

The Safety Fad Diet: Why Quick Fixes Are Undermining True Safety Excellence

Avoid the trap of quick-fix safety solutions by focusing on foundational practices like employee engagement and root cause analysis.

By Shawn M. Galloway



Ah, the fascinating world of occupational safety! Where each month introduces a new buzzword, and well-meaning safety and business leaders become trend-hopping gurus trying to come up with the next miracle solution. Just like your buddy who swears he can lose 10 pounds by drinking only kale smoothies for a week, many leaders tend to chase the latest quick fix fad. It's a diet for the safety soul, which is about as healthy as a three-day-old donut.

THE QUICK FIX MENTALITY: A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Picture this: Safety slogans and trendy concepts swirling around like confetti at a New Year's Eve party. "Safety Culture Transformation," "Behavior-Based Safety," "Human and Organizational Performance," and "Zero-Harm" and "Target Zero" initiatives sound like they should come with a side of fries. With often an expectation of immediate results, and who doesn't want a quick win?

But much like that kale smoothie, these flashy fixes often lead to a stomachache in the long run. They can distract from the hard work of establishing genuine safety excellence when the expectations are not clear. All are potentially useful tools at different points in the safety excellence journey—something that requires much more than just a sprinkle of trendy jargon.

THE SIREN CALL OF SILVER BULLETS

Don't we all love the idea of a silver bullet? They're that one magical solution that promises to solve all our safety woes.

Unfortunately, just like a friend's claim that a single yoga session can cure her lifelong back pain, this mindset leads to a cycle of chasing one shiny trend after another. When the newest safety tool, program, process, or app fails to deliver, it's time to jump onto the next techno gimmick. This leaves organizations in a perpetual state of confusion, like a kid in a candy store who can't decide which sugary treat to buy.

Organizations often scramble for the latest tech toys—drones for inspections or augmented reality for training—without securing their foundational safety practices and making sure there is a plan to validate value and sustainability first. Sure, technology can be the cherry on top, but it should never replace the hard work of building a solid safety culture. It's like trying to ice a cake that hasn't been baked yet. Spoiler alert: It won't hold together.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE CULTURE OF SAFETY EXCELLENCE

Establishing true safety excellence is more like a marathon than a sprint. It demands consistent effort, dedication, and a long-term commitment to improving and maturing safety thinking and practices. Just as a balanced diet and regular exercise promote lasting health, building a strong safety program involves continuous training, open communication, collaboration, evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, and active leadership involvement.

Here are some sustainable practices to help you resist the urge to indulge in those safety fad diets:



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steering a ship; if they're not focused on the course, the whole crew is doomed to drift aimlessly.

MOVING BEYOND FAD DIETS

Just as health enthusiasts must resist the temptation of fad diets in favor of sustainable lifestyle changes, safety professionals and business leaders need to shift their focus from quick fixes to long-term strategies for safety excellence. By resisting the appeal of flashy programs and focusing on core practices, organizations can build a safety culture that genuinely protects employees and improves overall well-being.

So, let's roll up our sleeves, put on our safety gear and get to work. True safety excellence isn't about chasing the latest trend; it's about digging your hands into the soil and nurturing a culture that will flourish over time. It's time to trade in those quick fix safety diets for a hearty, sustainable approach. Let's make safety a mindset and a lifestyle, not just a passing fad. **EHS**



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- » **Engagement Over Compliance:** Don't just check boxes to meet regulatory requirements. Involve your employees in meaningful safety conversations. Create platforms for open dialogue where they can share their experiences. Make safety a shared responsibility that leads to shared ownership. Remember, an engaged employee is like a well-nourished plant—much more likely to flourish!
- » **Root Cause and Causative Factor Analysis:** Instead of jumping on the latest trend to address safety incidents, take a deep dive into the root causes and contributing factors. This not only reduces the likelihood of the same issue from popping up again like a bad sequel but also builds trust. Employees appreciate knowing that their organization is genuinely committed to improvement rather than just slapping on a bandage or putting more administrative controls (i.e., paperwork) and PPE on employees.
- » **Long-term Training Programs:** One-off training sessions might seem like a quick fix, but they're about as effective as a sugar rush—temporary and fleeting. Invest in ongoing training that evolves with your organization's needs, ensuring that safety knowledge is refreshed and built upon, like layers of a beautifully crafted cake.
- » **Leadership Commitment:** Safety excellence doesn't just happen; it requires commitment from the top. Leaders must model safety behaviors, allocate resources for safety initiatives, and create an environment where safety is prioritized over productivity. It's like a captain

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