

Food Safety Culture

Food Microbiology and Food Safety Series

Food Microbiology and Food Safety publishes valuable, practical, and timely resources for professionals and researchers working on microbiological topics associated with foods, as well as food safety issues and problems.

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Food Safety Culture

Creating a Behavior-Based Food Safety
Management System

 Springer

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*This book is dedicated to my parents,
Haralambos and Daisy Yiannas, for
teaching me through their example and
not just words, the importance of a strong
work ethic and always searching for a
better way.*

Contents

1	Looking Back to Shape the Future	1
	History of Food Production	1
	Emergence of Retail Food Establishments	3
	Foodborne Disease	4
	Retail Food Safety	6
	Reducing Risk Early in the Food Production Chain	6
	Changing Behavior	8
	Key Points	9
2	Why the Focus on Culture?	11
	What Is Culture?	11
	Why Is Culture Important?	12
	Who Creates Culture?	13
	How Is Culture Created?	14
	The Foundation	15
	Core Elements	15
	Leadership at the Top	16
	Confidence in the Part of All Employees	16
	Clear Management Visibility and Leadership	16
	Accountability at All Levels	17
	Sharing of Knowledge and Information	17
	Best Practices	17
	Key Points	18
3	A Systems-Based Approach to Food Safety	21
	What Is a System?	22
	Systems Thinking	22
	Behavior Change Theories and Models	23
	Behavioral Theory	23
	Social Cognitive Theory	23
	Health Belief Model	24
	Theory of Reasoned Action	24

- Transtheoretical Model 24
- Social Marketing 25
- Environmental or Physical Factors 25
- A Behavior-Based Systems Continuous Improvement Model 27
- Key Points 28

- 4 Creating Food Safety Performance Expectations. 29**
 - Getting Employees to Do What They Are Supposed to Do. 29
 - Expect More than Efficiency. 30
 - Expect a Proper Food Safety Attitude 31
 - Be Specific – Not Generic 31
 - Start with the Food Code 32
 - Develop Risk-Based Expectations 32
 - Beyond Regulatory Compliance 34
 - Write Them All Down 35
 - Key Points 36

- 5 Educating and Training to Influence Behavior 39**
 - Education Versus Training 40
 - Why Educate and Train?. 41
 - Focus on Changing Behavior 42
 - Make It Risk-Based 44
 - Value and Respect Diversity 44
 - Keep It Simple and User Friendly 45
 - Key Points 46

- 6 Communicating Food Safety Effectively 49**
 - The Importance of Communication 49
 - Use a Variety of Mediums 50
 - Posters, Symbols, and Slogans 51
 - Use More than Words. 51
 - Have Conversations 52
 - Ask Questions 54
 - Key Points 55

- 7 Developing Food Safety Goals and Measurements 57**
 - The Importance of Food Safety Goal Setting. 57
 - Establishing Effective Food Safety Goals. 58
 - Why Measure Food Safety? 59
 - What Should You Measure? 61
 - Lagging Versus Leading Indicators of Food Safety 62
 - Key Points 65

- 8 Using Consequences to Increase or Decrease Behaviors** 67
 - Determine the Cause of Performance Problems 68
 - Creating Consequences for Food Safety. 69
 - Positive Consequences. 70
 - Negative Consequences. 73
 - Key Points 74

- 9 Tying It All Together – Behavior-Based Food Safety Management . .** 77
 - Management or Leadership?. 77
 - Traditional Food Safety Management Versus Behavior-Based
Food Safety Management. 78

- 10 Unwrapping – Thoughts on the Future of Food Safety** 83
 - The Way Forward? 83
 - Making Significant Leaps 84
 - The Future 85

- References** 87

- Index** 91

Introduction

It has been said, *what we know and what we believe is of little consequence. It is what we do that is important.* When it comes to food safety, this point is certainly true.

The main reason I decided to write this book is simple. It's because I wish I could have known 20 years ago (when I started my career in food safety) what I know now. The concepts I will share with you in this book are not generally taught in food science curriculums. They are not something you generally hear about in food safety seminars or at food safety conferences. To my knowledge, there is not much documented in the food safety literature about this topic.

The concepts you'll read about in this book are simple. Many are age-old principles about human behavior. Others are more recent concepts developed through the study of human behavior, group dynamics, and organizational culture. Many of the ideas may be considered simple. They are so simple that they are powerful. In fact, one of the most common compliments I receive is that the ideas presented in this text are simple, but they are rarely assembled together in this manner and they are rarely used in the context of improved food safety performance.

In the field of food safety today, there is much documented about specific microbes, time/temperature processes, post-process contamination, and HACCP – things often called the hard sciences. There is not much published or discussed related to human behavior and culture – often referred to as the “soft stuff.”

However, if you look at foodborne disease trends over the past few decades, it's clear to me that the soft stuff is still the hard stuff. We won't make dramatic improvements in reducing the global burden of foodborne disease, especially in certain parts of the food system and world, until we get much better at influencing and changing human behavior (the soft stuff).

Despite the fact that thousands of employees have been trained in food safety around the world, millions have been spent globally on food safety research, and countless inspections and tests have been performed at home and abroad, food safety remains a significant public health challenge. Why is that? The answer to this question reminds me of a quote by Elliot M. Estes, who said, *“If something has been done a particular way for 15 or 20 years, it's a pretty good*

sign, in these changing times, that it is being done the wrong way.” To improve food safety, we have to realize that it’s more than just food science; it’s the behavioral sciences too.

Think about it. If you’re trying to improve the food safety performance of an organization, industry, or region of the world, what you’re really trying to do is change peoples’ behaviors. *Simply put, food safety equals behavior.* This is the fundamental premise that this entire book is based upon.

Before you read this book, let me share what it is intended to be and what it is not.

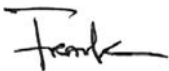
This book is intended to be:

- An introductory textbook on the topic of behavior-based food safety
- An easy to use, quick reference guide on key concepts of a behavior-based food safety management system
- Primarily for food safety professionals

This book is not intended to be:

- A highly technical reference manual
- A step by step instructions manual
- The only resource for those with an interest in the behavioral sciences or behavior-based food safety

This book is devoted to providing you with new ideas and concepts that have not been thoroughly reviewed, researched, and discussed in the field of food safety. It is my wish that by simply reading this book, you pick up a few ideas, tips, or approaches that can help you further improve future food safety performance within your organization or area of responsibility. By sharing and learning from each other as professionals, we can make a difference, advance food safety worldwide, and improve the quality of life for consumers all over the world.



If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, I would love to hear from you. You can e-mail me at foodsafetyculture@msn.com Thanks for reading.