

Principles of Workforce Engagement:

HOW TO DEVELOP A SAFER WORKPLACE





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Introduction

Employee engagement at its best can ensure that well-laid out safety policies are not only adopted but embraced. When policies are based on comprehensive strategies and are easily implemented, employees feel empowered to internalize safety. And a really engaged workforce will go so far as to suggest improvements on their own.

How can companies create such an environment? It's not as hard as it looks. This e-book will offer timely guidance in how to formulate a plan.

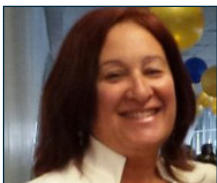
The first place to start is at the top—leaders need to be inspirational, especially in times such as these as workplaces are undergoing simultaneous changes.

However, leadership is only as good as its ability to communicate the policies, so we'll explore how choosing the right words to frame policies matters.

Choosing a management style is crucial but using a Big Brother approach isn't the most helpful one. The better route to take is to build a foundation of trust, which is based on five tenets: caring, commitment, consistency, competence and communication.

And once those characteristics are present, team building begins. But that's easier than it looks as often managers are confused as to the best approach so we'll examine some success stories to help get you started.

With all of this knowledge, you'll find that creating a highly engaged workforce will bring your company to new, higher levels of success.



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Inspirational Leadership in a Crisis

Leaders show others they have a plan to regain stability within their operation despite the instability outside.

By Paul Angelo

The COVID-19 pandemic is creating economic uncertainty and anxiety, which means distractions in the workforce are at an all-time high.

Safety leaders understand that when distractions are high, exposures increase. Workers and managers are finding it difficult to focus because they have so much on their minds: their health and safety, the health and safety of loved ones, whether or not they can pay their bills, what the world will look like when this period of physical distancing subsides, and so much more.

It's times like these when inspirational leadership is needed most.

Inspirational leadership is a transformational leadership style that is critical when workers are worried, production is tenuous, and business is unstable. All three are interconnected—when one falls, the others go down too. Conversely, exposure starts to climb. Inspirational leadership is therefore needed most during economic downturns, uncertainties in world affairs, or from sudden and unexpected natural disasters like a tornado or earthquake, or acts of terrorism like 9/11.

At its core, inspirational leadership is the ability to articulate an idea or an action

to win over people so they share the same idea or action. Optimism, enthusiasm, fellowship—these are all direct results when people are inspired. Inspirational leadership builds relationships with others and minimizes the distractions that lead to the higher level of exposure.

But in order to inspire others, the leader him or herself needs to be inspired. They need to believe in the vision they want to share. In this pandemic, experts and top government officials need to believe a vaccine is possible, the curve can be flattened, and that society will pick up where it left off, because if they don't, the millions of people who hang on those words won't either.

For that reason alone, all eyes are on leadership during a crisis. People are looking for physical signs and verbal cues that the situation is under control. In other words, for leaders, now is not the time to take passive resignation. They need to be in front of the situation and show others they have a plan to regain stability within their operation despite the instability outside.

So what do leaders need to do to achieve this state? Here are six ways to get there.

1. Get inspired. In order to inspire

others, leaders need to determine what “good” looks like. Then they can share that inspiration with others. You don’t want to get this wrong because the stakes are too high.

For example: Recently I was working on a project that required checking on printing materials I needed to do my job. So I called the leader responsible for printing and asked the status of my draft. There was urgency because I had a client waiting. However, when I asked, the leader responded by asking how I was doing and how my family was doing. The conversation I thought would be contentious was instead empathetic.

When I talk with clients I try to lead by establishing a genuine relationship. My co-worker was effective because he wasn’t defensive or anxious. He was calm and authentic. It is possible to be inspired by everyday interactions with people and pay it forward.

2. Establish your vision. Where do you want things to land after this

crisis? For example, one vision I find inspiring is the idea that we will get through this together and the “new normal” may be different, but in some ways, it could be better. That’s a vision others can get behind. You don’t want to lie and say that the change won’t be painful. But you do want to prevent yourself from going down the road of only doom and gloom. Make sure the picture you paint is a good one and comes from a real place within yourself.

3. Set the example. You are the barometer that workers will use to gauge whether things look good or if you don’t believe things will get better. Look at what you do or don’t do and what you say or don’t say. If you don’t invest the time and energy into showing you care, you’re just setting the stage for other people to feel rejected.

Think about it as a performance that will have a lasting effect, positive or negative. You have to realize that when you’re on that stage, it’s not just about

you—it’s about us. And if you’re an inspirational leader you will recognize that how you respond will have a powerful impact on the organization.

4. Interact with your team.

Physical distancing is how we are living right now. We’re not bumping into each other in the hallway or conducting major business around a conference room table. Yet you need to interact with your team. How can you do this? Set up Zoom or similar technology calls to talk with one another, or just use the phone. Leadership is an interactive sport, so you have to interact. When under duress, some people close in. But now is the time you need to reach out.

5. Practice inspiration every day.

You don’t need to wait for that monthly meeting to give an end-of-game victory speech. You can inspire others on every phone call you’re on or with every daily interaction. Also, remember: Your workers are not expecting you to give a speech that matches the great leaders of our day. You just need to show people you need them to move forward.

6. Inspirational leaders build credibility with their workers.

At the heart of inspirational leadership is sharing your vision, helping others grow, serving as a mentor, and projecting optimism. If you do those things well, you’re going to build trust with your people that will pay off in increased safety and well-being.

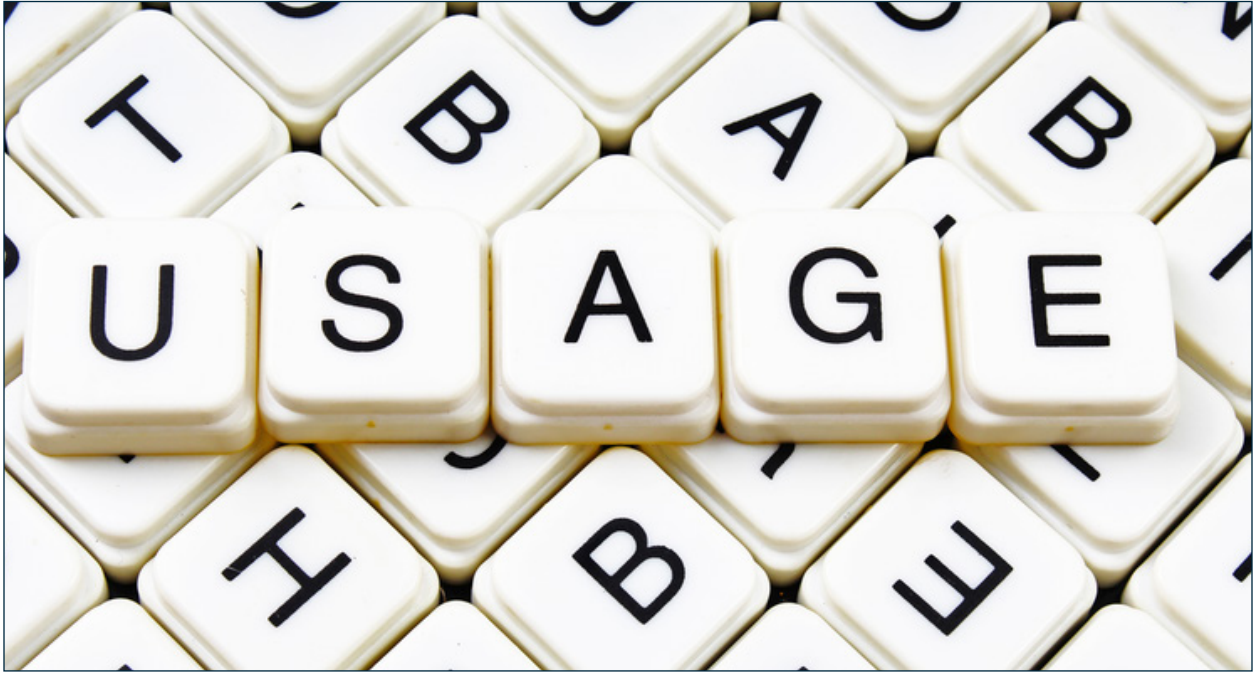
So how do you start? Think about what inspired you recently. How can you use those actions or statements with those around you. Communicate that everyone will get through this pandemic together and show them that you really believe what you say.

Recognize that you need to be on your game every time you interact with your people. Make sure you check in with them, encourage them and listen. They need you now more than ever. And you need them too. **EHS**

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The Power of Words: Ramifications for Occupational Health and Safety

Words are powerful. How can a safety professional use them for worker engagement?

By E. Scott Geller

Words are magical in the way they affect the minds of those who use them.... Words have power to mold men's thinking, to canalize their feelings, to direct their willing and acting.

The above quote from Aldous Huxley's "Words and Their Meanings" reflects the power of words to influence our feelings, expectations, attitudes, and behaviors. When people use expressions like, "Say that enough times and you'll start to believe it," "Can't I talk you into it," or "Do as I say, not as I do" they are acknowledging the influence of words on behavior.

The replies, "What good is it" to the friendly "Good morning," and the assertion "It's a pain in the neck" to the question, "How is your job?" not only reflect a person's feeling or attitude at the time; but these sorts of negative re-

actions can influence negative feelings of both the deliverer and the recipient of such words. Years ago, when my two daughters discussed horse manure at the dinner table, I would lose my appetite for the food before me. Similarly, using negative, uninspiring words to describe everyday events or ourselves can contribute to losing our appetite (or passion) for life.

What does all of this have to do with occupational health and safety? I propose that certain words we commonly use can contribute to debilitating and counterproductive perceptions or attitudes regarding occupational health and safety. Moreover, certain expressions used frequently in the health and safety domain can actually reduce people's engagement in safety-related efforts. Using many of these words has become habitual and we are often unaware of how our verbal behavior contributes to less-than-optimal commitment to health, safety, and human welfare. This article pinpoints a few of the more commonly used words in the health and safety field that we should consider eliminating from our everyday language, and suggests some "healthy" alternatives.

FROM "ACCIDENT" ZTO "INJURY"

When a young boy soils his pants (i.e., an "Inside job"), we label the event an "accident," implying the occurrence of a chance event with no one to blame—"He just couldn't help it." Perhaps this inference is warranted in this case, but many other situations referred to as "accidental" did not have to happen. Workplace "accidents" are usually unintentional, of course, but are they truly chance occurrences? Are there specific controllable factors (e.g., changes in the environment, behavior, and/or attitudes) that can prevent various "accidents"? Answering "yes" to these two questions implies "accident" is the wrong word to use when referring to unintentional injuries. Continuing to use this term in our culture can reduce the number of people who will answer "yes" to those questions with personal conviction. We need to use words that support the belief and expectation that various factors can be controlled in order to prevent unintentional injuries at work, at home, and throughout the community at large.

Over recent years, the term "incident" has been substituted for "accident," but

an incident can be intentional. For example, people refer to the tragic shooting of 32 students and faculty at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007, of which I am all too familiar, as an unfortunate “incident.” Why not tell it like it is? It’s not a traffic “accident,” it’s a vehicle crash or collision. It’s not a workplace “accident,” but an occupational injury or fatality that can be prevented with strategic safety-related improvements in environmental, behavioral, and management-system factors.

FROM OCCUPANT RESTRAINTS TO SAFETY BELTS

For years, many transportation and safety professionals have used the terms “occupant restraints” and “child restraints” for vehicle safety belts and child safety seats, respectively. Not only do those terms imply discomfort and lack of personal control, they fail to convey the invaluable function of these devices.

Although “seatbelt” is better than “occupant restraint,” this popular term is not adequate because it does not describe the device—neither in function nor in appearance. Vehicle safety belts were once only lap belts and now they are combination lap-and-shoulder belts. Yet the term “seatbelt” is still the most common word used to refer to both of these devices. We need to get into the habit of saying “safety belt” and “child safety seat.” Why, because then we will be conveying the critical life-saving function of these devices, and thereby support their consistent use. Relatedly, should we say “air bag” or “safety cushion”?

FROM PRIORITY TO VALUE

From flight attendant announcements on airplanes to TV commercials, we frequently hear the popular slogan: “Safety is our top priority.” What does such language mean? Our everyday experiences with “priorities” teach us that priorities change—they come and go. A priority today might not be a priority tomorrow. Depending upon the demands of the moment, we often shift our focus from one top priority to another. Do we really want to associate safety with such a term?

For many years, I have advocated talking about safety as a “value”—an inher-

ent principle or ideal associated with every priority, every day, and in every way. Safety should be a “value” that employees bring to every job, regardless of the ongoing priorities or task requirements. A safety mission statement should refer to safety as a “value” rather than a “priority.”

AUTONOMY AND SELF-ACCOUNTABILITY

Substantial research in psychological science has demonstrated that the perception of personal choice enhances self-motivation or self-accountability, and our everyday experiences verify this evidence-based human dynamic. Consider, for example, how certain words from others or said to ourselves (as in self-talk) reflect external control versus internal choice, and thereby imply other-directed versus self-directed behavior. In other words, which word choice would you prefer to use and receive?

Did you receive and perceive that assignment as a “requirement” or as an “opportunity”?

Would you rather be asked to “change” or “improve” your behavior?

Are your behaviors influenced by “peer pressure” or “peer support”?

Was that safety rule presented as a “mandate” or an “expectation”?

Were you “trained” or “coached” to perform that job safely?

Should we refer to safety professionals as “loss-control managers” or “safety-achievement facilitators”?

Should we discuss the results of a safety audit as “meeting OSHA standards” or “fulfilling our corporate mission”?

Does your workplace have a “safety compliance” or a “safety achievement” task force?

Should we acknowledge employees for working “30 days without an injury” or for working “30 safe days”?

When attending a group meeting or a teaching/learning session do you say to yourself, “I’ve got to do this” or “I get to do this”?

Finally, do you wake up to an “alarm clock” or an “opportunity clock”?

COVID-19 LANGUAGE

Even some critical words used currently

and frequently to discuss the prevention of the global coronavirus are misleading and should be improved. Specifically, we are advised (or mandated) to keep a six-foot “social” distance from others when in public settings. Is “social” the most appropriate word to use in this context? Obviously, the word “social” does not imply a particular physical distance, but rather reflects an interpersonal connection or companionship a person experiences with one or more other individuals, independent of physical distance. Some people do use the more appropriate term—six-foot “physical” distance, but “social” seems to be the more popular adjective used these days.

What about those facemasks we are asked to wear in public places? This disease-prevention device is consistently labeled PPE for “personal protective equipment.” The misleading word here is “personal.” In the workplace, employees do wear PPE for personal protection, but the primary purpose of the COVID-19 facemask is to protect others from the spread of this deadly virus. Thus, the first “P” of PPE should represent “public,” making PPE signify “public protective equipment.” In this way, wearing a facemask is communicated as protecting others more than ourselves, with such behavior portrayed as more selfless than selfish—as actively caring for people (AC4P) behavior.

This is obviously a limited list of word substitutions to consider, but I hope the message is clear. Simple word usage can affect both attitude and behavior. Considering the ramifications of using the various word substitutions suggested here can be a useful personal or group exercise. Adding alternatives to this list would be even more beneficial. However, understanding and appreciating critical relations between our words, attitudes, and deeds is only half the “battle.” We need to improve our everyday verbal habits, but that is easier said than done. **EHS**

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The Principles of Employee Engagement

Successful change is almost always a series of steps, not a huge jump.

By Terry Mathis

More and more of my consulting work involves management or leadership teams who have set goals but are struggling to get the workforce engaged in accomplishing them. Sometimes the problem is simple resistance, which is generally created one or more of three ways: workers don't understand the goals; workers don't like or agree with the goals; or workers don't like the messenger bringing the change.

But more often the problem is that managers don't understand the process of building engagement and ownership. They think that communicating the goals or dictating that they must happen will do the trick.

I have helped literally hundreds of organizations get the employee engage-

ment they wanted in their change or improvement efforts, and the following are among the principles I most often impart:

START WITH STRATEGY

Quite frankly, most leaders who are trying to get employees engaged don't have a strategy for doing so. They tend to think that a vision or a set of goals is a strategy, or that a list of action items is a strategy. They are not! Strategy is a prescribed methodology to win.

Good strategy creates a unique position from which to accomplish the desired goals and reach the vision. How many of your employees would describe your leadership actions as "unique?" A good strategy includes a

precise plan to get and utilize employee engagement. It directs worker actions toward the desired goals and visions, and aids in their workplace decisions. One reason leaders struggle is precisely because they don't have a strategy to direct their efforts.

PEOPLE SUPPORT WHAT THEY HELP CREATE

There are several ways to begin to build support for new efforts, but creative involvement is the one I find works best and most often. Early involvement in change efforts tend to build a sense of ownership and pride. Workers will try harder to make their own plans work than they will the plans handed to them by leaders.

This does not mean you let workers decide what to do. That was decided in



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the strategy. You let the workers help decide how to do it. Leaders create the strategy and workers help fill in the tactics. Without any creative input, it is difficult or impossible to get workers engaged adequately to ensure the success of the effort.

EAT THE ELEPHANT A BITE AT A TIME

One of the most common mistakes leaders made in the past decade is trying to do too much at once. Successful change is almost always a series of steps, not a huge jump. Trying to do too much often creates a sense of overload and early failure.

Motivation is delicate in the early stages of something new and should be nurtured rather than mashed under an impossible load. The adage that “the way to eat an elephant is a bite at a time” should be a guiding principle of change. Map out the change so everyone knows where they are going and how long the journey will take. Change maps also keep people from feeling lost and turning back to familiar ground and undoing the progress.

Then, take the journey a step at a time, beginning with smaller and easier steps and progressing to larger and more complicated steps as progress is made and people become more experienced and capable. Measure the progress and celebrate milestones along the way. Congratulate those involved and those who helped to keep motivation high.

IF YOU DON'T GET IT IN THEIR HEADS, YOU WON'T GET IT IN THEIR HABITS

A team of site leaders recently told me they had decided on three safety improvement goals and had been working hard to accomplish them. I asked them if I walked out on the shop floor, how many employees could name the three? If they can't name them, they are not focused on them. If they are not focused on them, they are not working on them. If they are not working on them, they are not happening.

Work habits are formed through repetition. Repeating actions that are

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not already habitual takes concentration and conscious effort. All change efforts should begin with getting the change targets into the mindset of the people who need to make the change happen. This often requires more effort than leaders expect and requires the assistance of first-line supervisors and informal leaders from within the worker culture.

PEOPLE DO THINGS FOR A REASON

Change needs direction but it also needs reinforcement. Actions that receive positive reinforcement get repeated, and repeated actions become habitual. Catching workers making the targeted changes and positively reinforcing their efforts isn't just nice, it is necessary!

When you see workers not making the changes, the best response is to find out why. You may be working against other influences in your workplace, and you may not discover them unless you ask.

COMMUNICATE ONLY METRICS THAT MOTIVATE PEOPLE

Not all the metrics that leaders use should be communicated to the employee base during change efforts. Metrics that are beyond the control of the average employee, metrics that might make workers think there is an ulterior motive to the change efforts, or metrics that create unhealthy internal competition should be kept among leaders.

When change efforts are underway, the best metrics are measurement of improvement toward goals of the targeted improvement areas. Like the old United Way thermometer, seeing progress toward goals tends to motivate effort to reach the goal. The clearer the connection between individual efforts and success metrics, the more workers can see how they contribute to success.

All too often the metrics that are shared during change efforts are either meaningless or misleading to workers. Try to use process metrics and avoid lagging indicators where possible. And remember, approximate measurements of the right things are better than exact measurements of the wrong things. Don't fall into the trap of measuring what is important rather than what is important.

It is not enough to decide to change. You need a process to make the change happen. **EHS**

Terry Mathis, founder and CEO of Pro-Act Safety (www.proactsafety.com), has served as a consultant and advisor for top organizations the world over. A respected strategist and thought leader in the industry, Mathis has authored five books, numerous articles and blogs. He can be reached at info@proactsafety.com or (800) 395-1347.

As a Leadership Style ‘Big Brother’ Isn’t Going to Work

“Using software to monitor what someone is doing on their computer screen does not gel with showing trust in your workforce and it’s certainly not a way to motivate people,” said Jim Guilkey, CEO S4 NetQuest.

By Adrienne Selko

Trying to figure out what millennial and Gen X employees need from a workplace culture has practically been a national pastime for manufacturing leaders. While most have a pretty good understanding of these workers’ preferences, and many have solid programs in place, there is now another large wrinkle to consider.

As COVID-19 has pushed much of the workforce into home offices, and many want to retain this arrangement permanently, managers are trying to figure out ways to ensure high levels of productivity.

One increasingly popular solution is to employ technology that can monitor employees’ workflow. Software is available that can track keyboard strokes and mouse movements. Other programs can record

what webpages employees visit. There is the capability of downloading videos of an employee’s computer screen. And technology placed on phones can keep tabs on what employees are doing during the workday. If that wasn’t enough, an employer can enable an employee’s computer webcam to take a picture of the employee every ten minutes.

“This ‘big brother’ approach isn’t going to be well received at all by younger workers,” explains Jim Guilkey, CEO of S4 NetQuest, a company that provides learning programs to many large manufacturing companies. He is also the author of *M-pact Learning: The New Competitive Advantage; What All Executives Need to Know*.

“Using software to monitor what someone is doing on their computer screen does



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Finding the right people for the right jobs is one of the biggest challenges manufacturing is facing and will continue to face. Once the economy is on a stronger track workers will have choices about where, and how they will work.

not gel with showing trust in your workforce and it's certainly not a way to motivate people," Guilkey added.

And it's not just the young workforce that objects. "I'm a Baby Boomer and I would be offended if that technology was used on me," Guilkey explained.

IS PANICKING A SMART LEADERSHIP STYLE?

While understanding the need to ensure a high level of productivity, especially in these tough economic times, Guilkey says that a "balance must be struck between people and profit."

He understands that right now leadership is in a bit of panic. They are concerned about making it through this challenging situation. "A knee-jerk reaction to micro-manage, and monitor the workforce, is not a good long-term strategy. Once the economy picks back up the measures you took will be how you are viewed in the marketplace. How will you retain and recruit future employees?"

DO YOUR METRICS REQUIRE A HEAVY HAND?

Instead of moving toward a system that relies on closely monitoring people to achieve specific business metrics, look



Jim Guilkey
CEO of S4 NetQuest

more carefully at what you are measuring advises Guilkey. "Here is how I measure our team. I ask three basic questions. Did you get it done on time? Is it within budget? Was it the highest quality?"

Those are the metrics that matter, he says. "I don't care how they achieve this, I trust my team."

Trusting your team is the "people first" approach of a leadership strategy that provides long-term results.

Guilkey gave the example of how he is communicating with his own team while they work remotely.

At their Monday meetings, they don't focus on the projects that are underway but instead use the time to talk about the creative ways team members are using

their quarantine time. He encourages them to show photos of their families and DYI projects.

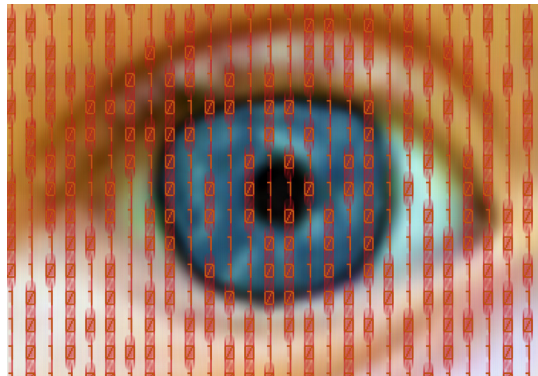
"I believe that as a result of facing this pandemic together, my team is tighter," says Guilkey. "We know more about it each other than we would have under regular circumstances."

The teambuilding exercise Guilkey uses is part of building trust, which is key to an engaged and successful workforce. "I tell companies that if they have to use a "big brother" approach, it's really a red flag that something is wrong in the organization," Guilkey says. "If you feel the need to monitor people so closely you either have an internal process problem, are not managing people correctly, or you don't have the right people in the right positions."

Finding the right people for the right jobs is one of the biggest challenges manufacturing is facing and will continue to face. Once the economy is on a stronger track workers will have choices about where, and how they will work.

"Trust is something highly valued by this younger generation," says Guilkey. "If an employer trusts them to get their jobs done, in a way that best suits their talents, they will stay with those types of companies. And that, in turn, will ensure the high level of productivity a company desires."

EHS



A Matter of Trust: How to Evolve and Manage Worker Health & Safety

A safety culture comes down to establishing a deep trust between the company and the workers.

By Lea Brovedani



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Top safety leaders create a safety culture that shifts from a minimum requirement of compliance to a workforce where employees are committed to working safely. Safety leaders know that safety starts and ends with the people. It's not about the confusing jargon, acronyms, abbreviations, and the piles and piles of paperwork. It's about the deep trust that exists between the company and the workers.

Safety leaders agree that compliance is important. Compliance is the rules, regulations and laws that are necessary for a safe workplace. For this article I spoke to three safety leaders to better understand how they moved from understanding and knowing the rules and regulations to being committed to operating safely always. It all comes

down to trust!

Trust is the ability to be open, vulnerable and courageous based on positive expectations. It's based on five tenets of trust:

Caring—Demonstrate genuine care of others. Employees can tell if compliance is about CYA (Cover Your Assets) rather than caring for them as individuals.

Commitment—Keeping your word or not stopping until your work or task is completed. When you are committed to a safe workplace it becomes a value that is non-negotiable and everyone lives and breathes it.

Consistency—Words and actions are aligned. The rules apply to everyone.

Competence—A skill or knowledge that aligns with the task. Everyone

should be trained so they have the skills and abilities to do their job safely.

Communication—Being able to listen and verbalize for complete understanding.

Everything works together and perfect trust is possible when all of the tenets align.

It's not surprising that the top companies are leading the shift and making a big difference in EHS. Each of the safety leaders I spoke to has a genuine concern for their people. It showed up consistently in all of the interviews. Let's take a look at some of their insights.

TRUST & SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION

Earnest (J.R.) Glascock, Jr. is director of corporate safety at The Lane

“First, you have to ask yourself: Why do the employees work safe on the job? Every employee needs to take responsibility for their own individual safety. They need to know the purpose behind why they are actually working safe.”

Construction Corp. He spoke candidly about trust in the construction business.

“There is a big difference between compliance and culture. Every company out there has a safety culture. To build a solid culture and commitment you need to get every part of the organization involved. That is key to safety success.

“First, you have to ask yourself: Why do the employees work safe on the job? Every employee needs to take responsibility for their own individual safety. They need to know the purpose behind why they are actually working safe.

“Why they want to work safe is the difference between compliance and culture. Compliance is, ‘I have to do this.’ Culture means, ‘I want to do this.’ That to me is the key. While purpose is important, it obviously goes deeper than that.

“The second point is you have to live by the core value of ‘care for people.’ That is a core value of our company. When a company genuinely cares for employees it sets that stage for that cultural commitment that every company strives for. When employees feel that the company really cares for them, it is reciprocated. It really is a full circle.

“Companies need to ditch that ‘safety is our number one priority’ approach. It’s one of those buzzwords but I would much rather hear a company talk about ‘safety always.’ What I mean by that is priorities can change. Even if it’s your number one priority there is the potential that the safety priority could be pushed if you’re behind schedule. So instead of a priority it needs to be a value. Values are unwavering. They don’t change. It’s something that you live each and every day.

“Most companies have values. However, for a value to be trusted it has to be lived. It’s tangible when you see it lived out in the field each and every



day. That’s what solidifies a world-class safety culture.”

According to J.R., trust is aligned with three core principles:

1. You have to care for the individual.
2. You have to see value in the person and add value to the person.
3. Your words and actions must align.

SYSTEMS THINKING APPROACH

Stephanie Benay is director of safety systems and assurance for BC Hydro in Vancouver, BC, Canada. When I’ve needed clarity around health and safety, Stephanie is the first person I go to for her intelligent, articulate and well-reasoned response. Her commitment to safety and her education, combined with her ability to articulate and see the big picture, are some of the reasons I go to her.

“In the last decade safety has changed from a worker blaming focus to being systems-focused.

“We need to understand safety beyond field execution. What that requires

is a systems thinking approach. Safety happens in the field but really it starts in the planning. It happens at the executive table when the budget is being planned.

“It’s like building a house. The basement is the health and safety management system. So you pour the basement to make sure that framework is solid.

“Once you’ve finished the basement and it’s a solid foundation, you put the walls up. That’s compliance. Compliance is an important step and it’s about meeting the necessary regulatory requirements. But it’s not where you stop. And that’s a key piece. You need to put the roof of the house on. The roof of the house is risk. If you pour a solid foundation and you put your walls up straight the roof can go on. What you want to do is get your organization and the people who work in the organization to the place where they are managing risk effectively.

“You don’t want to add extra layers of bureaucracy that can get in the way. Let people effectively get to the place where they have the tools, the skills, the education and the wherewithal to manage the risk that they face on a daily basis.”

PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

Reliance Electric is a nationwide electrical contractor. I met Fred Barlow, CSO, and Nephi Allred, president and CEO, when I spoke at a safety conference in Austin, Texas, in 2016. Since that time, I’ve seen first-hand their commitment to the value of trust in their people and in their services. Fred and I spoke at length about the trust and safety at Reliance.

“Safety and trust go hand in hand. What is safety? It is to preserve life. If you are preserving or helping to save someone’s life there has to be a high

trust relationship. It means that we care about their lives and making sure people get home safely. Trust is vital to a healthy safety culture.

“Workers willingly go into a construction site, which by itself is an inherently dangerous process. You can threaten people with penalties all day and it’s a short-lived pressure to them. Moving from compliance to a commitment is a behavioral emotional change.

“A commitment requires that something change in the heart. You have to change something in the inside. There has to be a desire planted. That is what we are focused on because compliance becomes easy once they have the desire to comply. We tie it back to their home and their personal lives. No one wants to be hurt at the end of the day. Compliance has to be tied to a commitment that is not work-related. You tie it back to principles like integrity and trust and caring and respect. People do it because they are adhering to their character. When they stand by their character, compliance becomes a lot easier.

“I tell people when I see a challenge in trust and respect in the workplace. When I started in safety there was a lack of trust between some people. When there is a challenge in trust and respect

you fix it the same way you fix the challenge at home. You have to put your ego and your position aside and genuinely care about each other. You have to do it consistently. Your spouse, your kids, they’re going to trust you when you care not only with what you say but with what you do consistently day after day and how they feel when they are around you. That’s the same way around the business. Upper management has to be very consistent in their message of safety and caring.

“I’ve never seen a worker truly want to be unsafe. They don’t say or think, ‘I’m going to go mutilate my arm today.’ So when I see a worker not following the safety rule that they’re trained in, I have to ask myself, ‘Why are they ignoring that safety rule?’ It’s not because they want to get hurt. I dig into the cause. Sometimes it’s because someone they are working with doesn’t share the same value on safety. They’re feeling peer pressure to do something that is out of their comfort zone, and they feel compelled to do it. Getting the proper training and getting the proper equipment takes time. On a job site, on a construction site, time is money.

“We can’t control everyone our employees work with. Because it is such

an ever-changing worksite we have to have their personal commitment that we talked about.”

MAKE IT EASY TO WORK SAFELY

It isn’t a surprise to me that the leaders I spoke to are highly trusted. To lead the shift from compliance to commitment and to evolve and improve worker health and safety, trust must be there. What was consistent with all of them was their belief that you hire and train workers and respect their ability to do the right thing. You show them that the rules and regulations are there because you care for them and it’s not just a CYA (Cover Your Assets).

I heard it again and again: “No one wants to get hurt or killed on the job.” Make it easy for them to live and work safely. And show them you genuinely care. **EHS**

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Practice What You Preach: Culture as a Common Thread of an Organization

Great cultures understand the value of every single employee. Here are four key areas where it could drive engagement throughout an organization.

By Jay Richards and Meredith Grzyb



We spend too much time in the workplace categorizing people. We point out differences, then we label. We have unfair expectations of how others will supposedly act or react in the professional world.

In reality, we all have more in common about what engages us than we might think. We just need to make sure, as leaders, we are providing a great culture to facilitate it. That increases the likelihood of our company becoming an attractive place to have a career.

To find the commonalities of company culture that resonate with a cross-section of people, you look to the data.

We recently pulled culture data from 182 manufacturing facilities where over 10,000 employees had taken both the Denison Organizational Culture Survey and an employee engagement survey. We divided the data by generation and then gender, creating six separate groups: Boomer Female, Boomer Male, Gen X Female, Gen X Male, Millennial Female, and Millennial Male. We then ran a correlation analysis on the culture to engagement to locate the key drivers of engagement within the culture of each facility.

When you look at the aspects of cul-

ture that drive engagement, they can be summarized into four key areas. One, each group wants to be a part of something meaningful. Two, they want to work for people they respect. Three, they want to know what they do within the company matters. Four, they like a company that is proactive and not reactive. Let's look at each of these areas, with more explanation:

1. There is a clear mission that gives meaning and direction to our work.

People don't want to wake up and just go to work. They want purpose and direction along with it. They want meaning to their work and this is up to the leaders to provide it. A great example of providing purpose was a plant manager in Battle Creek, Michigan, we worked with years ago. He was working to implement lean practices. Other plants around the company struggled to get lean to take hold. His approach was different. He turned the process into a mission. He told employees the reason they needed to become lean was to increase the efficiency of the plant. By increasing the efficiency of the plant, the parent company would send them more

work. If the parent company sent more work, they would grow. If they grew, they would hire more people, and those people would be friends, family and neighbors. He then painted a picture of how their plant provided jobs for the city of Battle Creek. This was a powerful motivator and gave people the sense of purpose they needed. Your company doesn't need to be a Google or Apple to have a dynamic mission. All you have to do is find what motivates people and then communicate your purpose. In this case, the hourly and salary workers and the union rallied around the PM's purpose, and the result was a plant that became one of the most successful in the company.

2. The leaders and managers "practice what they preach."

This is simple, but not always practiced in manufacturing. You want a boss who is fair, approachable and treats you with respect. You don't want someone who will say one thing and do another. The days of managers and supervisors managing through fear are long gone. The high-performing cultures build leadership and they do it through respect: Treat people how you would like to be treated. Therefore, as you promote people into leadership positions, take care to lay out your expectations of leadership style. Do not just let your supervisors develop their own style. Teach and coach the style that is the most effective. If you do not have a leadership program, consider building one.

3. Everyone believes that he or she can have a positive impact.

Get people involved! If you have a compelling purpose and direction, then let your people be a part of the direction. Make sure you create and regularly talk about the metrics that are important to

Get people involved! If you have a compelling purpose and direction, then let your people be a part of the direction.

you. Engage people in quality, productivity and safety teams, and make sure those teams are truly employee-led. If you are winning, let people know. Connect people to the success of the organization. Celebrate your wins; learn through your losses. Allow your employees to talk honestly about your culture and ways they believe that your organization can be improved and be open to making changes. If we all started living by the belief that every person has something to offer and teach us, we would be much better off. Gender, race, age, and education should not act as qualifiers. Everyone can make an impact.



4. Leaders set goals that are ambitious but realistic.

When you are in poorly run facilities, you can often hear the drumbeat. It is a never-ending, fire-fighting, re-inventing-the-wheel type of atmosphere. People will often say one of the key attributes of their company is how well they come together during a crisis. I would then challenge them on how well they come together to prevent any future crisis. Basically, you are in a reactive versus proactive environment. This doesn't mean you have to slow up the work or just hire more bodies. As leaders you need to take a hard look at how well the leaders from the front line on up are running the company. Do you have an effective continuous improvement program?

Meredith, a millennial, recalls that as a purchaser for 16 automotive plants for 2.5 years, she was constantly putting out fires. Very expensive fires. One small part could cause entire lines to go down on the floor, and everyone turned to her to fix it. Her company was caught in a constant cycle of small temporary fixes to put out immediate crises without ever having the time necessary to

fix the root issue.

In retrospect, she adds, "a major cause for this cycle was lack of company alignment, poor communication, consistent processes and training, and a proactive environment. My boss and I (both female) tried time and time again to create alignment and consistency and were continually disregarded by the plant managers and CEO's (all male). The solutions were there, the processes were there, we took the time to train plant teams, but the follow-through from leadership and support from our CEOs was not present. Why? The answer is simple. It was a reactive versus proactive environment."

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

Why does all this matter? Easy! The culture of an organization can be a common thread that binds us. The data above gives us important insights into building a strong culture that is conducive to attracting and maintaining employees across the gender, generational and ethnic spectrum. Because your leaders play a critical role of creating your culture, it is important they create the type of environment employees want to be a part of. A while back a client asked, "What do companies with great cultures do?" It was a great question and one where Denison had plenty of data to get an answer to. What we found was when people in organizations with top quartile cultures describe the strengths of their culture, they describe it in terms of family. This makes total sense. Within a family we are all equal. We have purpose. We count on each other. We are not afraid to ask questions. No matter what, we have each other's back. We have respect.

Great cultures understand the value of all of their employees. Male, female, mil-

lennial or boomer. Great organizations do not see categories. They see people with skill sets and know how to utilize them. There are no "old boy networks." You don't get ahead because of the people you know. You get ahead based on what you do and how well you do it.

While there have been definite strides made in today's marketplace for higher inclusivity, there is still a long way to go. We aren't just changing numbers (quotas), we are changing perceptions, organizational frameworks, and environments. This change comes from the top down. It starts with our leaders, who ultimately have the biggest impact on company culture. So, as leaders, we always need to be cognizant of the importance of each individual employee. Everyone has something to offer; everyone wants to make a difference; everyone wants to have purpose. As a leader, you can create an environment that empowers people to do so. As we make our way through 2020, one thing is clear: The numbers show the world wants a more diverse and inclusive planet. We want to tap the whole talent pool, not just the pool that looks like us, sounds like us, and thinks like us. Therefore, focus on company culture. Build the type of culture that everyone wants to work for. **EHS**

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Meredith Grzyb is a client manager at Denison Consulting, and an aspiring leadership coach. With 2.5 years of experience as a lead purchaser for 16 automotive plants in Canada, Mexico and the US, she is passionate about strong communication practices, organizational efficiency, and effective leadership strategies.
