

Who should perform behavior-based safety observations?

Ideally, we would love to have everyone at all levels see value in safety observations, in being able to observe, and be observed by, anyone regardless of level or job. Further, the end goal should be a culture where you wouldn't need behavior-based safety (BBS) checklists, training or consulting methodology to positively reinforce or express concern when injury prevention and culturally related safety behaviors of any kind are observed.

BBS shouldn't be used as a "gotcha" program for safety compliance, as it is best suited for addressing influencers on discretionary injury prevention behaviors. Knowing this, who is best to perform observations: everyone or a select few?

Is everyone already having frequent and engaging coaching conversations about observed safe precautions being taken, and expressing concern when perceived at-risk behaviors are witnessed? If not, transitioning to having the entire work force participate as observers will be a new concept to the organization. Never forget, forced change is almost always temporary. When the force goes away, so does the change. Change strategies should consider trust

as the primary factor for the observation process design. Rather than providing all solutions for change effectiveness, allow this article to serve as a guide, asking the right questions to determine what would work best in your situation.

Should we make everyone perform observations?

Have you validated, with an assessment (surveys and interviews), that trust is unquestionable in the collection of safety data regardless of position or level, tenure and task responsibility? If yes, then possibly so. How good of a job would everyone do? Are they willing to be involved? How would we coach their individual performance to improve and excel?

When you mandate something people do not see value in, you are engaging hands and feet without hearts and minds, often creating a false start or sub-optimized results. People may perform observations, but they may only do them when they know they have to, or do the minimal necessary to get by. Mandating a process designed to influence, not enforce, rarely yields passionate engage-

ment. In fact, it tends to create disinterest, disengagement and malicious compliance.

Should we use a select few?

Generally, yes, at least when starting. Consider what has been said so far about influence, discretionary behavior, hearts and minds, and engagement. If our goal is to introduce something that could be game changing for the organization with edicts, do we really feel this is the most successful approach? If someone doesn't want to be an observer (e.g., safety coach), and we make them, how will that affect the person being observed? Might their experience influence perceptions about the process? Further, if this experience is negative, might this carry over in how they conduct future observations?

It is generally best to identify your recognized change agents or influential people who see the value in the tool and are willing to participate. Help them show the value in the process by targeting and over communicating early wins. When this occurs, people will respond and start pulling toward a process they see offers the company and,

most importantly them, value. If your culture is indeed ready for all to perform, it could compromise success if only the "chosen" few are involved.

Starting with too much or not enough participation could stall or expedite results. Either way, it's vital to understand what motivates, or could demotivate, your culture with a BBS process. Generally, it is better to grow the process into the culture that creates pull rather than pushing it into place. Work on growing participation based on value recognition and interest that creates want-to rather than have-to engagement. Most importantly, and considering acceptance to change, make the strategy fit your culture rather than making the culture fit the strategy.

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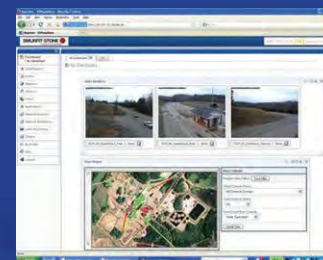


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