



# Do you manage — or influence — people?

The result: “have to” versus “want to” attitudes

By SHAWN M. GALLOWAY

A person doesn't succeed just by being a great leader; they succeed by leading great people. Often, those holding leadership positions view their role as managing the efforts of others. If this is true, then to achieve safety success, you need your team more than your team needs you. A great leader alone cannot achieve nor sustain success in safety; it takes the discretionary effort of all levels within the workforce.

I have yet to see an organization achieve sustainable safety excellence through forced, mandatory effort alone. Conversely, I have seen it achieved through influencing others to perform proactively on their own behalf. Discretionary effort increases in criticality as an organization moves toward attaining a high-impact safety culture. Achieving the cultural position where workers *want* to be involved in safety efforts cannot be enforced or simply managed.

## “I have to” vs. “I want to”

To be an effective leader and enable discretionary effort to flow freely, rather than *managing*, consider *influencing*. I have found the difference between a manager and a leader is the ability to influence. Managing someone is to apply extrinsic motivators to prompt the action of others. To influence is to create a physiological environ-

ment where someone is driven by intrinsic motivators. Do we want people to act in safety exclusively because they have to, or because they want to?

## Observation and feedback

One of the most important tasks a leader can undertake is to coach for performance. Elements that most often describe the act of coaching are: observing and providing feedback. To coach someone is to help them improve their own performance. If the performance is behaviorally defined, it is observable. To help an employee improve their performance long-term, feedback is critical. Acquiring short-term gains in safety performance is not where the difficulty lies; sustainability is the challenge. This cannot be easily accomplished unless the individual has the aspiration to improve and own the change. This necessitates influencing, rather than managing.

## Find your focus

To coach for safety is one of the easier focus points, as the behaviors that indicate desirable actions have already been documented through the years (i.e., position yourself out of the line of fire, keep your eyes on your path/task, select the proper tool for the job, etc.). To discover your focus points, analyze your incidents to find vital precautions that could prevent similar

future events. Keep the list short to facilitate memory and the development of self-sustaining habits.

As a leader experiences positive safety changes through influencing and coaching for safety, trust in the influencing leadership style builds. Many leaders have effortlessly applied this tool to other performance targets as well, such as production, quality, on-time delivery, customer satisfaction, and project management.

## Carry it forward

How you lead people will make a distinguishable difference to you and those you impact. If you have ever played athletics, consider your memory of past coaches. Do you want to be more, or less, like them? Reflecting for a moment on this question is a great start toward making a positive difference in the lives of others. **ISHN**

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