



'Danger, Will Robinson!' and other warnings of threats

Imagine this scenario: You are riding with a friend who is driving faster than allowed. A police officer becomes visible up ahead. What does your friend do? They slow down. What is their behavior after passing the police officer who is no longer in the rearview mirror? They speed back up. They are behaving in a way to avoid getting caught. Now let's introduce punishment. The next time this occurs, they are pulled over and issued a fine for speeding. Does your friend ever again break the speed limit? Does your friend work on their behavior to more consistently do the right thing or purchase a radar detector, improving the chances of not getting caught again?

If an employee is found not wearing PPE and gets in trouble, from that point on, do they always wear the PPE or set a lookout? "Here comes the boss, put it on!" In the 1960s TV series *Lost in Space*, the robot warns young Will Robinson about an impending threat by saying, "Danger, Will Robinson!" Does your workforce unfortunately view man-

agement or safety people entering work areas as impending threats? Here are a few of my favorite, creative ways I've witnessed employees warning each other.

- Code names. A safety compliance officer I worked with always perceived himself as more of a coach than a cop in safety. This was not a public perception. When visiting a location to audit, over the loudspeaker he would hear, "Charlie 2-2-3, Charlie 2-2-3." Someone eventually pulled him aside and informed him this code means, "The safety guy is on-site; the safety guy is on-site."

- Bird calls. Taking a tour of a manufacturing plant with management, we changed areas and heard "Caw, kraa; caw, kraa." Leaders of this tour informed me these bird calls were employees' way of letting each other know a management tour was underway.

- Reflective tape. The evening superintendent of an electrical line crew would sit in his truck down the street from where line workers were working on the poles and watch with binoculars, waiting

for them to make an error. He would then drive over to the work, pull the employees off the pole, and chastise or punish them. Under the guise of a toolbox talk requested by the crew, a member of the crew popped open the hood of the superintendent's truck and placed reflective tape behind the front grill. From that point on, the boss' truck would light up due to the headlights of passing vehicles, making the workers instantly aware he was watching.

- "Thump, thump." Conducting a recent strategy and culture assessment of a large, multi-unit chemical plant, I was receiving a tour led by the plant manager, safety manager and union vice president (VP). The union VP led the way, not out of kindness or leadership skills, but to warn the workers when we were coming. Prior to opening each of the doors to meeting rooms or control rooms, he grabbed the door handle with his right hand and with a closed fist of his left hand, pounded twice on the door: "Thump, thump."

Culture is shaped by many things,

especially signals of impending threats. These examples are indicators of cultures suffering from perceived poor leadership, low trust and lack of engagement. What is the relationship between workforce and management within your company? Is management's presence seen as valuable? What signals, positive or negative, are common within your company? If management or safety is viewed as a pain-point, people will work hard to either avoid them or not get caught. That shouldn't be their goal, but it is a common one in many suffering cultures.

Shawn M. Galloway is the president of ProAct Safety and co-author of several bestselling books. As an award-winning consultant, adviser, leadership coach and keynote speaker, he has helped hundreds of organizations within every major industry to improve safety strategy, culture, leadership and engagement. He is also the host of the highly acclaimed weekly podcast series Safety Culture Excellence®.

For more information, call (936) 273-8700 or email info@ProActSafety.com.



High Pressure Solutions

UP TO 60,000 PSI

- HOSE ASSEMBLIES
- FITTINGS & ADAPTERS
- QUICK DISCONNECTS
- NEEDLE, BALL AND CHECK VALVES
- MEDIUM AND HIGH PRESSURE TUBING

For more than 25 years SPIR STAR has been a leading supplier of high pressure fluid control products with a network of partners and assembly centers. When you're looking for expertise and solutions, you can trust SPIR STAR to deliver reliable, quality products, stock extensive inventory, and provide unmatched customer service.

SPIR STAR

HIGH PRESSURE PERFORMANCE

ISO 45001:2018 Certified
ISO 9001:2015 Certified

WWW.SPIRSTAR.COM | 281.664.7800 | TOLL FREE: 800.890.7827

© 2021 SPIR STAR