

Behavior Based Safety (Fool) Proofing a Fool

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How many times can you give someone safety training, whether it is compliance training or behavior based safety (BBS) training and hope they do everything you asked or told them to do? The bottom line is, when employees leave the training room you will rely on them (the employees) to perform (behave) in a safe manner. *Is it possible to foolproof a fool?* Or, is it possible to provide different avenues of approach to get the employees to perform better when it comes to safety? The answer is yes! Try following some of the following techniques to help improve your safety climate.

First, there is the “scare-them-to-death” tactic. You know the one I am talking about. Scare them with injury and fatality statistics. Show them a high impact video, or simply, provide progressive discipline for incidents which happen, but were never intended to happen. Now, this may work for some, but the safety climate has a way of disappearing when you punish an employee for non-deliberate acts. There is room for discipline, don’t get me wrong, but search and investigate, I bet 99% of the time you will find out that the injuries were never deliberate. If you punish employees for non-deliberate acts, then your safety climate will disappear and employees will not respect the safety program/training. You can judge this by how many employees sit in the back of the room for safety training, versus the front, or even the middle for that fact.

Secondly, incentive programs could be provided. There is definite positive behavior modification behind providing incentive programs, this is by far better to implement than progressive discipline. There are many programs available but any program is better than none.

Programs that are proven to work include:

- 1) Self Safety Programs
 - a. This is a program that is employee drive (bottom up) and works on the promise of employee ownership. Employees enforce the safety program that they help create. This really works for companies just starting with safety program development. Self Safety is driven by the employees and policed by the employees. Management MUST provide support in this safety arena
- 2) Safety Awards or Merits
 - a. Providing awards works most of the time when prevention and reduction of injuries becomes a goal for most companies. Awards could simply be providing gifts, time off or cash. See Table 1. You could also provide a group safety BBQ where the group that performs the best (least amount of mishaps) receives the award. Every employee loves receiving gifts, yet another way to provide positive behavior reinforcement.
 - b. A merit system can also be implemented. Merits are very similar to awards, but differ, in that an employee or group of employees will earn merits in route to an award at the end of a merit unit. A merit unit may be a quarter, annually or whatever you chose. At the end of the merit unit the employee or group of employees will select from a plethora of award choices. See Table 1. There are many vendors that provide this service see your local safety contractor.

Gift	Cost	Individual	Group
<i>Cups/Mugs</i>	\$2.50 per cup	Yes	Yes
<i>Clothes</i>			
(Hats)	\$5.00 per hat	Yes	Yes
(Shirts)	\$5.00 per shirt	Yes	Yes
(Jackets)	\$15-20 per jacket	Yes	Yes
<i>Group BBQ</i>	Varies	No	Yes
<i>Group Retreat</i>	Varies	No	Yes
<i>Cash Awards</i>	Varies	Yes	Yes

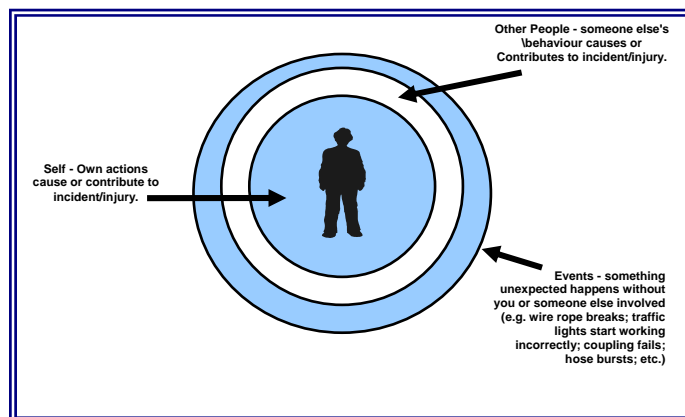
Table 1

3) Behavior Based Safety Systems (BBS)

- a. BBS is traditionally a long term situation. Receiving a return on investment (ROI) usually takes anywhere between 3-5 years. The ROI is usually measured by safety metrics including incident rates, days away from work or restricted days rates (DART rates) or something less tangible like the climate of the safety around employees (how safe they feel vs. how safe they are). Knowing how long most construction projects last this is probably not in your near future. However, there have been recent breakthroughs that help construction companies implement BBS systems without the long ROI. This breakthrough system has a proven track record to not only reverse a negative safety climate, but to reduce incident and DART rates by as much as 60-90%. Construction projects do not have the luxury of waiting 3-5 years to see a safety climate shift utilizing traditional BBS Systems. Most superintendents would be willing to reduce injuries but not after a project is complete and you are long gone from the job. Here is what some construction companies have done instead of the traditional BBS implementation:

Introduce Safestart™ Advanced Safety Awareness Techniques that would equip the individual to self preserve their own awareness. These concepts go along way to prevent mishaps and can be used at work, but more importantly at home and on the road.

It is important that the blame game be given a strong shove out the window. Instruct employees that management knows that people are not trying to make mistakes on purpose, but that these mistakes are caused by events that are completely unexpected. These Sources of Unexpected (see Example 1) can be explained by three rings. The outside ring is where events occur that are completely out of your control. The middle ring is where someone does something unexpectedly to get you hurt. And, the inside ring is you-you do something unexpectedly to get you hurt. The inside ring contributes to 96% of the reason why people get hurt. Stubbing your toe on a coffee table, hitting your head on an open cabinet, closing the car door on your finger or hand, etc.



Example 1 (Copied with Permission)

The following are Safestart™ concepts that can help you combat these sources of unexpected. Usually referred to as State to Error patterns, try to identify the last time you were hurt and one of these Critical Errors or States were not involved, I bet you have a hard time finding that they were *not* involved.

The Critical Errors that usually cause these unexpected injuries are:

- Eyes Not on Task;
- Mind Not on Task;
- Being in the Line of Fire; or
- Losing Your Balance/Traction/Grip

These Critical Errors are usually caused by being in one of these four states:

- Rushing;
- Frustration;
- Fatigue; or
- Complacency

Even though these mistakes happen, it is possible to teach your employees to recognize when they are in one of the four states which minimize the risk of injury.

Larry Wilson, author of Safestart™, emphasizes that these tools helped construction companies reduce injuries and improved overall safety climate within many cultures who have implemented it. These are the answers to help minimize the preceding Critical Errors and States:

- 1) Self-Trigger on the state or amount of hazardous energy.
- 2) Analyze close calls so that you don't agonize over larger mishaps.
- 3) Look at others for their patterns that lead to Critical Errors
- 4) Work on you own individual habits.

To conclude, it is possible to provide tools that would enhance entice and elevate employee's safety performance within your organization. Providing progressive discipline is appropriate for those employees who do deliberate acts that cause injury. Just remember that employees (people) never intend to make mistakes.

Providing incentive programs is a great way to reward good performance (behavior). This is definitely positive reinforcement, especially if you're looking for good repeat behavior.

Implementing behavior based safety has plusses and minuses, but for the most part if you are looking for a quick ROI, reduction in injuries and turn around in your safety climate, implementing a program like Safestart™ will get you in the right direction, especially when you want to see your employees return to work the next day.

After all, you may not be able to foolproof a fool, but you can sure give them the tools to help them succeed in your safety climate, and of course, they are not fools, they are your answer to succeed, they are your people.

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