



What data drives your improvement strategy?

Data from many sources must be leveraged, analyzed and understood to forecast the direction of efforts toward improving both safety performance and culture. What data do you leverage to strategically improve safety? “Big data,” a term coined by Roger Mougalas from O’Reilly Media in 2005, is defined by Dictionary.com as “extremely large data sets that may be analyzed computationally to reveal patterns, trends and associations, especially relating to human behavior and interactions.” Big data, however, has been around quite a long time.

Without good data, opinions drive a blind-leading-the-blind strategy.

Accounting was first introduced in Mesopotamia around 7,000 years ago to record crop and herd growth. In 1663, to create a warning system for the ongoing bubonic plague, John Graunt created the first record of statistical data analysis. In

1943, during World War II, Colossus, the first data-processing machine, was created by the British to decipher Nazi codes. This machine reduced the time to perform these previously manual tasks from weeks to hours. Data capabilities have only continued to improve. Professor and data scientist Clive Humby even declared, “Data is the new oil.”

In work with organizations across all major industries, we have reviewed hundreds of strategies ranging from enterprise-wide to site-specific. Early on in our work, far too many strategies were born of either a response to undesired events or best guesses of what might make a difference to improve performance or culture. However, a significant increase in the quantity and quality of data leveraged to drive strategic decisions around environmental, health and safety improvement efforts has been observed. Several clients even employ data scientists to provide the necessary profound insight into their actions and results and, ultimately, help inform better decisions.

In a 2018 benchmarking project led for a client, 53 percent of the respondents indi-

cated they use a comprehensive scorecard from all data collected. Balanced scorecards are growing in usage, leading to companies being better informed and more strategic about their decisions. The following are two examples of rich sources of data and information, with some questions to consider.

Injury, incident and event data: Are your injuries mostly preventable behaviorally, conditionally and/or environmentally? What do the commonly tracked variables in your reports tell you? Are events or risks greater on certain times of the day or days of the week, or depending on the tenure of the employee at the company, on a task or in a role? Are you measuring the value derived between safety improvement efforts and safety results, or are you assuming correlation means causation?

Customers and consumers: What do you know about your customers and consumers, what they value and what value you can provide them? Do they believe what you want them to believe? What is creating desired and undesired perceptions? Do they know what you want them to know? What is hindering this? Are they able to do what

you want them to do, and are they regularly doing it? What might be influencing them to do otherwise? What are the stories, and who has the loudest voice? Who are those positively challenging the status quo, who is sustaining it and who are the naysayers? What efforts are perceived as effective compared to those perceived as not? Do they see value in what the EHS professional sees value in?

Without good data, opinions drive a blind-leading-the-blind strategy. Feeling your way forward, even with significant confidence and an impressive internal drive, relies too much on luck. Being lucky is not an effective or sustainable strategy.

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