



Employee involvement in safety: Identifying participation barriers

Those striving to achieve safety excellence come to realize the importance of employee ownership and involvement in safety. It would be difficult to find a worker who purposely attempts to hurt himself. Everyone wants to be involved in safety to the point that it ensures they go home injury-free. Contrasting other work-related activities, safety presents its own internal motivation, incentive and reward.

People are willing to be involved in safety efforts, but it may be difficult to realize the demotivators that employees face. Demotivation is often described as something that either neutralizes previously held motivation or worse, creates a disincentive to being motivated. To be successful in ensuring engagement in safety, it is important to understand the social dynamics of involvement and the barriers to a participative safety culture.

Human beings are, by nature, social creatures. We desire to feel a sense of belonging. We want to be involved in something. We aspire to share our thoughts, creative or otherwise. We wish for participation in the communal relationships that the world around us perpetually promotes. If appropriately guided, this social desire could be positively leveraged

to assist organizations in their safety efforts, toward the prevention of incidents.

The desire to be “connected” increases with each new social networking platform or technological advancement, especially for younger generations. Today, the prevailing sites — Facebook, Twitter and YouTube — offer great persuasion as they become more and more pervasive. These platforms allow for people to share their ideas, thoughts and curiosities.

People are neurologically wired and culturally reinforced to share ideas. How can this be utilized in safety? Make no mistake; if you do not involve employees at work, they will look for other conduits to channel their creative tendencies. What safety involvement opportunities or conduits do you provide? Regrettably, employees are not always aware of the participation opportunities most companies offer.

To identify participation barriers, whether through perception surveys or focus group conversations, attempt to gather insight around the following two areas:

1. Can they identify the opportunities for involvement in safety? Ask employees to identify who they should contact to express

an interest in volunteering. Occasionally, the reason you don't have the desirable level of involvement is that employees do not know who to approach with their interest. This may seem overly simplistic, but remember that just because we might have shared information on this subject once, doesn't mean the message was received.

2. Do they feel their immediate supervisor or manager would support them if they joined a safety team or committee? It has been repeatedly proven that people pay attention to what their boss pays attention to. If employees do not feel that their immediate supervisor holds a high degree of importance for safety volunteers, it is likely that an employee might be intrinsically discouraged to participate. How often do your supervisors speak about the importance of employee involvement in safety? Do they feel there would be direct or indirect punishment for participating? Would their boss be inconvenienced if they were involved in safety efforts?

Experience has taught me that the approach is unexpectedly simple. Don't jump too quickly to dangling proverbial participation carrots. Incentivizing is a short-lived tactic fraught with

complications. Rather, work aggressively to identify and neutralize the participation demotivators. Following this you will have created an environment that facilitates motivation and the desirable involvement behavior, rather than a culture that works against it. Only then can

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you ensure sustainability of the ideal safety goal: true ownership of safety, both on and off the job.

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FEATURE

MaRS 2010 on maintenance, reliability coming in August

The Associated Chemical Industry of Texas, the Texas Chemical Council and Houston Business Roundtable have endorsed the Fourth Annual Maintenance and Reliability Symposium (MaRS 2010) as an opportunity for their constituents' maintenance and reliability personnel to learn and grow in the profession.

The Houston Chapter of Society for Maintenance and Reliability Professionals (HCSMRP) Annual Symposium tracks are based on the SMRP Body of Knowledge, and there will be multiple speakers in each of the tracks. The SMRP Body of Knowledge contains five validated pillars of information essential to the success of maintenance and reliability professionals. We listed information on Tracks 1 through 4 on business management and manufacturing process reliability in the May and June/July issues of BIC Magazine.

Track 5 will focus on work management, including skills used to get the maintenance and reliability work done. It includes scheduling and planning activities, quality assurance of maintenance activities,

stores and inventory management. Speakers and topics for this track include:

- Richard Van Liew — “Planning and Scheduling from Both Supplier and Recipient Perspective”
- Greg Dunn and Ed Foster — “Guide to Maintenance Work Sampling”
- Bob Craft — “Determine Asset Degradation Proactively with Stress Wave Analysis”
- Paul Sly — “Oil Filtration and Flushing: Application and Results”
- Dustin Ashleigh — “Nonintrusive Testing and Inspections of Outdoor Substations”

On the morning of Aug. 20, there will be a panel of industry area experts discussing the topics of “Capital Expenditures and Maintenance/Reliability Spending Strategies for 2011” and “Using Lean Reliability and 6 Sigma to Increase Asset Performance.”

MaRS 2010 will be held Aug. 19-20 at Moody Gardens in Galveston, Texas.

To register for MaRS 2010, visit www.smrphouston.org/events.htm.

Houston Chapter of SMRP
2010 Maintenance & Reliability Symposium

August 19-20, 2010
Moody Gardens Hotel, Galveston, TX

- Technical Presentations by speakers from major industries following the five pillars of SMRP
- Great opportunities for learning & networking
- Nearby for the TX, LA industrial areas
- Low cost

For information or to register visit: www.smrphouston.org

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