

Case study: Learning our AEIOUs – New Zealand Steel

The problem

New Zealand Steel had been using the iCam process to investigate incidents that happened on site. They were finding that the iCam method wasn't particularly inclusive or human-centred so decided to look for alternative methods of learning from events.

There are five basic principles that are widely adopted by most Human and Organisational Performance (HOP) practitioners:

- people make errors
- error-likely situations are predictable
- all human actions are influenced by the context in which they occur
- operational upsets can be avoided
- our response to failure matters.

New Zealand Steel wanted to adopt a method that took these principles into consideration. They used their 'immerse, ideate, experiment' innovation process to tackle this problem. Working groups were created and open discussions were held about investigation process.

The solution

AEIOU sessions were born! AEIOU stands for:

Abnormal
Event
Improvement
Opportunity
with U (you).

This acronym helps people apply HOP thinking to abnormal events and moves away from the traditional 'incident investigation' approach. It also makes it clear that the sessions are for 'you' to make work more successful.

New Zealand Steel has completed eight pilot AEIOU sessions and feedback has been very positive. The process has been easy to follow, participants feel engaged and the sessions are providing valuable information about 'work as done'. People gained a far better understanding of the context of the situation and inclusion in the process led to greater commitment to complete the agreed actions.



Workshopping with WorkSafe

The hardest thing about implementing AEIOU was making arrangements for our operators to attend. Their input is invaluable, but it can be difficult getting them off the manufacturing floor for the sessions. Although it was hard this was also a highlight of the sessions - seeing the operators and not just the supervisors actively engaging in the conversations. Sharing their stories and experience.



New Zealand Steel's safety evolution including AEIOU

What we learned

During this innovation New Zealand Steel learnt how applicable the HOP principles are. For anyone looking to implement something like this in their workplace the best starting point is:

1. Make sure your solution engages the people in your workplace closest to the work
2. Understand the concept of 'work as imagined' versus 'work as done'
3. These two conditions were the foundation of the AEIOU model and a new 'safety differently' approach.