



## | Engaging employees |

### What are some creative tactics employers have used to improve the effectiveness of their training and education efforts?

Responding is Shawn M. Galloway, CEO, ProAct Safety Inc., Houston.

Besides leveraging the obvious technological advancements of gamification, virtual reality and artificial intelligence, here are some creative approaches I’ve been a part of in four categories: sticky, mentor coaches, ownership transfer and practiced recovery.



**Stickiness:** A government client with 40,000 people to care for and various complex risks started questioning the efficacy of their training and education efforts. With 30 major safety programs, they went to each subject matter expert, identified the three most important things someone should know about each and turned them into a quiz. The result? Most people didn’t know the most important things, regardless of the amount of training, education and communication. This led the organization to develop two new leading indicators – employee and leadership safety IQ – as well as better-focused development and increased accountability for trainers, which resulted in a significant increase in return on investment.

**Mentor coaches:** A utility client facing the need to transfer knowledge and operational experience to

many new employees on power line crews brought back several influential retired workers willing to work part-time to ride with crews and coach them in their jobs. A mining client with many new supervisors hired an ex-Mine Safety and Health Administration inspector a few days a week to work with the new supervisors to teach them how to see safety through the eyes of MSHA and provide feedback as the leaders started to improve how they manage safety expectations with their crews.

**Ownership transfer:** A manufacturing client facing significant employee turnover because of COVID-19 collaborated with seasoned and well-regarded employees who exhibited strong ownership of safe work. Together,

they developed best practices for performing tasks safely and efficiently, and precisely how to respond to upset conditions or when work wasn’t going to plan. For each department area, a list of the “top five risks we never take and the five precautions we do” was developed and used as training guides and visual aids throughout the plant. A competition took place to see which group had the highest percentage of employees who could recite from memory the items on the list.

**Practiced recovery:** A construction client recognizing the need to be just as good at recovering from injuries as preventing them tested the effectiveness of how well crews responded to injury events. Safety professionals who were already onsite would surreptitiously stage a dummy and an injury event before calling out the code for “worker down” to assess how the individuals onsite responded. The workers knew these would occur at some point throughout the project; however, only the safety department knew precisely when these drills would take place. After the drills, the team would be provided feedback and discuss lessons learned.

The best part of each of these examples is that the ideas for each effort came from the workers. I often find the correct answers on how to improve training and education usually exist within the organization – you just have to ask the right questions.

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