

In the November 2013 Leading Thoughts column, Robert Pater writes, "Leaders . . . should speak personally about previous challenges, lessons learned and their own safety experiences outside the job" (p. 32). This letter from Shawn Galloway builds on that key point.

Safety Excellence What's Your Safety Elevator Pitch?

In less than 30 seconds, tell me why I should care about your efforts to become excellent in safety? What's in it for me? These often occurring and occasionally voiced thoughts can be heard when a workforce is presented with the need for change. Safety excellence requires much more than do-as-you're-told rules and polices. It requires creating passion

in the workforce and engagement of discretionary efforts to achieve breakthroughs in performance and culture.

If safety excellence requires different actions than those to achieve safety compliance, this means change. What is your compelling reason? What is your response to "why?" that not only presents the case for change, but also moves the hearts and minds and hands and feet of those who help you?

It is rumored the elevator pitch originated in the early days of Hollywood when screenwriters hoped to catch top-floor executives in an elevator to pitch their movie idea during the ride. Evolving to become a standard tactic of sales training and networking, we have all been unexpectedly exposed to someone pitching something to us. While perhaps silly in theory, the idea has merit and application in safety, when used correctly.

During a recent consulting engagement, a senior executive shared a concern. Speaking of his colleagues on the executive team, "The commitment for executing our aggressive safety strategy is there, unquestionably. But I don't think we are confident in our ability to communicate it in a way that inspires the action we need." Delivering the business case is often much easier than delivering the personal case. For business, we have hard and soft costs, exposure, community perception and brand protection. What is the personal case for excellence in safety and how do you communicate it?

To answer "What's in it for me?" the team was asked to brainstorm five key areas: "If we achieve and sustain excellence in safety performance and culture, why is it important and what is the value to: 1) the corporation; 2) the individual location; 3) the individual employee; 4) the employee's family; and 5) you, as a leader?"

After brainstorming these categories, the value proposition options were clear. Knowing that what motivates one person can easily demotivate another and that every culture is different, the goal is not to create a script, but rather to be empathetic. From the position of others, what is valuable to them and how will excellence in safety better protect what and who they care about most? Now, how does one communicate this?

"People respond emotionally to change before they respond logically. This is not the time for long dissertations . . . or a speech full of facts and figures that few will remember. Speak from the heart."

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Don't "speechify." In general, people respond emotionally to change before they respond logically. This is not the time for long dissertations, a message that feels scripted, or a speech full of facts and figures that few will remember. Speak from the heart. Sure, it will feel necessary to talk about business impact and perhaps you are in a burning-platform-like situation. Consider, though, that the goal is to influence people to care about the personal need for safety excellence, rather than what needs to occur to lower costs or injury rates. Talk about why this is important to you.

I'll never forget the senior executive as he began communicating his reason for change. His message was full of stories, engaging and personal. He began with this: "When I was 3 years old, my grandfather lost his life in an industrial accident. I never had the opportunity to learn from him and I want to make sure your grandchildren, one day, have the opportunity to learn from you. This is why what we are doing in safety is so important."

Sure, he also spoke to the business rationale, but what I and the audience remembered is that he cared. That was a wonderful start to how he successfully influenced his organization's culture to achieve safety excellence.

Shawn M. Galloway
Spring, TX

Michael Behm, an associate professor at East Carolina University, started a discussion on LinkedIn about OSH education. To view his post, follow this link <http://linkd.in/NDsDkj> (you will need to log in to your LinkedIn account). You can read the full interview with John Grimaldi at www.asse.org/psextra. Share your thoughts at professionalsafety@asse.org.



Careers

Safety Education

In April 2012, *Professional Safety* published an interview with the late John Grimaldi (find it posted in *PS Extra*). I'm interested in others' views on an excerpt from that interview:

PS: How can colleges and universities better prepare students who plan to pursue a career in occupational safety and health?

John: There should be more advanced degree programs. At NYU, one could earn a master's degree in safety management, and for a doctorate, you could build your own program. [M]any smaller schools now offer degrees. I think this is good, but I am concerned that high-profile schools are not increasing their programs or are choosing to eliminate them. . . . [W]e need the high-profile schools to offer programs to keep a focus on safety management.

Michael Behm
Greenville, NC