Three Strategies for Managing Human & Organizational Errors

THE PROBLEM

Many organizations try to manage errors without any core strategy. This haphazard approach can capsize or sink your entire Human Performance Improvement (HPI) effort.
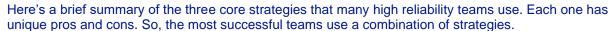
HPI is an emerging field, with multiple strategies that often seem to conflict with one another.

Common sense tells us to reduce human errors.
But some HPI experts say that humans don't cause errors.

Many believe that, *"If you can't measure it, you can't manage it."*
Yet some say counting errors stops us from understanding them.

Others say that defining the term "error" leads to useless debate.
Some even suggest that "errors" don't exist at all.

If you're confused, you're not alone.

Here's a brief summary of the three core strategies that many high reliability teams use. Each one has unique pros and cons. So, the most successful teams use a combination of strategies.

THREE STRATEGIES TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

#1 APPLY DEFENSES
Give your team members effective, ready-to-use defenses like Peer Checks and Three-Step Communication. They can create quick wins. And team leaders find them easy to teach and observe in the field. But remember, classic defenses, when rigidly mandated, can easily become just another compliance tool that employees will avoid.

#2 IMPROVE PROCESSES
Find and fix hidden weaknesses in your procedures and policies throughout your organization. Assess, manage and improve the riskiest processes first. Correcting even one critical weakness may prevent hundreds of errors over time. Yet remember that many complex, creative jobs like troubleshooting can't be "proceduralized."

#3 BUILD RESILIENCE
Build up resources-in-reserve to help your teams recover from errors quickly like flight deck crews on aircraft carriers, wilderness firefighters, and other High Reliability Organizations (HROs). Building resilience can also help teams improve communication & trust. But remember, building resilience requires time, money, training & other resources-in-reserve which many leaders consider inefficient.

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