

The background image shows a modern office environment with warm wood-paneled walls. In the center, three people are seated around a table, engaged in a discussion. To the right, a man and a woman are seated at a desk, looking at a computer monitor displaying data. The lighting is soft and professional.


# A 'just' culture overview

presented by: Jaci Brown

# Agenda

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- Introduction
- Understanding the goal
- Obstacles to success
- References

A woman with long blonde hair and glasses, wearing a patterned shirt and dark pants, stands in a modern office space with large windows. She is gesturing with her hands as if presenting. In the foreground, a group of people are seated, looking towards her. The background shows a brick building with many windows.

What do we mean by  
'just'?





# Comparing research

An article recently published on BMJ Open Quality (A scientific/medical journal) produced a review of 16 professional articles, opinions, and databases reporting on just culture in the healthcare industry. [1]

# Overarching themes

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Their research yielded four reoccurring themes across the data: Strong leadership, education and training, accountability, and open communication. The conclusion of the review leading to a wide summary outline of ideal just culture by top professionals in a mission critical environment. Overall themes can be applied directly to software while details differ. [1]

# Education and training:

After the new procedure for critical reviews is finalized, inform everyone. Layout the plan of action for response interviews, taking responsibility, and gathering data. [1]

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# Strong leadership

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Leadership must be willing to participate in taking accountability for their actions.

Demonstrating the process can also help strengthen belief in the safety a just culture can provide.

While this may still include consequences, the visibility and focus on preventing reoccurrences will help solidify the new intended culture. [1]

# Accountability

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The shift from fear of reprimands and terminations over small errors will require a shift in mindset. Encouraging accountability helps everyone know what is expected of them. When the sense of accountability is shared across a group, the environment to report mistakes become more focused on quickly recovering and moving away from the mistake together. Accountability also forms a more solid picture of what success looks like in the organization, and even consequences for blatant disregard of rules, processes, etc. [1]



# Open Communication

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Creating a standard for open communication can go a long way to increasing the success of a just culture. Listening, withholding judgement and blame, and open forums for sharing can help advocate for a just environment as well. When all sides of incident feel free to share their viewpoints, it may become easier to see how or where an error occurred, perhaps as simple as in communication.[1]



# Obstacles

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Many of the obstacles to a just culture involve the human nature to react emotionally, assign blame, and protect themselves. While not all inherently negative, some of these tendencies can get in the way of a just culture.

# Blame

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Humans have a tendency to blame someone when something goes wrong, but its not helpful often. Use a process of fact gathering methodically for every circumstance. Remember that hindsight isn't helpful, and quick actions are often forced. [2]

# Outcome bias

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Outcome bias comes from using the severity of the issue/outcome as justification for increased punishment. To assess without outcome bias, separate the individual's actions from the outcome. Would a similar skill leveled employee make the same decision? Was the action correct despite the overall event outcome? [2]

## Lack of Transparency

People should know what will happen in an investigation of failure. Knowing what will come will prevent fear of rash decisions from hiding the truth. It may also encourage more detail in the interviews as employees share the urge to learn from their mistakes so as not to repeat them.

# Inconsistent assessments

Inconsistency can unravel an entire just process. If investigations are not handled in an orderly, expected manner, reliance on the safety of a just culture may disappear. When the rules don't apply equally to everyone, everyone else notices.





## Reference

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[1] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10186448/#s4title>

[2] <https://justculture.hqca.ca/overcoming-barriers-to-a-just-culture/>