



IMPLEMENTING A JUST CULTURE

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JUST CULTURE

- A Just Culture is an idea that focuses on problem solving and learning when an incident occurs instead of blaming individuals. The goal is a work environment that focuses on continuous improvement.

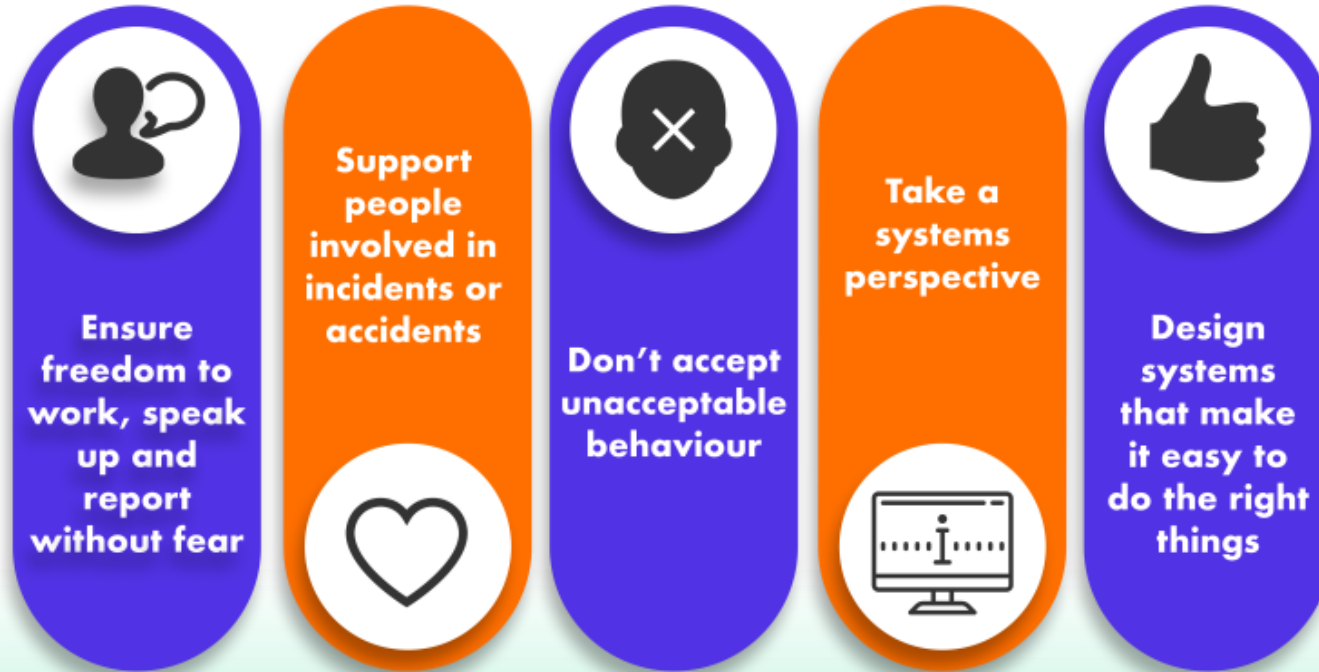
The goal is a work environment where people can ask questions and report incidents without fear.

It is meant to create a safe space where people can be open without having to worry about losing their jobs.

It is meant to encourage learning

Instead of blaming an individual for a mistake it focuses on finding out what caused it and how to prevent it in the future.

The Five Commitments of Just Culture



Credit: Dingeman,
2023

A just culture embodies Honesty, Learning, Justice, Humility, and Respect

IMPLEMENTATION



Retrospectives are used to reflect on either an incident or as part of the end of a sprint to discuss both the negatives and positives in an effort to see what can be improved.



It is about Team learning and focuses more on process failures than individuals failures

It questions how it happened and not who did it



Promotes a sense of shared accountability for outcomes

Everyone is allowed to share their thoughts
Focuses on finding a consensus not just management giving direction

MISCONCEPTIONS

- A Just Culture does not mean that no one takes responsibility. The goal is to determine how something happened. Was it the fault of a process or was it human error. If it was human error, was it a mistake, a lack of knowledge, or was someone taking risks that they should not have.
- It is about fairness, but this does not mean there are no consequences.

A mistake can lead to training to prevent future mistakes

Repeated mistakes demonstrates a pattern



ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS



Incentives and metrics focus on things like speed, delivery and uptime.

Instead focus on group metrics such as "Deployment frequency and success rates, Lead time from commit to production and Mean time to recovery from failures"(Adijat, 2025). This shifts the focus to encourage collaboration.



Leaderships structures are inherently top down

This can discourage openness and prevent teams from learning from their mistakes



Teams may remain siloed

This can prevent team collaboration and sharing of knowledge.

CULTURAL BARRIERS

Fear of retribution and or a lack of trust

- Team members may be afraid to be open and admit mistakes or a lack of knowledge or understanding because they remain afraid that there will be consequences.

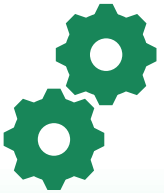
Resistance to change.

- Teams may be stuck in their old way of thinking

Decisions are still made by management creating a hierarchy

- Managers still make all decisions instead of utilizing the teams experience

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES



Tools are only as effective as the teams who are using them.

A development team that uses an automated pipeline yet pushes errors to operations (Adijat, 2025).



Lack of incident traceability

Without a clear understanding of what caused an incident there is a potential to lead to finger pointing.



Inconsistent Postmortems

The lack of a consistent process for postmortem reviews can prevent a blameless learning culture from existing.



SUSTAINING

- Leadership needs to align with Just Culture
 - Leaders should reward learning.
 - Honesty and vulnerability should be reinforced.
- Continuous Education
 - Just Culture should be taught during onboarding
 - Regular training should continue to reinforce mindset.
- Blameless Postmortems
 - They must remain a safe place where incidents can be reviewed, and teams can share knowledge and learn.

REFERENCES:

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