Operations 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.

Table of Contents

This toolkit gives you useful information and practical activities to implement in your establishment. You can jump between the activities and choose the activities that are right for your team and organisation.

You can use the live links to navigate this document, including the bar on the top right hand side of each page.

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 Operation managers embed a culture of best practice and food safety in their team and organisation?

Operations managers can foster a culture of best practice in their teams by establishing clear QA guidelines and embedding them into the daily workflow, ensuring that quality checks become a routine aspect of operational procedures. By leading through example, offering regular feedback, and incentivising meticulous attention to quality, they can create an environment where team members naturally prioritise and take pride in upholding high standards, making quality assurance an integral part of their professional ethos and team identity.

Section 1

Operations 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 is at different levels of maturity and readiness for change.

LESS MATURE →	MORE MATURE
Higher risk of food safety incidents: • More mistakes, costing time and money • Higher risk to your brand reputation	Greater protection from food safety incidents: • 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 team's culture maturity level?

Understand what level of maturity your team 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 team, 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 my team'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 my team reluctant to change or embraces continuous improvement?

- ❑ What is the biggest area of improvement for my team?

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	Trusting and safe culture
WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE - 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	- 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 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.*

9

Reflection

What is your team'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-step model for nudging culture

As Operations 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.

Celebrate milestones and continuously improve

5 Measure for momentum

Cultivate urgency and define your aspirational culture

1 Ignite the change

Communicate and engage effectively & repeatedly

4 Amplify the message

Culture model

Empower champions **2**

Form a team of culture champions

Show values in action

3

Operationalise culture through concrete behaviours

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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 culture.

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?

18

02
Empower your team

Turn your team into culture champions

Building a strong culture is about behaviour change and requires a team of dedicated people to drive it. This involves identifying key people who embody a strong culture mindset and are able to influence others.. Empowering your team to be culture champions with resources, authority, and support is vital to drive change effectively.

- **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.

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?

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 culture personal
- Create a families wall
- Commitment device

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 best 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.

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.

Lead by example

As the leader of your team, it's important to show the values and behaviours your want your team to have.

The psychology behind the nudge
Leading by example works through observational learning and social norms, because you are a role model for others and you set the standard for what is acceptable.

Ask yourself

Reflect on your own behaviours around food safety and best practice and come up with some ways you can strengthen your leading by example.

- Is "good enough" ever good enough for me, or do I constantly strive for excellence?

- Do I openly acknowledge and celebrate QA wins across the team?

- Do I openly discuss and learn from quality failures, taking responsibility without blame?

- Am I transparent about metrics and goals, sharing data and progress with the team?

- Do I personally participate in quality checks and audits, setting an example of hands-on commitment?

- Do I consistently provide constructive feedback on quality issues, focusing on solutions and support?

- Do I actively seek out and implement new improvements or technologies to enhance quality?

- Do I encourage and empower my team to raise quality concerns and suggest solutions?

- Do I make myself readily available for questions and support around quality issues?

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 QA 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 QA 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

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.

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 QA 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?
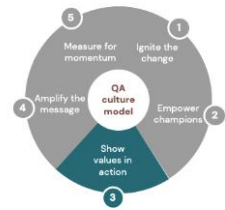
Why, why, why, why but why?

It's important to have a curious mindset for finding QA issues, understanding them through root cause analysis, and reporting them. Being curious means your team can find the underlying cause of the issue and prevent it from happening again, from a mindset of problem solving, not people-blaming.

The psychology behind the nudge
The use of the curiosity gap helps to increase engagement, memorability, problem solving and critical thinking skills. Memorable and catchy phrases aid cognitive recall, making it easier to remember and act as an internal prompt to the target behaviour.

ACTIVITY

How can you use the phrase "why, why, why, why, but why?" in your team's root cause analysis, conversations about QA and training?

Buddy up for QA

Speaking up about concerns and issues is intimidating and makes employees feel vulnerable, especially when raising issues to management. It is important to create a culture in your organisation that supports employees to speak up. Implementing buddy up systems is an effective way to share knowledge and learnings between more experienced workers and newer workers; as well as establish friendships and trust in teams.

**The psychology behind the nudge**
Buddy systems tap into our social nature through social facilitation and accountability. The shared accountability enhances motivation and commitment, as people are more likely to follow through on goals when they know someone else is relying on them.

What makes a good buddy?	What is their role?
• Active listening • Friendly and patient • Knowledgeable about processes and expectations • Good communication • Willing to take on a buddy	• For new employee: introduce them to the team and culture, learn organisation QA procedures • Share knowledge, tips, best practice • Act as a sounding board for ideas or problems
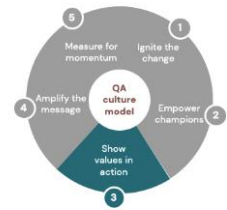
Buddy up for QA

QA Buddy guide

Being a QA Buddy:

- **Be approachable and welcoming**: Show genuine interest in the newcomer and their questions. Make yourself available and easy to talk to throughout their onboarding and beyond.

- **Active listening**: Give your full attention when the newcomer speaks. Avoid interrupting and use clarifying questions to fully understand their concerns.

- **Patience and empathy**: Remember, learning QA takes time. Be patient with the newcomer's pace and understanding. Put yourself in their shoes and be empathetic to their anxieties.

- **Non-judgmental**: Create a safe space where the newcomer feels comfortable asking any question without fear of criticism or reprimand. Encourage open and honest communication.

- **Practical guidance:** Offer clear and concise answers to their questions. Share useful resources like documentation, tutorials, or internal tools. Point them to relevant experts within the QA team if needed.

- **Positive reinforcement**: Celebrate their progress and accomplishments, no matter how small. Positive reinforcement builds confidence and encourages further learning. Introduce yourself as their QA Buddy during their onboarding. Briefly explain your role and how they can reach you.

- **Schedule regular check-in meetings** (weekly or bi-weekly) to address any questions or concerns. Encourage them to come to you anytime between meetings as well.

- **Lead by example:** Showcase your own commitment to quality and continuous learning.

30

Conversation guide with QA managers

If your organisation has a QA manager or a team of QA roles, it's important to regular talk to them about QA culture, food safety and best practice. This can sometimes feel challenging because it can feel like QA managers and Operations managers have competing priorities.
Here is a guide for topics for a regular conversation.

Goal: Regular communication between Operations and QA about managing quality

Setting: Casual but professional space, conducive to open communication

Agenda

1. Shared Vision (10 minutes)
- Floor Operations Manager: Share the production targets and challenges in meeting them without compromising quality.

- QA Manager: Briefly explain the overall QA goals and the value of quality for customer satisfaction and brand reputation.

- Discussion: Identify common ground and shared objectives (e.g., happy customers, brand trust, sustainable production).

2. Exploring Challenges (15 minutes):
- QA Manager: Describe specific quality concerns observed (e.g., inconsistent packaging, hygiene issues, product variations).

- Floor Operations Manager: Explain any factors impacting quality (e.g., high production volume, staffing limitations, equipment efficiency).

- Discussion: Actively listen, acknowledge challenges, and avoid blame. Brainstorm potential solutions collaboratively (e.g., improved training, streamlined processes, resource allocation).

31

Conversation guide with QA managers cont'd

3. Collaborative Solutions (20 minutes):
- QA Manager: Propose specific QA initiatives that benefit both quality and efficiency (e.g., automated checks, process improvements, standardised procedures).
- Floor Operations Manager: Share ideas for adapting workflow or implementing tools to enhance both quality and throughput.
- Discussion: Focus on win-win solutions, prioritise feasibility, and agree on ownership and timelines for implementation.

4. **Communication & Monitoring (10 minutes):**
- QA Manager: Discuss communication channels for ongoing updates on progress and potential roadblocks.
- Floor Operations Manager: Suggest ways to involve and incentivise floor personnel in maintaining quality standards.
- Discussion: Agree on how to measure progress and success jointly, including both quality metrics and production efficiency outcomes.

5. Closing & Next Steps (5 minutes):
- Recap key takeaways and action items.
- Reiterate commitment to collaborative approach and shared success.
- Schedule follow-up meetings to monitor progress and adapt strategies.

Remember:
- Maintain a respectful and positive tone throughout the conversation.
- Use data and evidence to support arguments and proposals.
- Focus on solutions and avoid getting stuck in blaming or defensiveness.
- Celebrate successes and acknowledge each other's contributions.
- Remember, building a strong culture is a continuous journey, not a one-time event.
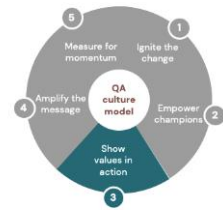
Language matters

How you as a leader respond to people raising QA issues as well as to people blaming others is really important. Here are some examples for what you can say to your team.

The psychology behind the nudge
Humans are wired for social acceptance. When others let us know 'it's not ok' to act a certain way, the behaviour is reduced. It also works through injunctive norms change behaviour because individuals think "because other people think I should do it".

What to say when someone raises an issue

"No worries about mistakes here. It's how we learn and improve."

"This is exactly why we encourage open communication. Great catch!"

"Hey team, let's give [name] a round of applause for catching this! Their vigilance keeps us on track."

"Your feedback helped us prevent a potentially big issue. You're a problem-solver!"

"Let's dig into this together. What kind of things made you notice the issue?"

What to say when someone blames a person instead of a system issue

"I appreciate you raising this, but blaming individuals won't help us prevent it from happening again. Let's look for the root cause."

Let's take a step back. Instead of focusing on who did what, let's analyse the system that allowed this to happen."

"We're all a team here, and mistakes happen. How can we work together to improve the process and avoid similar situations in the future?"

"Let's avoid assumptions and accusations. Can we reconstruct the steps leading up to the issue to see where and how the system could be improved?"

33

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.

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.

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 QA developments 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.

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.

Section 3

Further reading

References and further help

Connecting with others in the dairy industry

The best way to plat 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 dairyeggsfish@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

Cover page image by Freepik by Freepik.com