

## SAFETY MEETINGS AND TOOL BOX TALKS 2

### Part 2

#### PRACTICE YOUR PRESENTATION

Your presentation will not be effective if you read from a script, rely too much on notes, or use PowerPoint slides as cue cards. Instead, you need to practice and rehearse your presentation enough so you can give all your attention to your audience—your employees or co-workers. Practice your presentation the way you will deliver it. Rehearse standing, speaking aloud, and with the proper passion, pacing, and movement. Will this kind of rehearsing make you look fake? Not at all! You will be a more confident presenter and make a bigger impact on your audience.

#### ENSURE EMPLOYEES ARE AWARE OF MEETING TIME AND PLACE

Be sure to communicate to employees meeting time and place. You may want to also consider sending them your proposed agenda, so they can mentally prepare and begin thinking about how they can contribute to the meeting. If you are hoping employees to come with ideas about a specific topic or concern, be sure to explain any expectations and hopes you have surrounding the meeting so everyone is on the same page. Well, it's just about time to start the meeting. Everyone knows where and when the meeting is. They have all received an agenda, so it's a done deal, right? Well, not necessarily so. There are a few actions to take just before and during the meeting to make sure it runs smoothly. Here are some important things to do just before the meeting starts:

- Arrive early. 30 minutes should suffice for a safety meetings. However, if training is included in the agenda, you may want to show up an hour early to make sure all gear and training materials are in proper order.
- Set up the room. Make sure there are enough tables, chairs, pencils, and paper. Ensure the lights and electricity work.
- What about refreshments? A small investment can result in a big return!

#### CONDUCTING A SAFETY MEETING

To effectively conduct a safety meeting, be sure to follow these additional best practices:

- Call the meeting to order and start at the appointed time.
- Note attendance. You may want to have a recorder or sign-in sheet. The attendance and safety topics discussed should be filed in a safe place, as this is information Government officials would take a look at if your workplace is selected for an inspection.

- You may want to review ground rules to clarify what is acceptable behavior during the meeting (e.g., don't interrupt while another person is speaking, raise your hand to be recognized, don't make negative comments about another person, etc.).
- Follow your agenda and be sure to engage with your audience.
- End the meeting on time.

Another meeting has just been completed, you've thanked everyone for coming, and they're returning to their work. Is your job done? Not yet! There may be some minor paper work you need to get done and you still haven't followed-up on assignments and action items. The follow-up stage may be the most important part of the whole process. Here are some things you may want to consider after you have conducted a safety meeting:

- Finalize meeting notes or minutes.
- Send a copy of safety meeting notes to employees.
- Provide an evaluation or survey to employees who attended.
- Keep track of any action items and implementations needed.

### **FINALIZE MEETING NOTES**

It's important not to wait to complete and finalize any of the notes taken during the FOLLOWING-UP meeting. The longer you wait to finalize the meeting minutes, the less able you'll be to accurately put down on paper what happened, who was assigned tasks, and the associated time frames. You will want to be sure you attach a couple items to your safety meeting minutes, if applicable:

- Attendance sheet or record.
- Recommendations or safety suggestions made by employees.
- Action items that were assigned, who they were assigned to, and the date needed.
- Anything else used or discussed in the meeting. After you have completed and compiled all of the safety meeting notes, be sure to store in a safe place. Seek out applicable government regulations regarding how long you should keep the minutes of safety meetings, as this may vary depending on your industry and the type of safety meeting you are holding. "Seek out applicable OSHA regulations regarding how long you should keep the minutes of safety meetings, as this may vary depending on your industry"

### **SEND A COPY OF SAFETY MEETING NOTES TO EMPLOYEES**

After you have finalized any meeting notes, you should consider sending them out to employees and co-workers. Not only will attendees benefit from a reminder of what was discussed, but it's also a good idea to fill in employees who were unable to attend for whatever reason. You can provide employees with these notes via email, a newsletter, or even post them on a bulletin board.

## **PROVIDE A SURVEY**

When it comes to safety, continual improvement is vital. Try sending out a survey or evaluation form to employees who attended the safety meeting and provide comments to the presenter. You can also interview individual employees and co-workers. What questions should be asked in a safety meeting survey? You can probably think of a few, but refer to some of the examples below if needed:

## **FOLLOWING-UP**

- Was the safety meeting fun?
- Are you satisfied with the quality of the safety meeting?
- Were positive safety recognitions given at the meeting?
- Do you think current safety issues are being resolved/addressed in a timely manner?
- What would make our safety meetings better?

## **KEEP TRACK OF ACTION ITEMS**

What kind of message do you think you will send if safety recommendations and action items are made in a safety meeting, but nothing is ever done to address or implement those items? Not a very good one, that's for sure. If there are items that require some sort of action or assignment that result from the safety meeting, be sure you take the proper steps to follow-up, track, and implement those items. This will help improve workplace safety and increase the priority of safety among employees. It's important for managers and other safety leaders to show dedication to safety by taking action, not just talking about it!

Effective safety meetings should be engaging and memorable. No one likes to hear, "ugg, another safety meeting?" In other words, you should try and make safety "sexy." If it is not fun or engaging for those attending, they will not remember it. So, how do you do that? Here are some not-always apparent tips to holding effective safety meetings.

## **REMOVE SHADED SAFETY GLASSES**

If you work outdoors, say on a construction site, you may be required to wear eye protection. However, that is not a good idea if you are leading a pre-shift or toolbox safety meeting. It's all about eye contact. If your audience cannot make eye contact with you, they have a harder time connecting with your message.

## **CONDUCT A HAZARD HUNT**

This is an excellent way to maximize engagement and increase safety awareness at your next safety meeting. The goal is to be on site and have workers look around to see if they can find any noticeable hazards that may eventually cause problems. This "hunt" gets them actively involved and thinking about the job and its hazards.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SAFETY MEETING**

### **ROTATE SAFETY MEETING LEADERS**

One of the mistakes many companies make is to assume safety meetings should only be run by one specific person. However, this limits the role to titled leaders and it misses a great opportunity to develop your front-line employees to become safety leaders as well. Rotating safety meeting leaders also allows you to apply safety leadership solutions to the development of your employees.

### **EMPHASIZE GOOD CATCHES**

The difference between a “near miss” and a “good catch” is the difference between a lagging indicator and a leading indicator. A near miss is simply an incident where no one got hurt, and often pure luck was the only thing that prevented an injury. A good catch happens when someone notices a hazard and does something about it before it results in a near miss or an incident. Reporting near misses has value, but it’s not predictive. It doesn’t tell us what comes next. On the other hand, reporting good catches indicates people are actively looking for hazards, which has a much greater value in a safety culture.

### **USE INCIDENT REPORTS TO LAUNCH SAFETY DISCUSSIONS**

Incident reports are great tools for safety discussions. However, keep in mind they are very mechanical in the way they are written. They tend to report the mechanics of that incident, and NOT the impact the incident had on the person who got hurt and on his/her family. It is better to tell the story rather than simply writing the report. “A good catch happens when someone notices a hazard and does something about it before it results in a near miss or an incident.”

### **INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN SAFETY MEETINGS**

There are several things you can do to increase employee participation in your safety meetings. Here are a few tips:

1. Hold Safety Conversations rather than safety meetings. What you call something can affect how it is perceived. Marketers make millions figuring out what to call new products. If you call your gatherings Safety Conversations, the connotation is you will create opportunities for two-way dialog. Employees will show up with the mindset they can contribute their thoughts.
2. Instead of an agenda, ask a question. Agendas can be very useful for keeping meetings on track. You might want to schedule a so-called “Question Session” to discuss a relevant safety topic or a recent incident? Yes, some of you skeptics are thinking: “This will turn into an instant gripe session or it will get completely out of hand.” It could. But, think about how you can facilitate it by setting a specific timeframe and stick to it. Use your best skills to keep the discussion on track so it relates to the question at hand.
3. Create a moving experience. Who said safety meetings have to be sit-down sessions? There are times when it makes sense to have people sit around the

table to look at diagrams or drawings and to write notes. But, what would happen if you made some of your safety meetings highly interactive with hands-on exhibits? For example, if you are discussing the use of hard hats, you could have a table display of various types of hard hats your company purchases. At another table, an expert could show employees how to properly adjust and clean their hard hats. In effect, you could have a “walk-around” meeting. You may need to experiment with these ideas and others to increase the conversational element in your safety meetings. Look for ways to have more informal safety sessions that will energize and engage everyone. “...what would happen if you made some of your safety meetings highly interactive with handson exhibits?”

Government reports almost seven to eight million Indians suffer from a workplace injury every year. However, when you mention “safety meeting” at your worksite, workers tend to view them unenthusiastically. But, you can turn your next safety meeting into an enjoyable experience. When it comes to improving the health and safety performance at your company, most managers believe worker involvement is a key to success. Positive relationships between employers and employees can help enhance productivity when it comes to safety.

### **HOW TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES & ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION**

Here are some strategies for building better safety meetings that engage the participants:

1. People engage with other people. In other words, you should not rely on PowerPoint to get your message across to your employees.
2. Select an interesting topic. This is the key to running a successful safety meeting. When used properly, specific topics teach workers safety awareness and also emphasize the importance of safety in the workplace.
3. Ask for opinions. Sometimes, it is better to ask workers what they want to talk about during the meeting, rather than supplying a topic of your choice. Discussing the most serious safety issues workers face on a daily basis encourages the group to come back for more meetings.
4. Questions are possibly one of the most powerful tools of a good leader. By not asking questions, one assumes they know all the answers. Not all workers have the personality style to step forward with suggestions or potential problems. When asked, however, many will offer more than expected. This is especially true if they are convinced their input is truly needed and wanted. Most people have something to contribute and will provide input when asked.
5. Make a big impression. For example, using scenarios and real-life accidents with photos can do the trick. You can also have guest speakers, such as health care professionals, paramedics, safety consultants, and even workers who have suffered a workplace injury.

6. Educate your audience. Teach employees about how to apply job-specific safety procedures at the meeting. You can also use safety workshops to illustrate a specific task, such as providing first aid in different situations.
7. Keep it simple. One idea at a time. As you know, safety meetings are critical to the on-going safety of your employees. But, you cannot just stick to any one thing for every meeting, and think, “well, we had our meeting.” It is definitely not just about filling a timeslot. It is about making sure you advance a new idea and call-to-action. Your organization needs to become better-not just better-informed-when it comes to safety. You should shorten your meeting with just one thought at a time. Consider using either newsletters or videos to supplement the training once the meeting is finished.
8. Create a call-to-action. This is what you want participants to do differently after you finish the safety meeting. It's not enough to just know the information. You must now do something with the information. That's why you start with a call-to-action in planning and work backwards from there.
9. Get feedback. You want to make sure your employees continue to attend the safety meetings. Therefore, make sure you get their feedback after each meeting. Encourage them to give you a few suggestions for making your safety meetings more interesting. Feedback can be given during the meeting or more anonymously by filling out a rating and suggestion sheet. Be sure to check the suggestions and make changes accordingly. As you've probably noticed, not all safety meetings and topics are created equal. Some can be boring and ineffective, while others are engaging and rewarding for all involved. So, when thinking about choosing safety topics and conducting pro-status safety meetings, be sure to avoid these top four meeting fails.

### **MEETING FAIL #1: BEING TOO GENERIC**

Many companies buy templates for their safety meetings and topics that are too cookie-cutter and generic. These templates have been dumbed-down to appeal to as many industries as possible. Generic safety meetings may talk about safety reports, inspections, incident reports, processes, and procedures, but they are so mind-numbing they are likely to put your employees to sleep. They also don't build safety buy-in.

### **MEETING FAIL #2: ACTING LIKE A LONG-WINDED COP**

Don't just harp on safety rules during safety meetings. Though you want employees to follow safety rules and for there to be accountability for those rules, acting like a cop will only alienate people and negatively affect your workplace safety culture. Instead, be a coach that builds motivation, ownership, and performance!

THINGS THAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED “...acting like a cop will only alienate people and negatively affect

### **MEETING FAIL #3: READING FROM A SCRIPT**

There's nothing more boring and ineffective than listening to someone drone on while they read word-for-word a presentation they have prepared. You should understand the safety topics within your presentation and engage with your audience during a safety meeting. Make eye contact! Be involved. Make the meetings a dynamic discussion rather than a one-way communication process that puts others to sleep.

### **MEETING FAIL #4: FAULT-FINDING AND NAME-CALLING**

Though it may be important to discuss previous accidents and injuries during your safety meeting, don't start naming names and placing blame on specific individuals for safety incidents. That's just bad form. Also, it can be quite effective to include an open forum timeslot during your safety meeting where employees can voice safety and health concerns. However, don't reduce another's idea to nothing by calling the person or the idea "bad" or "stupid" or any other negative word. Don't let other employees be negative towards other ideas either. You should make it very clear at the beginning of the meeting or the open forum that this behavior is unacceptable. "...don't start naming names and placing blame on specific individuals for safety incidents. That's just bad form." You may have heard this, "Ugh, another safety meeting?" During some safety meetings, the presenter tends to read a so-called "safety meeting script." As you can imagine, this type of safety meeting is a waste of time and money. So, what are some ways to improve your meeting process? When you decide some part of the safety meeting needs to be improved, it is important to use a systematic process to make sure the change is effective. We encourage the use of the Shewhart/Deming Plan-Do-Study-Act process. Let's take a brief look at this process.

### **IMPROVING THE MEETING PROCESS THE SHEWART/ PDSA CYCLE PLAN**

Plan a change or a test aimed at improvement. DO Carry out the change or the test on a small scale. ACT Adopt the change or abandon it, or run through the cycle again.

STUDY - Study the results. What did we learn? What went wrong?

### **IMPROVING THE MEETING PROCESS Step 4: ACT – ADOPT, ABANDON, OR REPEAT THE CYCLE**

Incorporate what works into the meeting process. Ask not only if we're doing the right things, but ask if we're doing things right. If the result was not as intended, abandon the change or begin the cycle again with the new knowledge gained. If your safety meetings are to be successful, there are a few things you can take into account.

- Raise awareness of unsafe conditions and lead to corrective action.
- Raise awareness, without identifying violating employees, of unsafe behavior and the corrective action.
- Introduce new relevant safety guidelines and government guidelines.
- Reinforce safety guidelines.
- Motivate employees to comply with generally accepted safe work practices.

- Help to internalize the importance of safety by including your employees in the process.
- Safety meetings don't have to be pointless or boring. With a little bit of thought and preparation, your employees will leave the meeting informed, energized about safety, and interested in participating in future meetings. Isn't that better than them leaving the meeting with the "Whew, another safety meeting is now DONE!"

### **Step 1: PLAN – DESIGN THE CHANGE OR TEST**

Take time to thoroughly plan the proposed change before it is implemented. Pinpoint specific conditions, behaviors, and /or results you expect to see as a result of the change. For instance, you may want to include a short 10 minute training session in each meeting. You'll need to carefully plan who will conduct the training, what format will be used, and what subjects will be presented.

### **Step 2: DO – CARRY OUT THE CHANGE OR TEST**

Implement the change or test it on a small scale. This will help limit the number of variables and potential damage if unexpected outcomes occur. Educate, train, and communicate the change to help everyone successfully transition. Keep the change small to better measure variables.

### **Step 3: STUDY – EXAMINE THE EFFECTS OR RESULTS OF THE CHANGE OR TEST**

To determine what was learned and what went right or wrong.

**Concluded**

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