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A Yokogawa Company

SAFETY PROGRAMME FOUNDATIONS
REASONS WHY SAFETY PROGRAMMES FAIL

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"Making a living shouldn't have to cost you your life. Workplace fatalities, injuries, and illnesses are preventable. Safe jobs happen because employers make the choice to fulfil their responsibilities and protect their workers." — Dr. David Michaels Assistant Secretary of Labour for Occupational Safety and Health.

In 2013, 4,405 workers were killed on the job in the US, according to the United States Department of Labour. Employers are responsible for the safety of all employees as they perform their required duties. Safety is nothing to be lax about – it is much too important. If employers are going to be successful in keeping workers safe, they'll need a clear approach that is structured, proactive, and simple.

This series of papers was created for that very reason. This paper outlines a structured approach to understanding some of the failures of a safety programme and concepts to succeed. This material is based on the case studies of actual safety transformations that have taken place within the oil and gas industries around the world. Many of the safety concepts used to improve safety in this series of papers have been duplicated in facilities around the world with similar positive results. To first succeed in your safety programme you must recognise the threats to any programme. Once understood, you will be better prepared to manage the threats and provide opportunities to succeed.

Some Causes of Failure

If you are a facility that has suffered with poor safety performance and have been in existence for years then you have probably built up decades of bad habits. Maybe you feel your facility is a shining example of what not to do in regard to worker safety. It is really difficult to drum up support for a programme with that level of epic failure. Every facility we go to proclaims safety is number one and encourages employees to work safe. Perhaps you still find yourself with high injury rates even though you have spent thousands of dollars in safety incentives and prizes. Some common approaches to a safety programme are:

- Prizes for worker safety
- Reprimanding employees for getting injured
- Filling out a form when someone finds an unsafe condition
- Monthly safety meetings

"But we used ASTM rated restraints…"

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- Promotion of safety at town hall meetings (you know…right after production KPIs and profit measurements!)

Don't feel bad if you have tried these unsuccessfully. These steps rarely work by themselves but instead need more structure around them, and some like reprimanding employees for injury should not be used at all.

Prizes for safety performance by themselves are a bad idea. In a future paper I will discuss the motivation triad which consists of

1) The desire for reward,
2) The avoidance of pain
3) The conservation of energy.

If your programme rests on the idea alone of providing a reward for good performance, there is a danger that we will drive the programme towards that of hiding bad performance to achieve the reward. This is increased because our #2 desire is to avoid pain.

We have heard people at many facilities state that because a facility is close to their safety reward threashold, if an injury occurs it would be better to go home and state the injury happened away from the facility rather than be the cause of loss of reward. The pain of the injury might be minor compared to the psychological pain or peer pressure suffered from being the cause of the lost reward.

Reprimanding employees for injuries is obviously not a proactive solution to safety. Again, the avoidance of pain is a driver and will cause employees to not report or to not be completely truthful. This robs the facility of the opportunity to have the healthy result of organisational learning. We should not reprimand employees for injury but instead should focus on positive learning and outcomes for prevention of similar failures in the future. Disciplinary action for willful non-compliance of safety policies on the other hand is recommended and reinforces the importance of the programme and the companies commitment that all personnel should comply.

Filling out safety observation forms or cards when an unsafe act or condition is observed is fruitless unless it drives action. Most facilities collect these and are reviewed by a committee for future action. The premise being that it is someone elses responsibility to act on these observations. Safety is everyones responsibility. If this programme includes a requirement to mitigate or eliminate the unsafe condition immediately then this improves the chance it will be effective.

Monthly safety meetings are not effective by themselves. It is important to have a focused safety culture that recognises safety and takes the time to meet with everyone. All too often these meetings become boring or are just held to meet a requirement. The focus should be to keep them fresh, **interactive** and provide useful learning and value.

If you have large meetings at any time and allow safety to be right after _____ (you fill in the blank) then you have already lost. The battle to keep safety at the top is an everlasting battle and I promise your employees will make note of anytime safety follows profitability, production or any other topic.

The Few

Another common failure is to have a single entity or a few people responsible for safety. The battle for safety is constant and forever and only a few safety soldiers tire soon and become ineffective.

SAFETY FIRST
SAFETY IS EVERYBODY'S JOB

Safety is the responsibility of every employee from the front office administrative staff to the janitor, from management and supervision to the front line employees. The message should start at the top and be consistent through all levels of the organisation.

Safety First Culture

In future papers we will be discussing challenges and concepts to implement a successful safety programme that changes culture and behaviour. I will give you something to think about in the meantime...

People First + Structured Processes = Safety

About KBC

KBC Advanced Technologies is a leading consultancy and software provider to the global hydrocarbon processing industry. With over 30 years of experience, KBC combines industry leading technology with experienced engineers and operations personnel using robust methodologies to create personalised, sustainable solutions for its clients.

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