

## APPLYING LEAN & SIX SIGMA PRINCIPLES TO BEHAVIOR-BASED SAFETY (PART 2 OF 3)



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Welcome to Safety Culture Excellence. Today's topic, Part 2 of 3: Applying Lean & Six Sigma Principles to Behavior-Based Safety. My name is Shawn Galloway, and I'm proud to be your host.



Shawn Galloway  
President & COO

I'm recording this for you from downtown Atlanta where we are working with 32 incredible individuals that represent 19 different sites within an extraordinary company. We're leading them through something that we call an Internal Consultant & Facilitator Development Workshop. Essentially, we are beginning a process to transfer our knowledge and experience to them in a just enough/just in time manner that has proven to be without a doubt, the most successful, effective, and efficient manner for a company to embed these capabilities within.

This also facilitates stronger multi-level support and most importantly, allows for continuous, sustainable value. This workshop covers the theory, but most importantly, what 900 other groups have done and teaches them not just how to deliver culture improving training, but an introduction into all of the successful consultative strategies that we utilize as Safety Culture Consultants. Within the next month, they will then follow us to participate in an organizational and cultural safety assessment at one of their locations. If the results are favorable, they will then observe us customize a fully supported Lean Behavior-Based Safety implementation. This allows for them to see both the theories and practice, which by the way, brings me to the first topic for today:

### **The Theory and Practice**

The great baseball player and philosopher, Yogi Berra, had a saying, "In theory there is no difference between theory and practice, in practice there is."

I have a strong belief that if you are going to be successful integrating safety into the fabric of activities, you need to be able to parallel and assimilate many different methodologies and technologies into your approach and, most importantly, you need to understand both theory and practice.

You know too often we encounter Behavior-Based Safety strategies that are based on a single principle or science. Moreover, if you really peel back the layers, you will find many of the methodologies are going further away from the business reality and focusing more purely in the theory that it's based on. I certainly mean no disrespect to any of the academic theories; I have seen them all have success. My point is, you need to look at your own organizational culture and see what would work best for you because we have also been called in behind their failures. Based on countless experiences, I can assure you of this. While there are some key principles that you don't want to ignore. There is no exact, magical formula of ingredients for success.

Even as I record this, we are working with several organizations that have every major approach implemented at different locations throughout the world. What they all have in common is the opportunity for further improvement. The approach they all are taking is to borrow key Lean and Six Sigma techniques and take a best practices approach to finding a transformational focus, greater efficiency, and immediate and sustainable results. This also allows them to accomplish what is currently quite difficult in many organizations and that is to get past to the blanketing effect and massive resource impact that most Behavior-Based Safety efforts have and truly gain insight into what influences organizational risk.

### **The Business Reality: If It Isn't Lean It Won't Last**

Locations are not just competing with outside organizations, they are also competing to remain an asset of their current organization by focusing on increasing their Hold Factor. As a result, most organizations around the world are integrating Lean principles into their business. This has become one of the most commonly used strategies to remain competitive.

Now a little side note here, you have to be careful with how the term "Lean" is thrown around. We often hear the term "Lean Safety". Now obviously the term is well intended, however, many times the misconception that gets created is, "Well, that means we are going to do less". That is certainly not what most people are implying with that but sometimes that is how it is interpreted.

Generally, what they are trying to convey is what most companies are up against. In our work we have found many organizations are doing a lot of things in safety with no additional gains. For those organizations, generally more activities isn't the answer, Lean just means working smarter. This is the same problem we have with the current methodologies in Behavior-Based Safety. Likewise, Lean Behavior-Based Safety doesn't mean less effort, it means aiming more directly at desired results. By the way, I'm not referring to eventual results; I'm suggesting rapid-results and ensuring the continuous improvement methodology, what we in ProAct Safety call a "Results Driven Change Philosophy".

### **Push vs. Pull**

Who defines the "value" of Behavior-Based Safety, the people implementing the process or the culture that will be impacted by it? Are you being pressured into expert predefined methodologies or are you able to pull what elements you want? It may sound selfish but everyone is listening to the famous radio station, WIIFM. Does the value of the approach really answer the "What's In It For Me" (WIIFM) question at all levels in the organization? Sadly, for most efforts the answer is no.

If you have a process, ask yourself this, are you pushing the effort as a result of what you, or worse, the consultant perceived as valuable or are you letting the data and culture pull and focus the effort?

If you asked your employees, "What one behavior or precaution is most important?", could they tell you? Could they even tell you the items on your checklist? For that matter, could they immediately recall a recent success?

Unfortunately, the vast majority of failed processes that we have been called in behind, we find that the data isn't being used. Either the data being collected wasn't insightful and didn't allow the committees or teams to identify their transformational opportunities, or it was and no one communicated back to the observers and employees... as a result, guess what's created... that's right, another black hole safety system... Something goes in and nothing goes out.

Remember the WIIFM question? As the culture progresses the answer to the WIIFM question needs to adapt and change. If you are not sharing the data, you might not realize it but think about it, you've just answered that question. Is that really the answer you would like to provide?

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In addition, we found a lot of unnecessary steps and non value-added features such as usage of resources and effort for example. As the Lean Thinking saying goes: "Doing the wrong thing very well is wasteful". Consider integrating the Value Stream Mapping approach. In the beginning and of course continuously make sure the approach focuses on identifying these three areas:

1. Those that do create value
2. Those that create no value but are required
3. The actions that don't create value and can be immediately eliminated

The other aspect of business reality that gets forgotten is that many don't pay attention that in today's hypercompetitive world, we can't be asking for the sites, or employees for that matter, to wait for results.

A major (key words - Structured and Communicated) element that the approach has to have without question, is a focus on quick wins or rapid change, which is called Kaikaku, then sustaining the mindset of continuous incremental improvement, referred to as Kaizen. This is a fundamental part of Lean Behavior-Based Safety.

There is a saying I picked up from a podcast called "Manager-Tools" whose co-founders are two guys I admire a great deal. Their saying is this, "If the strategies aren't implementable, they will be less likely to be implemented by the folks doing the work". I think that's a great saying. If it is not practical, if it doesn't make sense, if it isn't flexible and people can't make it their own, it is either not going to get implemented, or even if you can get it started, most likely it won't last because it's an awkward fit to the culture. Bob Young, the co-founder of Red Hat, said it best, "It's like buying a car with the hood welded shut; if something goes wrong, you can't even try to fix it".

### **"How often do you wash a rental car?"**

Our founder, Terry Mathis, is actually one of the original pioneers of Behavior-Based Safety. The original approach he created is different in the fact that it wasn't born in the academic world, it was born out of organizational necessity and in the real world of work safety issues. He actually developed it internally at Coca-Cola where he was the Director of Training in the early 80's. He ultimately customized the process 42 different ways at 42 different locations before leaving to enter the consultant ranks. He then worked for another consulting firm for a couple of years prior to starting ProAct Safety 15 years ago. At an American Society of Safety Engineers conference several years ago, he asked a question of the audience, "How often do you wash a rental car?". In other words, do you take care of something that isn't your own? Think about how that relates to your employees and your safety programs.

### **"Projects don't fail in the end, they fail in the beginning."**

As a company we have always been able to differentiate ourselves because of our customized approach; and we have found it's always best if you can adopt multiple approaches and theories to fit your culture, rather than trying to make a culture fit a particular approach. The latter will almost surely create resistance to change. Well that sounds obvious you might say, but consider many of the methodologies out there who do not allow you to customize their materials, these end up being perceived by the workforce as "programs".

If you have been in safety for more than a month then you have been exposed to the strong "program of the month" mentality that exists all over the world and at some sites this perception is certainly stronger than others. If you think about it, managers are just in their expectation of recognizing a return on their investment as quickly as possible but unfortunately a lot of the programs they've rolled out in safety haven't quickly returned on investment, so they get pulled and something else is tried and what are we doing... We are reinforcing that perception.

### **Resisting Change or Resisting Forced Change?**

You know it's interesting; there has been a lot of debate out there on the subject of resistance to change. Let me share with you our strategy, don't create the perception of it. Think about it, if you minimize the perception of change, you minimize the resistance to it. So the question gets asked again, "do people resist change, or resist forced change?". When you and the force go away, how long do you think the change will last?

Let's look at a common example. What if every externally led initiative has failed miserably, now here someone comes along with another externally led change effort with a consultant's logo, look, and feel. In addition, what if they start using terms that are not common to the workforce, or even culturally unacceptable? For example, at many of our client sites with labor unions, referring to a group of workers as a team, would be problematic. Some unions consider the phrase "team" to include the entire workforce, they are all the team. Well, what if you form a group of employees and based on inflexibility of the materials, they are forced to use the term "committee".

We've also worked in organizations where a committee was where you send a program to die a slow painful death... Why start off projects with elements that would trigger resistance? Now as you put this into framework of your own company culture and change initiatives, ask yourself this: Am I managing the resistance to change as part of the project or trying to understand it and what could trigger it prior to? Of course here is where the expertise becomes very important.

### **Planning is Invaluable but Plans are Worthless**

I was fortunate to have served in the United States Army and one of the things they taught me well is you want to be able to identify the potential snipers in the trees and landmines in the road before you start down a path. So expertise and planning is obviously important but the military calls those types of plans a Commander's intent. The actual tactics used are left up to the soldiers that encounter the issue. Something else I'll share comes from West Point. They have a saying, "All strategies are successful until they reach the enemy, because the enemy had a vote too". The approach to Behavior-Based Safety has to be **flexible and dynamic** because no one is perfect at predicting change in the world, let alone business issues.

To that, there is another statement I'd like to present and it comes from the book, "Lean Thinking" by James Womack and Daniel Jones, and it goes like this. "A value creation system must be flexible and responsive, because forecasts are always wrong. A policy deployment plan is nothing more than an organizational forecast, which future events quickly conspire to prove wrong." Today's executives are realizing that planning is invaluable but plans themselves are worthless. Think about it, a good planning process

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gets people to think through the issues but it should not narrowly define the tactics. I'm sure you've heard before, "The best laid plans of mice and men, will always go astray and Murphy's Law will always happen at the worst opportune time."

### **Culture transformation is a process not an event**

If you want to have the best opportunity of starting off right, like Lean Behavior-Based Safety, the approach has to be flexible and has to be flexible and has to give the culture the ability to customize and make it their own. Additionally, the tools you bring to encourage change have to be delivered in what we call, Just-enough and Just-in-time. Don't just do training for training's sake and certainly don't look at Behavior-Based Safety as a Band-Aid. If you are about to implement, by now you should have already created your Safety System Tool Box. That has to be well defined for an advanced tactic such as Behavior-Based Safety to truly have a chance of being successful, supported, and sustainable.

In closing part two of this series, I'd like to leave you with five final points:

1. New Philosophies, ideas, and methodologies in safety should not be jealously guarded;
2. Please don't allow safety planning to become an annual management distraction. Make sure it is a collaborative effort involving all levels of the organization;
3. Make sure that it is customized and focuses on leveraged use of external expertise and that expertise should be delivered in a way that it transfers the knowledge so it becomes internal to the organization;
4. The culture has to own the process. Ensure the strategies are supportable at all levels of the organization and that it has the flexibility to adapt to the uncertainty of the future;
5. And most importantly, ensure the individuals leading this effort hold themselves accountable for the results. As Eddie Murphy once said, "What have you done for me lately..." In today's world unless you are just looking for another flavor of the month or program to manage, immediate results and systemic communication are key.

Until next time, remember: "In safety, prevention trumps reaction." For more information on Safety Culture Excellence or if you have a topic to suggest, please email us at [podcast@proactsafety.com](mailto:podcast@proactsafety.com).