

Five Elements to Safety Success

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This past year I had the opportunity to take a class called SLCA, SAIF Loss Control Approach. Now, before you quit reading thinking this is some insurance company propaganda, I have to tell you that I was very impressed. The concepts are based on solid, time-proven management theories, and they are very easy to implement if you decide to do so. What is the advantage to implementing such management concepts? Reduced injuries, money saved, and increased production.

Background

SAIF Corporation researched what consistently top-performing companies have in common. These are the companies that over time have shown to have substantially less injuries and losses than the average company. What are the commonalities? These companies:

1. Set expectations
2. Provide training
3. Hold employees accountable
4. Provide feedback to employees
5. Recognize achievements

These five management elements are the basis for safety and production success.

Culture Extremes

Two well known companies and the cultures within those companies show how effective recognition and accountability can be.

Case One: Federal Express

We are all familiar with FedEx and their motto: "It absolutely, positively has to be there overnight." Here is a perfect case study of how reward supports a company's desired culture. An employee is unable to open an overnight drop box due to a damaged lock. The employee goes above and beyond, unbolting the massive drop box from the sidewalk, single-handedly loading and delivering the entire drop box to the shipping hub, where a crew of technicians open it and deliver the packages on time. This employee was recognized for his outstanding performance and support of the company by top executives and owners in an annual company meeting. Simply put, his behaviors were reinforced, like any good worker who puts themselves out for the company.

Case Two: The Infamous 7-Eleven Convenience Store

An employee on the night shift who was robbed at gun point single handedly ran the robber down, and detained him until police arrived and arrested him. What a hero! The employee was subsequently fired for violation of very clear burglary procedures established by the employer. What kind of a message does this send? That 7-Eleven is serious about the employee's safety, and established procedures are to be followed.

What's the Point?

The point is that on a daily basis we reward and reprimand as we see fit, and it is our right to do so as company owners and leaders. I implore you to take a look at what behaviors and practices you are rewarding and what the true outcomes could be.

Changing Culture and Moving Forward

Changing culture is easier said than done. It starts with wanting to change and recognizing the need for change.

- Recognize that all accidents are preventable. Injuries are preventable; we can predict where injuries will happen, so they are preventable.
- No injury or incident is acceptable.
- Get rid of internal company competition; we want employees working together.
- Mutual trust + mutual respect = mutual benefit
- Safety is a lifestyle, 24/7. Encourage your managers and employees to live this way.
- Establish methods of feedback within your organization to reward the behaviors you desire.

Remember, the five simple elements: setting expectations, providing training, holding accountable, providing feedback, and recognizing achievements are what successful companies have in common.