



Oil Refiner Transforms Culture to Improve Safety and Performance

Safety incidents fell more than 70% after the company implemented the principles and practices of High-Reliability Organizations.

Challenge

A petroleum company with five U.S.-based refineries faced rising safety risks as teams struggled to respond to ad hoc procedures and inconsistent practices. Despite rapid development of new systems, leadership recognized that procedural fixes alone were not enough. Efforts were not sustained, and employee behavior varied widely across sites.

To ensure long-term safety in its refineries, the company partnered with us to develop a roadmap to become a High-Reliability Organization (HRO) and to build the necessary underlying culture. HROs operate in demanding and complex environments while achieving industry-leading performance by creating a culture of resilience that catches, corrects, and constantly learns from errors.

Discovery

We applied our proprietary methodology to identify cultural gaps and lay the foundation for meaningful change. Using interviews across all levels and yardstick®, our web-based assessment tool, we benchmarked the organization's culture against HRO attributes and highlighted the behaviors required for consistent operational discipline.

Working with senior leadership, we defined five cultural pillars—integrity, knowledge, questioning attitude, formality, and team backup—to guide decision-making and create shared expectations across the workforce. We helped employees translate these pillars into role-specific behaviors via role description sheets, ensuring the HRO principles were internalized and adopted consistently.

Impact

We supported the company in embedding the new cultural pillars into its Operational Excellence Management System to ensure long-term sustainability. Workshops integrated the principles into hazard recognition and training, while the company extended the framework across business units—refreshing hiring and performance processes and strengthening communication.

The transformation delivered measurable and lasting results:

- Safety incidents decreased by more than 70%.
- Refinery utilization improved by nearly 5% year-over-year.
- Approximately \$200 million in EBITDA was captured.

The CEO described the guiding HRO principles as “a simple and effective model to change the culture of the company,” creating a foundation of operational discipline that reshaped how teams work every day in complex environments.

Contact Our Experts



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About Innosight

Innosight helps enterprise leaders turn uncertainty into opportunity and thrive in a changing world. With unmatched expertise in navigating disruption, we partner closely with clients to address their most complex strategic challenges, building resilience in today's business while shaping the organization of tomorrow. Together with our colleagues across **Huron**, we align strategy, operating models, and people to drive transformation and deliver sustainable growth.

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