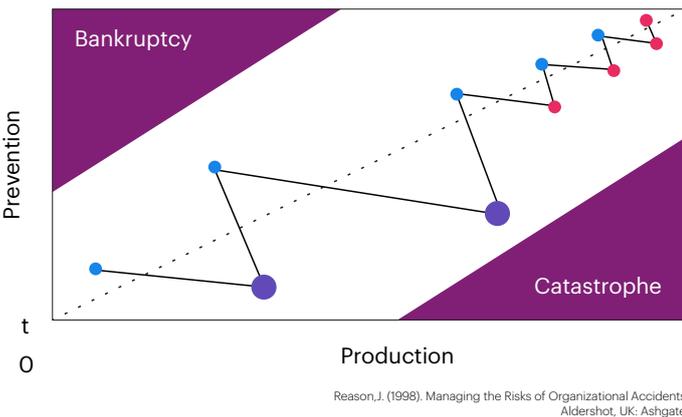


Don't forget to be afraid : How to balance production and prevention to avoid accidents

In a world where commercial pressures demand faster, better, cheaper and cleaner, how do the best organisations maintain their composure and retain a focus on what could go wrong at any time when there are high stake decisions to be made?

High Reliability Organisations possess the wherewithal to handle these dilemmas effectively. HROs develop a chronic sense of unease, whereas Lower Reliability Organisations (LROs) often focus on past success rather than future failure – **they forget to be afraid.**

James Reason illustrates the enduring tension that exists between production and prevention in the model here.



Organisations rarely balance the two objectives and tend to oscillate between a preoccupation with making profit and a focus on being safe. Business pressures can push organisations to cut cost (and corners), whereas an accident is often followed (usually briefly) by tighter procedures, compliance and regulation.

Production makes money and is easy to measure, whilst prevention costs money and is difficult to measure. Nobody gets plaudits or rewards for preventing an incident that has never happened, yet the lure of making money and the “seduction of production” is a palpable force in any organisation.

So, what are the tell-tale signs that your organisation could be drifting towards either bankruptcy or catastrophe?

- What is the first thing that leaders talk about at the start of a meeting?
- Where do the high calibre employees work in your organisation?
- What do the key performance indicators for your organisation measure?
- What objectives do the reward and recognition programs favour?
- What do employees need to do to get promoted?
- What stories do people tell about your organisation – who are the heroes and who are the villains?
- Are managers preoccupied with past success or the possibility of future failure?
- Do leaders spend their time “counting the beans” in their offices or asking questions out on the shop floor?

The recent release of the film **Deepwater Horizon**, a dramatization of the BP disaster back in April 2010, is a chilling reminder of when an organisation gets this balance wrong.

Similarly, whilst the inquiry into the Grenfell disaster has only just begun, early indications suggest that production won the day over prevention.

These examples show that, from major multinational oil companies to local housing associations, finding and maintaining an appropriate balance between the seemingly opposing forces of production and prevention is a key challenge for all organisations and sectors.



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Bourton Group has supported many businesses from a wide range of industries to implement Lean improvement techniques via tailored engagement programs.

We work collaboratively to deliver on efficiency objectives and targets, with returns on investment of over 20:1 being reported, along with wider benefits of reducing waste, decreasing time to complete activities and improvements to quality – all of which have been directly attributed to Lean.