practice into the organisational DNA, ensuring that quality is not merely a checkbox but a lived ethos driving sustainable business success.

Each steps is detailed more on the following page.





01

Ignite the change

Cultivate urgency and define your aspirational culture

To embed a food safety and best practice mindset as part of your organisation's culture, there first needs to be a sense of urgency. This involves highlighting the gap between the current state and the desired future, utilising data, stories, and concrete examples to showcase the need for a more proactive QA approach. At the same time, we need to develop a clear vision of the desired culture, making sure it resonates with employees. It's also important to emphasise the importance of change and the potential consequences of inaction.

- **Highlight the need for change:** expose the gap between the current state and desired future, using data, stories, and examples.
- **Creating a sense of urgency:** emphasise the importance of change and the consequences of inaction.
- **Develop a clear vision:** define what you want a proactive culture to look like for your organisation in clear, concise terms that resonate with employees.
- **Drawing a compelling picture:** use storytelling and visuals to paint a vivid picture of the future state.



02

Empower champions

Form a team of culture champions

Building a strong culture is about cultural change and requires a team of dedicated people to drive it. This involves identifying key people who embody a strong food safety and best practice mindset and are able to influence others. The team should be diverse, representing different departments, levels, and perspectives to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Empowering these culture champions with resources, authority, and support is vital to drive change effectively. This team should meet regularly, have open communication, and shared ownership of the culture change. This team can also leverage social influencers within the organisation to spread awareness of the cultural transformation initiative.

- **Identify key people:** select individuals who embody desired values, have influence, and are respected by their peers.
- **Build a diverse team:** ensure the coalition represents different departments, levels, and perspectives.
- **Empower champions:** provide the team with resources, authority, and support to drive change.
- **Foster collaboration:** encourage open communication, teamwork, and shared ownership of the vision.



03

Show values in action

Operationalise culture through concrete behaviours

To turn vision into reality, we need to translate abstract values into concrete behaviours that employees can readily adopt in their daily work. This involves defining specific actions and practices that embody desired cultural attributes of a strong food safety and best practices mindset. These behaviours and actions can then be incorporated into performance reviews, talent management systems, and reward structures to ensure they become ingrained in organisational processes. Leading by example and consistently demonstrating desired behaviours is crucial for senior leadership to encourage and motivate employees. Finally, providing constructive feedback and recognising individuals who embody cultural values reinforces positive behaviours and fosters a culture of continuous improvement.

- **Define concrete behaviors:** translate abstract values into specific actions and practices that employees can readily adopt.
- **Integrate food safety and best practice into processes:** infuse cultural values into performance reviews, talent management, and reward systems.
- **Lead by example:** ensure leaders consistently demonstrate and role-model desired behaviors.
- **Provide feedback and recognition:** offer constructive feedback an



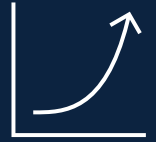
04

Amplify the message

Communicate and engage effectively & repeatedly

Effective communication plays a vital role in amplifying the message and engaging employees in the culture transformation. Sharing stories of individuals and teams who have successfully integrated proactive food safety and best practices into their work provides inspiration and showcases the potential for positive change. Utilising multiple channels, including internal communication platforms, training sessions, team meetings, and social media, ensures the message reaches a wide audience. Creating visual cues, such as posters, infographics, and videos, can further reinforce the message and make it more impactful. Encouraging open dialogue and feedback fosters a sense of ownership and involvement among employees, while building a community of practice allows individuals to connect, share experiences, and learn from each other.

- **Tell stories of success:** share stories of individuals and teams who have successfully integrated cultural values into their work.
- **Utilise multiple channels:** communicate the vision through internal communication platforms, training sessions, team meetings, and social media.
- **Creating visual cues:** use visual aids, such as posters, infographics, and videos, to reinforce the message.
- **Encourage dialogue and feedback:** foster open communication and give opportunities for employees to share their perspectives.



05

Measure for momentum

Celebrate milestones and continuously improve

Celebrating milestones and successes is essential for maintaining momentum and nurturing a strong culture. Identifying and implementing quick wins, which are small, achievable interventions that demonstrate progress towards the vision, and provide tangible evidence of change. Recognising and rewarding individuals and teams who contribute to best practice reinforces desired behaviours and encourages continued effort. Regularly measuring progress and impact through surveys, interviews, and data analysis allows for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement. Adapting and refining strategies based on data and feedback ensures the cultural transformation remains dynamic and responsive to evolving needs and circumstances. Finally, building a culture of learning that encourages experimentation, innovation, and the sharing of QA best practices lays the foundation for sustained growth and development.

- **Recognise and reward successes:** celebrate individuals and teams who contribute to positive cultural change.
- **Measure progress and impact:** track cultural progress through surveys, interviews, and data analysis.
- **Adapt and refine strategies:** continuously review and update nudges and interventions based on data and feedback.



01

Ignite the change



01 Ignite the change

Highlight the need for change

Building a strong culture isn't just about implementing new processes or tools – it's about a fundamental shift in mindset. To trigger this shift, we must first ignite the spark of urgency.

The psychology behind the nudge

A sense of urgency is important because without a compelling reason to change, people fall back into comfortable routines. By highlighting the tangible consequences of inaction – lost revenue from recalls, eroded customer trust, and potential legal ramifications – we create a sense of shared vulnerability and a desire for a better way. This urgency then becomes the fuel that drives the journey towards a culture of proactive quality assurance. Think of it as setting the fire that will forge a new path – without the initial spark, the journey remains shrouded in darkness.

How to apply this

There are several ways you can do this for both leadership and staff. The next few pages give you examples of how you can do this – you can pick and choose one or more of the strategies that will work best for your organisation.

These are described on the following pages:

Show the consequences of inaction

- Quantify the impact of past quality issues
- Conduct a "near miss" analysis
- Present a hypothetical scenario

Competitiveness and market advantage

- Benchmark against industry leaders
- Showcase consumer trends
- Highlight potential market opportunities

Leverage existing regulation and compliance requirements

- Show the cost of non-compliance
- Highlight the benefits of exceeding compliance
- Use compliance as a springboard for broader cultural change

Define your QA culture vision

- Define your culture
- Create a culture vision statement
- Use #TeamAustralianDairy
- Conversation Guide for Executives

01 Ignite the change

Activity

Show the consequences of QA inaction

There are several ways you can create a sense of urgency by showing the consequences of inaction around QA.

Quantify the impact of past quality issues

Present data on recalls, rework, customer complaints, and lost revenue due to QA failures. This tangible evidence can shock stakeholders into action.

Conduct a "near miss" analysis

Use internal data or industry reports to showcase potential risks and near misses that could have had significant consequences.

Present a hypothetical scenario

Paint a vivid picture of a major QA failure, its impact on brand reputation, and potential legal ramifications. This can be a powerful way to spark discussion and action.

01 Ignite the change

Activity

Competitiveness and market advantage

There are several ways you can create a sense of urgency by showing how implementing best practices give a business advantage.

Benchmark against industry leaders

Analyse the practices of your top competitors and highlight their successes in customer satisfaction and market share. This can create a sense of urgency to catch up. You can analyse internal records on product recalls, complaints, and customer satisfaction. Share the data visually and compare it to industry benchmarks to raise awareness of areas for improvement.

Showcase consumer trends

Present data on increasing consumer demand for transparency and quality in food products. Explain how a proactive culture positions your organization to meet these evolving expectations.

Highlight potential market opportunities

Research and present data on emerging markets or product categories where strong QA can be a competitive advantage. This can motivate stakeholders to invest in building a better system.

01 Ignite the change

Activity

Leverage existing regulation and compliance requirements

There are several ways you can create a sense of urgency by highlighting mandated requirements.

Show the cost of non-compliance

Present data on recent fines, penalties, or market access restrictions faced by dairy businesses due to QA failures. This can demonstrate the immediate financial and reputational risks of a weak culture.

Highlight the benefits of exceeding compliance

Explain how a proactive culture goes beyond minimum requirements, leading to improved product quality, reduced audit risks, and potentially faster export approvals. Share success stories of how data-based QA initiatives have led to improved product quality, reduced production costs, or increased efficiency.

Use compliance as a springboard for broader cultural change

Frame QA not just as a regulatory obligation but as a foundation for building a culture of excellence and continuous improvement.



Define your culture vision

A clearly defined culture is the compass guiding your team towards excellence. Without it, you're sailing in uncharted waters, relying on intuition and guesswork instead of a shared understanding of what "quality" truly means in your organisation. This ambiguity leads to inconsistency, confusion, and ultimately, compromised products. Defining your culture is like drawing a map – it sets expectations, identifies priorities, and empowers every employee to navigate towards the same quality destination. It fosters trust and collaboration, ensuring everyone is rowing in the same direction.

The psychology behind the nudge

Humans crave clarity – it's wired into our need for predictability and control. Without a clear definition of your culture, you leave employees in a psychological limbo – uncertain of expectations, hesitant to innovate, and prone to frustration. This ambiguity breeds a sense of powerlessness, hindering engagement and ownership. Conversely, a defined culture acts as a psychological anchor. It provides a shared framework, reducing anxiety and ambiguity. It empowers employees to take ownership, knowing their actions contribute to a tangible goal. Don't underestimate the power of a clear vision – it's not just a document on a wall; it's a key to unlocking your team's full potential and propelling them towards a quality-driven future.

How to apply it

- Define your culture
- Create a culture vision statement
- Use #TeamAustralianDairy
- Conversation Guide for Executives

01 Ignite the change

Activity

Define your culture

The following questions are a guide for a discussions with Executive and others involved in defining the culture. This can be used as questions for a workshop or meeting to define these aspects.

A framework for defining culture

1. What does quality mean to us?

- Translate your core values into specific quality behaviours. (e.g., "Integrity" means transparency in QA data sharing.)
- What are your customers' top expectations? (e.g. consistent taste, zero recalls)

2. How can everyone champion quality?

- Empower employees to take ownership of quality (e.g. encourage reporting near misses)
- Break down silos and foster collaboration. (e.g., cross-functional teams)

3. How do we learn and improve together?

- Celebrate successes and "near misses" as learning opportunities.
- Track progress and adapt based on data insights.

01 Ignite the change

Activity

Create a Culture Vision Statement

Below is an example that you can amend and suit your unique organisation.

Example of a Culture Vision Statement

At [Organisation Name], we are driven by a shared passion for delivering the highest quality dairy products, exceeding customer expectations at every step. We cultivate a culture of proactive ownership, where every employee is empowered to champion quality and continuous improvement. Through open communication, data-driven decision-making, and collaboration, we strive to be the benchmark for dairy excellence, building trust and loyalty with every product."

Here's why this statement works:

- Clearly defines the core value of quality: "highest quality dairy products"
- Emphasises employee ownership and empowerment: "proactive ownership," "every employee is empowered"
- Focuses on continuous improvement: "culture of continuous improvement"
- Highlights collaboration and data-driven decision making: "open communication," "data-driven decision-making"
- Sets an aspirational goal: "benchmark for dairy excellence"
- Connects quality to customer satisfaction and trust: "exceeding customer expectations," "building trust and loyalty"



01 Ignite the change

Use #TeamAustralianDairy

This nudge aims to help companies better receive information about best practices and food safety, while also highlighting the cost to establishments and Australia as a result of poor QA.

The psychology behind the nudge

This nudge increases awareness of the potential negative outcomes, motivating people to make more cautious and informed decisions. Loss aversion operates under the psychology that people will avoid losses when possible and that losses are more painful than equivalent gains; therefore, the loss of market access and Australia's reputation is a huge cost for an establishment.

How to apply

Use the phrase "Team Australian Dairy" or #TeamAustralianDairy when referring to the whole industry and its approach to QA. The more this is used, the more this can become a 'floating signifier' (a symbol or concept that's loose enough to mean many things to many people, yet specific enough to galvanize action in a particular direction).

ACTIVITY

Where could you use #TeamAustralianDairy in your communication and training?

01 Ignite the change

Conversation guide with Execs

This is a conversation guide for speaking with Executive about strengthening QA culture. Adapt it to your specific company culture, leadership style, and the unique challenges you face. By presenting a compelling case, demonstrating the potential benefits, and addressing concerns head-on, you can increase your chances of securing executive buy-in and building a thriving QA culture.



Goal: Secure executive buy-in and resources for building a proactive QA culture

Before the conversation

- **Gather data:** Prepare statistics on past QA failures, customer complaints, and potential financial losses.
- **Craft your message:** Frame QA as a strategic investment, not just a cost.
- **Anticipate objections:** Prepare clear responses to potential concerns about budget, workload, or change management.

Opening

- **Briefly explain** the purpose of the conversation: "I'm here today to discuss a critical opportunity to strengthen our QA culture and drive long-term success."
- **Share a relevant statistic** or anecdote to highlight the current state of QA: "According to our data, we've had X product recalls in the past year, resulting in Y in lost revenue."

Conversation guide with Execs cont'd

Building the case

1. The Problem

1. Explain the consequences of a reactive QA approach:
"Our current reactive approach to QA leaves us vulnerable to costly mistakes, reputational damage, and missed market opportunities."
2. Show data on the impact of past QA failures:
"These recalls have cost us not only financially, but also eroded customer trust and brand loyalty."

2. The Solution

1. Introduce the concept of a proactive QA culture:
"By embracing a proactive QA culture, we can prevent these issues before they arise, ensuring consistent quality and exceeding customer expectations."
2. Explain the benefits of a proactive approach:
"This shift will lead to reduced costs, enhanced brand reputation, improved customer satisfaction, and a more competitive edge."

3. The Investment

1. Outline your specific proposal for strengthening QA culture: "I propose a multi-pronged approach that includes..." (e.g., employee training, data-driven decision making, cross-functional collaboration)
2. Be transparent about the resources needed: "This initiative will require an investment of X in [resources needed]..."
3. Emphasise the return on investment (ROI): "However, we project a Y% increase in revenue and Z% reduction in recalls within the next year."

01 Ignite the change

Conversation guide with Execs cont'd

Addressing concerns

- **Workload:** Explain how the new approach will streamline processes and empower employees, ultimately reducing workload.
- **Change management:** Assure executives of your commitment to a smooth transition with comprehensive training and support programs.
- **Budget:** Be prepared to offer alternative funding options or phased implementation plans.

Closing

- **Reiterate the importance** of a proactive QA culture: "Investing in QA is not just about fixing problems; it's about building a foundation for sustainable growth and success."
- **Call to action:** "I urge you to consider this proposal and partner with me in building the robust QA culture our company needs to thrive."

Additional tips

- **Use visuals:** Data charts, graphs, and even images of product recalls can add impact to your presentation.
- **Speak confidently and passionately:** Your enthusiasm will be contagious and help convince executives of the importance of your initiative.
- **Be open to feedback and collaboration:** This is a shared journey, and incorporating executive input will lead to a stronger outcome.



02

Empower champions



Identify key people

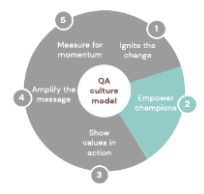
Identify key people in your organisation that have an interest in culture and the ability to work with you to achieve it. These people should embody a proactive mindset and be able to influence others and various parts of the company.

The psychology behind forming this team

To shift mindsets and embed quality into the everyday practice of your organisation, forming a guiding coalition is critical. When a diverse team of culture champions is assembled, it sends a powerful message of commitment and buy-in. Employees see leaders from all levels actively engaged, fostering trust and a sense of shared ownership. It is also an important source of sustained momentum that ensures that the initiative doesn't fizzle out, especially if and when leaders aren't the sole drivers of this change. The coalition fosters a culture of peer-to-peer accountability, ensuring long-term commitment and continuous improvement.

Choose your culture champion team

- Who are the individuals within the organisation who consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to quality? (e.g. proactive problem solvers, those who champion data-driven decision making)
- Who are the natural influencers and communicators, capable of inspiring and motivating others to embrace a quality-focused mindset? (e.g. individuals with strong presentation skills and a knack for building relationships)
- Who possesses a deep understanding of their respective departments and can bridge the gap between different functions within the organization? (e.g. cross-functional experts, individuals with experience in various areas)
- Who are the "culture catalysts," those who possess the energy and passion to drive change and rally others around the vision of a proactive QA culture? (e.g. individuals with infectious enthusiasm, those who thrive in collaborative environments)



Hold a Culture Champions workshop

Invite potential candidates from the previous activity and hold a workshop to begin the process. The sample agenda below can be adapted to your context and organisation.



Purpose: To kick off a process of strengthening culture

Sample agenda

Welcome & Introductions

Setting the Stage

- **Vision & Alignment:** Present the Culture Vision Statement and emphasise its importance in guiding the process of improvement. Encourage discussion and questions
- **Current Landscape:** Use data and examples to highlight the current state of the organisation's food safety and best practices. Share statistics and potential areas for improvement without negativity or blame.
- **Why Change is Needed:** Explain the rationale for strengthening culture, focusing on the benefits and opportunities it presents for the organisation and its employees.
- **Building the Framework**
Actionable Strategies: Divide participants into smaller groups to brainstorm specific initiatives and action plans for each identified pillar. Focus on practical steps and achievable goals.
- **Resource Mapping:** Identify existing resources and tools that can support the implementation of the action plans. Consider training programs, communication channels, and technology platforms.

02 Empower champions

Hold a Culture Champions workshop cont'd

Sample agenda cont'd

Empowering Champions

- **Champion Roles & Responsibilities:** Define the role of culture champions in promoting and driving the culture change within their teams. Provide clear expectations and ongoing support mechanisms.
- **Communication & Collaboration Skills:** Equip champions with practical tools and techniques for effective communication, conflict resolution, and building team buy-in.

Next Steps & Commitment

- **Action Plan Finalisation:** Each group refines their action plan with clear timelines, ownership, and success metrics.
- **Commitment & Accountability:** Encourage participants to personally commit to their roles and responsibilities in making the culture vision a reality.
- **Feedback & Establish mechanisms** for ongoing feedback and adjustments to the action plans based on progress and learnings.

Closing Remarks

- Recap the key takeaways and express appreciation for everyone's participation.
- End on a positive and motivating note, emphasising the group's power to build a thriving culture of excellence.



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02 Empower champions

Empower culture champions

To set up the culture champions group for success, provide them with resources and authority to manage QA culture and related challenges.

The psychology behind the nudge

Empowering culture champions isn't just about resources and authority – it's about unlocking their inner drive. Self-determination theory states that control over their work fuels passion, and regular feedback loops like praise and recognition validate their progress, keeping them motivated. Forming a tight-knit champion community builds a sense of belonging and shared purpose, encouraging collaboration and boosting morale (Social identity theory). This powerful combo fuels innovation, ownership, and continuous improvement, driving your culture to excellence.

WAYS TO EMPOWER

- ❑ **Formalised champion network:** Create a structured network or committee where culture champions can collaborate, share best practices, and advocate for collective action on critical issues.
- ❑ **Cross-departmental collaboration:** Facilitate connections and opportunities between culture champions and other departments, allowing them to access relevant expertise and resources beyond their immediate team.
- ❑ **Direct reporting channels:** Establish direct reporting lines between culture champions and senior management, ensuring their voices are heard and concerns addressed promptly.
- ❑ **Budget allocation:** Provide a dedicated budget for culture champions to use for learning and development, tools, and resources needed to advance their initiatives.
- ❑ **Ongoing communication and engagement:** Regularly communicate with culture champions to update them on company initiatives, address concerns, and gather feedback, ensuring they feel valued and connected to the broader organisational goals.



02 Empower champions

Captains of Team Australian Dairy

Tapping into the social identity as being a leader in the dairy industry and their local community, and acknowledging the power executives have over their establishment's values and direction.

The psychology behind the nudge

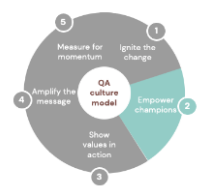
Tapping into the identity of an executive targets the emotions, goals, beliefs and intentions that they have. This can be done through language, prompting and framing around social identity, influence on relationships and social status.

How to apply

Use the phrase "Team Australian Dairy" or #TeamAustralianDairy when referring to the whole industry and its approach to culture. The more this is used, the more this can become a 'floating signifier' (a symbol or concept that's loose enough to mean many things to many people, yet specific enough to galvanize action in a particular direction).

ACTIVITY

Where could you use #TeamAustralianDairy in your communication and training?



O2 Empower champions

We are proud to work in dairy

Using pride to remind workers about the care and reasoning for joining the dairy industry. Employees will feel more satisfied with their work and are motivated by a sense of achievement.

The psychology behind the nudge

Having a sense of ownership towards your work increases how you value your work and the effort you're willing to put into it.

When a person has intrinsic motivation, they are likely to seek novelty and challenges. When people are intrinsically motivated, they are more productive, engaged and happier at work.

How to apply it

See the next pages for more detail:

- Tap into emotions
 - Showcase QA exemplars
 - Connect to user impact
 - Celebrate small wins
- Trigger cognitive biases
 - Loss aversion
 - Social proof
 - The sunk cost fallacy
- Make QA personal
 - Create a families wall
 - Commitment device

02 Empower champions

We are proud to work in dairy

There are several ways you can tap into a sense of pride of working in the dairy industry, you can use one or all of these below and tailor to your workplace as needed.

Tap into emotions

- **Showcase QA exemplars:** Share stories of colleagues who go above and beyond for quality, highlighting the pride and satisfaction of delivering excellence.
- **Connect to user impact:** Emphasise how exceptional QA practices translate to happy customers, positive reviews, and ultimately, brand success.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Recognise and reward individuals and teams for consistently exceeding quality standards, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Trigger cognitive biases

- **Loss aversion:** Frame defects and errors as missed opportunities, preventable damage to brand reputation, and potential financial losses.
- **Social proof:** Highlight teams with consistent quality track records, normalising a commitment to excellence through peer influence.
- **The sunk cost fallacy:** Encourage early reporting of potential quality issues, emphasizing the cost savings and risk mitigation compared to delayed fixes.

02 Empower champions

We are proud to work in dairy cont'd

Make QA personal

- **Create a families wall:** Create a wall where people can put photos of their families and community, to highlight the real impact that their products have – both the positive impact your company's products have as well as who could be affected by poor quality.
- **Commitment device:** Encourage employees to set personal safety goals or sign safety pledges, increasing their sense of ownership and responsibility over QA.



03

Show values in
action



03 Show values in action

Define concrete behaviours

To truly embed a strong food safety mindset and best practice into your company, you need to translate abstract values into clear, actionable behaviours. You need to get really specific to make the vision into something that is easy to understand, see and hear, which ultimately is what bridges the gap between aspirations and measurable action.

The psychology behind the nudge

Fuzzy culture aspirations don't get traction. Behavioural science shows that concrete behaviours simplify expectations, build good habits, support social learning, and make progress measurable. So, break down your aspired culture into everyday choices and behaviours.

A framework to define behaviour

A great framework for defining behaviour is the AACTT framework (Action, actor, context, target, time).

WHO does **WHAT** to **WHAT** **WHERE** and **WHEN**

- **Audience** WHO we want to perform the behaviour
- **Target** WHAT is the subject of the behaviour
- **Action** WHAT is done to the target item
- **Context** WHERE the behaviour takes place
- **TIME** When the behaviour takes place

Example:

Visitors with cars (**WHO**) catch (**WHAT**) the shuttle bus (**WHAT**) to Cradle Mountain (**WHERE**) during their visit (**WHEN**).

QA Examples:

QA Inspector (**WHO**) discovers (**WHAT**) discrepancies in cheese curd moisture content through lab analysis (**WHAT**) at the milk intake point (**WHERE**) before processing begins (**WHEN**).

Chief Operations Officer (**WHO**) approves (**WHAT**) implementation of a new milk filtration system to remove trace contaminants (**WHAT**) at the milk intake point (**WHERE**) before processing begins (**WHEN**).

03 Show values in action

Define concrete behaviours

Go through your culture Vision Statement and define it into behaviours.

Tip: You can have as many behaviours as you want, and can even break them down by audience, e.g. 5 behaviours for QA managers, 5 for Exec, 5 for production floor

Behaviour:

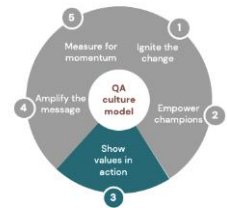
WHO	
WHAT	
WHAT	
WHERE	
WHEN	

Behaviour:

WHO	
WHAT	
WHAT	
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Behaviour:

WHO	
WHAT	
WHAT	
WHERE	
WHEN	



Create psychological safety

To create a strong best practices mindset where people are unafraid and in fact rewarded for raising issue, it is critical to build psychological safety and trust. This needs to occur in the culture champions group as well as the rest of the organisation.

The psychology behind the nudge

Psychological safety is a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (as coined by Professor Amy Edmondson, Harvard Business School). It enhances employee engagement, performance, creativity, as well as well-being. Social acceptance is a fundamental human need and safe environments are the foundation for trusting and high performing teams.

TIPS FOR CREATING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- Create opportunities for people to comment and give feedback
- Meet people's ideas, concerns and questions with respect
- Make communication inclusive, transparent and visible
- Begin with low-risk opportunities to contribute
- Follow up with the person after they have raised something
- Share comments, concerns, questions and ideas more broadly with the group to keep people informed and demonstrate action on what has been raised
- Embed systems and processes to allow people to raise concerns and to address these as a workplace
- Celebrate days of significance for people from diverse cultures, backgrounds and groups, and encourage discourse around these identities.



O3 Show values in action

Search, spot, speak up

Using alliteration and sticky phrases to encourage messages to be easy to recall and engage production floor workers. An example of this is “Search, spot, speak up” – referring to being aware of issues or potential issues, finding these issues, and then raising them.

You can put up posters and signage in the operating environment (using posters with Search, spot, Speak up). Posters with simple visuals are also helpful in overcoming any language barriers.

The psychology behind the nudge

Rhyme-as-reason bias states that people are more likely to perceive a phrase as accurate when it rhymes. Rhyming increases the fluency and familiarity of a statement. Using alliteration makes phrases more memorable and is more engaging for target audiences.

ACTIVITY

Where could you use “Search, spot, speak up?” in your sites?
Have you got existing messages that you can display more prominently?



O3 Show values in action

Integrate best practice into processes

To truly support a culture of strong, food safety and best practice needs to be embedded across the organisation and how it works. One of the most concrete ways to do this is to make QA part of recruitment, training, performance management, and communication.

The psychology behind the nudge

Embedding food safety and best practice into everyday work processes taps into several aspects of human psychology. Costly signalling, a concept from behavioural science, applies to integrating best practice into business by demonstrating an organisation's commitment to quality through these changes, signalling to employees that food safety is a top priority worth their attention and effort. Such visible investments act as a clear message that the company values quality, encouraging employees to mirror this commitment in their daily tasks and interactions.

Another is the availability heuristic, where people assess the frequency or importance of something based on how easily it comes to mind, plays a key role in best practice integration. By frequently seeing food safety and best practice as part of their work and employment, quality remains at the forefront of employees' minds, making it a more readily available and influential factor in their decision-making processes.

How to apply this

- Recruitment
- Onboarding and training
- Performance management
- Communication and engagement
- KPIs and measurement

03 Show values in action

Integrate food safety and best practice into processes

There are several ways you can embed best practice as part of HR and workplace processes, policies and practices.

Recruitment and selection

- Update job descriptions to emphasise quality awareness and attention to detail.
- Include food safety-related questions in interviews to assess candidates' understanding of quality principles and practices.
- Involve QA professionals in the interview process to get their unique perspective.
- Conduct skills assessments or simulations to evaluate candidates' practical food safety best practice abilities.

Onboarding and training

- Integrate food safety principles and best practices into induction and onboarding processes.
- Offer training courses specific to best practice methodologies and tools used in the organisation, including the *Culture: Growing Dairy Exports*.
- Encourage cross-functional training between QA and other departments to foster collaboration and understanding.
- Create mentorship programs where experienced QA professionals guide new hires on quality-related aspects of their roles.

03 Show values in action

Integrate QA into processes cont'd

Performance management

- Include food safety and best practice-related goals and objectives in performance reviews for all employees, not just those directly involved in QA.
- Offer career development opportunities focused on QA skills and expertise.
- Recognise and reward employees who demonstrate commitment to quality in their work.
- Conduct regular "pulse checks" to identify and address any gaps in employee understanding or application of best practice principles.

Communication and engagement

- Promote open communication about quality issues and concerns across the organisation.
- Establish regular channels for sharing best practices and success stories.
- Organise events or campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of quality.
- Create a culture of shared responsibility for quality, where everyone feels empowered to contribute to improvement.

03 Show values in action

Integrate QA into processes cont'd

KPIs and measurement

- Develop and track key performance indicators (KPIs) related to quality in different departments and processes.
- Use data to identify areas for improvement and measure the effectiveness of implemented food safety and best practice initiatives.
- Share quality data and metrics transparently with employees to increase accountability and engagement.
- Set regular goals for quality improvement and celebrate achievements when reached.



04

Amplify the message



04 Amplify the message

Tell stories of success

Use storytelling and real world examples to show positive outcomes for individuals that display the desired culture behaviours. The more an individual can see examples of people raising issues and being rewarded, instead of blamed, the more psychological safety increases and the more the behaviour becomes normalised.

The psychology behind the nudge

Stories are a primal form of communication centred around social connection and imagery that make them easier to remember than facts and figures. This nudge also uses survivorship bias, a cognitive shortcut that occurs when a successful subgroup is mistaken as the entire group, due to the invisibility of the failure subgroup. Here we are showing the success of instances of past behaviours, and praising people for raising it in the past, in essence having “survived” the error raise.

How to tell culture stories

Stories and case studies work particularly well when:

- People feel a behaviour is out of the norm, ‘foreign’ or strange – stories help normalise the behaviour.
- When a group really isn’t used to seeing themselves in a particular way
- When the storyteller is similar to the listener in terms of demographics, lifestyles, and so on.

Highlight and share stories through:

- Personal sharing of stories, in a safe space
- Case studies of good food safety and best practice mentality
- Examples of people with a strong mindset from across teams, demographics, job roles, and more.



04 Amplify the message

QA spotlight newsletter

Write a regular newsletter or segment as part of regular all staff correspondence is a simple yet impactful tool to create engagement, and momentum. It's a cost-effective way to embed QA into the everyone's awareness.

The psychology behind the nudge

A newsletter empowers employees (ownership), showcases examples (inspiration), and feeds positive feedback (growth), which makes QA becomes a shared journey, not just a top-down directive.

Create a QA spotlight newsletter

Highlight the human side of QA:

- Feature culture champions: profile individuals who embody the new mentality, sharing their journey and insights.
- Show the impact of best practice: showcase how improved quality benefits customers, employees, and the organisation as a whole.
- Celebrate milestones and achievements: recognise individuals and teams who have made significant contributions to business improvement.

Making it actionable and collaborative:

- Offer practical tips and resources: share best practices, tools, and training opportunities to help employees improve their skills.
- Encourage sharing and collaboration: feature "QA Q&A" sections or forums where employees can ask questions and share knowledge.

Maintaining momentum and consistency:

- Set a regular schedule: decide on a frequency (monthly, quarterly) for the newsletter and stick to it.
- Showcase continuous improvement: feature new initiatives and track progress towards shared goals in each issue.



04 Amplify the message

Exec Quality Walkaround

Employing the Management by Walking Around (MBWA) technique focussing on quality. This involves executives walking around the production floor to discuss food safety and best practice management.

The psychology behind the nudge

It is beneficial for employees to see executives on the floor and executives get a greater understanding of processes. Costly signalling is also used to show that food safety is highly important because the company executives are walking around and checking in with processes and the team. Mere exposure refers to the tendency to have preferences are we are familiar and comfortable with the process. Costly signalling is a method that showcases the strength and value of a behaviour, product or service by using the cost and money to boost status.

Support your Executives to do a 'Quality Walkaround'

- 1. Focus on strategic alignment:** Show how MBWA aligns with broader organisational goals, such as improving customer satisfaction, reducing costs, or launching products faster. Highlight how increased QA transparency can inform strategic decision-making.
- 2. Frame MBWA as a series of short, focused visits.** Offer flexible options, like virtual shadowing or casual lunch meetings, to accommodate busy schedules.
- 3. Pilot program:** Start with a small pilot program involving a few executives and focused teams. This allows for adjustments based on feedback and generates tangible results for wider buy-in.

Addressing Concerns

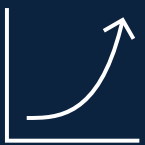
- **Time investment:** Assure them that MBWA will provide valuable insights that outweigh the time commitment. Offer to accompany them on initial visits to provide context and facilitate interactions.
- **Micromanagement fears:** Reassure them that the focus is on understanding the team's challenges, not micromanaging their work. Promote open communication and collaboration without imposing top-down directives.
- **Disruption to workflow:** Propose flexible time slots for visits and work with QA leads to schedule them during less disruptive periods. Emphasise the team's role in guiding the visit and addressing any concerns.



Exec Quality Walkaround cont'd

Executives 'QA Walkaround' conversation topics

- **Focus on the "why":** Encourage executives to ask questions about the team's goals, priorities, and challenges. This helps them understand the bigger picture and the impact of QA on the organisation.
- **Emphasize "what" over "how":** While understanding process is important, prioritise questions about what the team is working on, what successes they've achieved, and what roadblocks they might be facing. This avoids micromanagement and fosters open communication.
- **Inquire about tools and resources:** Understanding the resources available to the QA team and any limitations they might face can inform future decisions and support initiatives.



05

Measure for momentum



05 Measure for momentum

Recognise and reward success

Celebrate individuals and teams who contribute to positive cultural change.

The psychology behind the nudge

Rewarding and recognising strong QA behaviours taps into powerful psychological triggers like reinforcement, intrinsic motivation, and social identity. It builds shared responsibility, drives a growth mindset, and ultimately strengthens the establishment's culture.

Options for reward & recognition

Formal Recognition

- **QA Awards:** Establish dedicated awards for individuals and teams demonstrating exceptional dedication to quality. Categories could include "Most Innovative QA Solution," "Outstanding Defect Identification," "Champion of Collaboration", or create your own.
- **Peer-to-Peer Nominations:** Create a platform for peers to nominate each other for QA-related accomplishments. Public recognition from colleagues can be deeply meaningful.
- **Performance Reviews:** Integrate QA contributions into performance evaluations, highlighting specific examples of how individuals or teams went above and beyond to ensure quality.

Intangible Rewards

- **Public Recognition:** Feature QA heroes in newsletters and company-wide announcements. Showcasing their achievements inspires others and reinforces the value of a strong QA mindset.
- **Leadership Opportunities:** Grant individuals with a strong QA focus opportunities to lead improvement initiatives, participate in cross-functional teams, or mentor others.
- **Skill Development:** Invest in training and development programs specifically focused on enhancing QA skills and knowledge. This demonstrates the organisation's commitment to supporting their continued growth and expertise.



O5 Measure for momentum

Measure progress

Regularly measuring progress and impact through surveys, interviews, and data analysis allows for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement

The psychology behind the nudge

Transparency and tangible evidence of progress motivates individuals and teams to sustain their efforts and stay engaged in the cultural shift. It gives accountability and ownership as well as a sense of achievement.

Ways to measure progress

Quantitative Metrics

- **Incident reduction:** Track the number and severity of incidents identified and resolved, indicating improved quality control.
- **Cost of quality:** Track expenses associated with quality issues, including fixes, reworks, delays, and recalls. Decreasing costs signal improved QA effectiveness.

Qualitative Measures

- **Employee engagement:** Conduct surveys and interviews to gauge employee morale, commitment to initiatives, and overall perception with the quality culture.
- **Collaboration and communication:** Observe team interactions, cross-functional partnerships, and knowledge sharing around best practices. Increased collaboration suggests a stronger quality culture.
- **Risk-taking and innovation:** Monitor the number of experimental projects, reports raising novel issues, and internal feedback mechanisms used. A rise in these points to a thriving growth mindset.



O5 Measure for momentum

Adapt and refine strategies

Continuously review and update nudges and interventions based on data and feedback.

The psychology behind the nudge

Building a culture of learning that encourages experimentation, innovation, and the sharing of best practices lays the foundation for sustained growth and development.

Workshop agenda example

- **Review data:** Review key metrics, share pre-workshop survey results on culture.
- **Thematic breakout groups:** Break into groups to dive deeper into each type of data to analyse more and identify barriers and enablers. Each group shares back their analysis and reflections.
- **Strategic refinement:** Groups develop action plans to address issues and build off success.
- **Timing and accountability:** Translate action plans into timelines, who is responsible and accountable, and measurement parameters.
- **Communication:** Develop a plan to share the progress and plan with stakeholders, leveraging data to showcase impact. Tailor plans for different stakeholder groups, e.g. Executive, managers, floor operators, and so on.
- **Wrap-up & next steps:** Recap key action items and ownership.

Section 3

Further reading

References and further help

Connecting with others in the dairy industry

The best way to play for #TeamAustralianDairy is to connect with others in the industry to share best practice around QA. It's a great way to learn from each other, talk through common questions and concerns, and build a strong industry for us all.

Connect with the dairy export program

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Dairy Export Assurance Program (DEAP) is available for support and questions you may have around QA.

Send us an email at dairyeggfish@aff.gov.au

Further reading

AACTT model of defining behaviour. Original article by Presseau et al. (2019): <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37901889/>

Building a culture where people feel free to speak up:
<https://hbr.org/2023/08/building-a-culture-where-employees-feel-free-to-speak-up>

Dairy Safe Food Safety Culture

<https://www.dairysafe.vic.gov.au/dairyregtech/foodsafetyculture>

TEDx talk on building a psychologically safe workplace | Amy Edmondson | TEDxHGSE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhoLuui9gX8>

Reference

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