

## Safety: A Value Contributor or Productivity Competitor?

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Fri, 2015-03-06 15:28

Safety continues to suffer from the wrong focus, goals and objectives. Until there is a change in how we frame safety's role and purpose within organizations, we will continue to upset the customers of safety, require a greater emphasis on controlling behavior and ensuring compliance, and continue with have-to rather than want-to cultures.

Until we view safety as a value contributor rather than a risk-reducing part of the organization, we will focus on failing less rather than achieving success. The two are not interchangeable. Safety enables profitability and productivity. It provides value. We hear common phrases like safety first, safe production, and safety mindset, all with the goal to overcome the perception, real or not, that safety must compete with production. This outdated thinking is why companies will struggle to capture engagement and volunteerism for safety efforts, and will continue to perpetuate current results.

Organizations must have a strategy no different than a business focus on creating value for current and prospective customers, all in order to win. Initiatives, training, programs, zero-based objectives (e.g., injuries, incidents, accidents) are all too often incorrectly viewed as the strategy when they are not. Strategy is a framework of choices or tradeoffs the organization makes to determine how to capture and deliver value. Strategy, therefore, is, "How do we win?"

*How many employees are eager to attend safety meetings and are the first one to sign up to participate in new improvement efforts?*

*—Shawn M. Galloway*

In business strategy, effective leaders learn you do not win by competing on price; you win by differentiating and delivering new or unexpected value. Companies don't win with capturing increasing market share by beating competition on price; they win by creating interest, intrigue and excitement. Are your safety improvement efforts focused on competing or on delivering value through interesting concepts, intrigue and excitement? The level of passion for safety that currently resides within the workforce answers this question best.

Consider scoring passion for safety excellence within your organization: not passion for personally having no injuries, but passion for what it takes to make no injuries happen to all within the company. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being poor, 5 middle of the road, and 10 excellent, what level of passion exists within your company? Why is this?

If someone interfered with your ability to participate in an activity you are passionate about, how would you



employees within your organization do not have that same reaction when told they can't attend a safety meeting, training or volunteer activity, how can you change this perception of value for safety? How many employees are eager to attend safety meetings and are the first one to sign up to participate in new improvement efforts?

## Fighting Confusion about Safety's Value

With our efforts to reach zero injuries, we often implement new programs, training or initiatives. When people do not see precisely how they contribute to safety excellence and how it adds specific value to them individually, or, if the efforts conflict with other business improvement initiatives, we confuse and disengage the very people we are trying to help and influence. When this occurs on the journey to no one getting hurt, how real and sustainable will the results be?

Imagine a company with disengaged and disinterested customers. All attention would be rigorously focused to turn this negative brand impression around within the marketplace. This would not be delegated; it would receive the attention of the board and senior executives because final accountability lies with them. If safety is so important, why does it continue to be delegated with a programmatic or initiative-focused strategy?

A strategy for safety excellence can be developed through answering a series of questions, determining how to best deliver value. Many clients have successfully accomplished this by beginning with the question: "How well aligned are the business and safety excellence strategy?" For example, what can hinder the ability to accomplish both safety and profitability goals? How does being excellent in safety enable client acquisition, productivity, business growth, and efficiency goals? If we are known as the best in safety in our industry, what does this do to the impression of our brand? If these questions aren't conversations within current strategic planning efforts, this is the place to start.

Safety has a brand within your organization. If you don't manage it just as strategically as the business is managed, value is lost and you are back to competing for attention. Don't compete; differentiate with a focus

on capturing and delivering value.



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