

When Safety Systems Aren't Enough: How Merck Moved from Compliance to Conviction Across 52 Global Factories



COMPANY OVERVIEW

- **Industry:**
Pharmaceutical manufacturing, regulated global manufacturing
- **Scale:**
52 factories, approximately 20,750 employees globally
- **Scope:**
Full-organization Safe by Choice initiative spanning manufacturing personnel, frontline leaders, and executive leadership
- **Duration:**
17-month rollout; program sustained and running strong 7+ years post-launch
- **Region:**
Global, delivered in 11 languages across multiple countries
- **Delivery model:**
Eagle's Flight-facilitated launch across 8 sites and 3 countries, followed by train-the-trainer scale with 77 Merck facilitators and 5 Merck master trainers

"Eagle's Flight helped implement Safe by Choice for approximately 20,000 manufacturing personnel globally. Nearly seven years later, the program was still running strong and safety performance had improved."

THE CHALLENGE:

Incidents kept happening inside a manufacturing network that already had the systems, the audits, the policies, and a workforce that understood the rules. Discovery across 20 countries revealed the real problem: employees did not believe safety outcomes were within their control. The gap was not procedural. It was a mindset, one that held firm even under the weight of governance structures and production pressure.

THE SOLUTION

- Conducted global discovery across sites and leadership levels to surface the specific mindset and behavioral gaps driving ongoing risk, then built site-customized scenarios and vignettes so the learning reflected actual manufacturing realities rather than generic compliance content.
- Designed distinct experiences for employees and leaders, with leadership sessions focused on personal ownership, visible modeling, and the coaching behaviors required to sustain a safety-first culture beyond the training event.
- Delivered 906 ownership sessions and 156 intentional leadership sessions across 62 sites over 17 months, with reinforcement tools, scorecards, and executive reviews built in to maintain accountability after initial delivery.
- Built and certified an internal delivery infrastructure of 77 Merck facilitators and 5 Merck master trainers, ensuring the organization could sustain and scale the program without ongoing external dependency.
- Supported retention through digital reinforcement activities that tracked knowledge lift over time, moving participants from a baseline of 77% to 87% knowledge retention.

THE RESULTS:

- 61% decrease in lost-time incident rates
- 31% decrease in total recordable incident rates
- 64% increase in near-miss reporting, a leading indicator of a workforce that now felt safe to surface risk
- One unionized site reached 1 million hours without a lost-time incident and set a new goal of 2 million hours
- Company moved into first-quartile safety performance based on LTIR and RIR benchmarks
- 10% knowledge lift in digital reinforcement tracking
- Program still running strong 7+ years after launch

KEY METRICS:

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- 52 factories, approximately 20,750 employees reached
- 11 languages
- 17-month rollout duration
- 906 ownership sessions delivered
- 156 intentional leadership sessions
- 77 Merck facilitators and 5 Merck master trainers certified
- Knowledge lift from 77% to 87% in digital reinforcement tracking
- Program sustained 7+ years post-launch