

## Passionately Proactive: A Pleading Call to Action

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Pub 21 June 2011 – Canadian Occupational Safety Magazine

Passion tends to follow an unfortunate event or diagnosis. While a support structure is proven to be critical to facilitate recovery, the reality is that passion for another is reactive. For our society to progress and truly reach the point of true prevention, passion needs to be proactive.

Recently I was fortunate to witness the celebration of a dear friend's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday. Only a year ago I was unsure if she would survive her fight with cancer. This friend's situation continued to personally impact me as a child of two, two-time survivors of this dreadful disease. I know quite well the toll it takes on an individual's family. With great trepidation, I considered what I would lose if any of my loved ones were to leave this world tomorrow. This reconfirmed to me how precious life really is.

Knowing we are unable to solve all of the medical mysteries that surround us creates a sense of either pessimism or optimism, resulting in a desire to either suppress or intensify our endeavor to help mankind remain healthy. Sadly, health mysteries remain a perpetual quandary. The vast majority of occupational injuries, however, are not.

Injuries that occur in industrial environments are quickly becoming fully preventable. As many leading organizations have progressed, so has the level of passion demonstrated when the goal is not achieved. Often this is misinterpreted by some employees as, "Management is only sincere and shows that they care after an event and this diminishes over time." The future challenge now lies in an organization's ability to inspire others to become passionately proactive.

Many years ago, I took a chance in introducing an important term: passionately proactive. I believe the reason it was so well received was largely due to the intrinsic desire for safety and health that already existed throughout the audience. Interestingly, this is what is often found among those that are consistently better than average in operational safety performance. Either you care about reaching a point of Safety Culture Excellence™ or you do not. Companies that are truly passionate about safety excellence engage their board of directors in it. Whereas, those that are not, do not.

Terry L. Mathis, CEO and founder of ProAct Safety™, is known for saying, "There are two kinds of people in safety: those who care and those who don't." I believe this is truer than we are willing to admit. I also find that some do indeed care about safety excellence; they just do not know how to show it. Caring is important, but limited if observable action does not follow. There are many things employees will believe you care about and will see your passion focused on only a few areas. I believe that executives do care about injury prevention; they just do not know how to behave in a way that reflects their internal desires.

When someone we care about becomes embattled with a fight for their life, we surround them with prayers, support groups, prepared meals and other religious rituals. This is what we do regardless of cultural upbringing. Yet it is still reactive. We need to move towards a society that focuses the passion we have for others prior to a struggling event. Only when there is a shared sense of proactive passion for safety and health excellence at all levels of the organization and society, will we ever achieve it.

We might not have the answers for the obscurity that is injury and illness prevention. But for us to choose to give up on finding the cures and prevention tactics is to give up on our descendants, and we're smarter than that.



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