

The Invisible Layer

A Positioning Essay — Tiffiney Jahn, Estrella Results Coaching

Four workers were injured from acetic acid exposure at BP Chemicals' Cooper River facility. The plant had the highest OSHA recordable injury rate in all of BP Downstream.

The organization ran every standard investigation. Safety observations. Process reviews. Root cause analyses. Every tool designed to catch this kind of problem.

What those tools eventually surfaced was not a process failure.

The root causes were 35 percent personal and family distractions, 25 percent fatigue, and 15 percent complacency. Every one of them invisible. Every one of them human. Every one of them accumulating on the floor, every shift, while the dashboards stayed green.

We implemented a visibility intervention. We gave the team a way to signal without speaking. We gave leadership a way to read what was actually present in the room.

808 days without a recordable injury followed.

The project was named Best CI Project for Safety across the entire BP organization — not because we built a better process, but because we built a better system for seeing what the process could not capture.

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This is not unique to Cooper River. It is happening in manufacturing operations right now.

People do not disengage overnight. A team does not lose ownership in a single meeting. A key employee does not decide to leave because of one bad week. These things develop over months, in patterns that do not appear in any report, through shifts that are invisible to the standard tools leaders have available.

The tools most organizations rely on — annual engagement surveys, open door policies, safety observation programs — were designed to measure what is already visible. They capture sentiment after the fact. They do not catch what is building.

By the time disengagement appears in turnover numbers, it has been developing for months. By the time resistance surfaces in a safety incident, the warning signs were already present in the room.

That is not a leadership failure. It is a visibility problem.

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This is not about making manufacturing feel like a therapy session. The floor is still the floor. Production targets are real. Safety is non-negotiable.

What this is about is operational intelligence — the same kind of real-time visibility manufacturing already has into equipment, applied to people.

One question. One word. A QR code scan that takes ten seconds. No surveys. No clipboards. No performance reviews. No conversation required.

The data is real-time. The patterns are visible. And when a leader can see the patterns, they can respond earlier — before the resignation letter, before the incident, before the conversation that should have happened six months ago.

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This is not intuition. The behavioral science behind this approach is documented across decades of research — on how people under pressure regulate behavior, pursue goals, and signal distress before it becomes breakdown. The instrument for manufacturing environments did not exist. I built it.

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I spent twenty-five years inside manufacturing before I understood what that invisibility costs. Chemical engineering. Lean Six Sigma. Operations leadership. I know what the floor looks like under pressure, and I know what the dashboards miss.

What I do now is give manufacturing leaders visibility into their people the same way they already have visibility into their equipment — in real time, before it hits the operation.

Not a program. Not an intervention that requires your teams to stop production or trust that their honesty will be received without consequence. A system that runs in the background and reads the room.

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The signal exists before the problem does.

It is already present in your operation — in the words your team is not saying, in the engagement that has narrowed, in the people who are still showing up but carrying something heavier than the work.

A system designed to read it will catch it. The question is whether yours does.

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Tiffiney Jahn. Founder, Estrella Results Coaching LLC. Twenty-five years on the plant floor.

Better people. Better business.