

5-STAR SAFETY Best Practices in Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement is a cultural component of an organization, and an integral part of sustainable safety programs. The reason for this is numerous. Regardless if the goal is safety, environmental, quality or production, engaged employees contribute; non-engaged employees wait to do what they are told, and then do what gets checked. This behavioral theory has been confirmed by numerous organizations and academicians over the years, and regardless of the safety management systems employed, employee engagement in one of the recognized elements. Combined with management commitment and communication, employee engagement rounds out the definition of today's world class culture.

From a Safety Management Systems (SMS) perspective, Employee Recognition is part of the planning process (Plan – Do – Check – Act). Like anything else, it can be done correctly and incorrectly. The maturity path to Engagement can be summarized as follows:



Again, while this does not happen by accident, a top-down approach tends to yield the expected results.

What Works:

1. Positive reinforcement-----increase behavior (Positive to do)
The most effective form of positive reinforcement is spontaneous individual recognition.
2. Recognition programs based on engagement, not just incident rates
 - Both individual and team based recognitions.

Typically this is where HR as an organization becomes a significant co-dependent to safety. Developing, communicating, maintaining and verifying an engagement program, with the right engagement topics, implemented through the chain of command (as opposed to a safety manager or safety committee issuing recognition) is more effective. Leading Edge organizations take the lead at the corporate HR level, ensuring that recognition is build into the fabric of policies, programs and management accountability.
3. Management Communication and feedback regarding closure rates, especially of employee suggestions, is either a major roadblock, or success, depending on management's commitment.

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- Management expectations that they control employee motivations, recognizing the value of employee input. Typically this is in part communicated as part of management-level safety training. Leading Edge companies have 1-2 day courses on safety management for leadership as a pre-requisite for receiving a promotion to a site or corporate leadership position.
- Understanding the difference between involvement and engagement.

<u>Involvement</u>	<u>Engagement</u>
Conduct site inspections	Modify the inspection checklist or schedule
Conduct accident/incident investigations	Extend corrective actions to lessons learned in their area
Make control suggestions	Prioritize control implementation based on Risk
Present at Safety Meetings	Develop a presentation for a Safety Meeting

- Minimum expectations: engagement in a suggestion program, plus at least three other safety programs (e.g., inspections, hazard analysis, investigations, etc.).
- Safety Committees: this tends to have mixed results, unless the expectations are clear that each member, salaried and non-salaried alike, are actively engaged and take action items. I'll cover Safety Committee details in a separate

What does not work:

- Silent Consent is seeing an unsafe act and doing nothing.
What happens when not all supervisor/managers are enforcing the same rules and expectations? You lose the Immediate and Certain portions of motivating consequences. The expectations are inconsistent. Employees will target to the lowest expectation.
- Requiring worker-level personnel to participate on their own time.
- The majority of disciplines tied to employee injuries. While there are times where discipline is needed upon injury, but if the majority occurs here, management is not being proactive enough in monitoring and coaching their workers.

From a corporate standpoint, the key expectations for a leading edge organization are:

- HR leading a robust recognition program at the worker level, both individual and team based.
- HR developing metrics regarding participation that are shared as part of regular leadership review.
- Leadership setting the expectation that recognition needs to occur via chain of command.
- Leadership reaching out during site visits to visit with safety committees, and workers, asking them to show the value of their recent suggestions.

While the safety professionals can assist with specific ideas for involvement and engagement, the ownership is really with Leadership and HR.

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