

A Tool Kit for Successfully Motivating Employees to Make Safe Choices

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Introduction

It's a constant challenge for leaders to motivate employees to accept personal responsibility for their own safety. Or is it? No one goes to work looking to get hurt. The challenge is not to increase employee motivation to not get hurt, but rather to remove the *de-motivators* to not getting hurt. Whether you are a safety professional or business leader, a common goal is to create a positive environment that educates, enables, and empowers employees to make safe choices, while also meeting business goals.

Employees' actions are motivated and influenced by what they **know, feel** and **see**. However, too often the solutions for encouraging employee safe behaviors are suggestion programs, safety improvement projects, chats with leaders or threats of discipline for noncompliance. These tactics may work for a short time but will definitely not produce lasting results because they do not address the underlying behavioral norms, work processes, and systems in which employees are motivated or demotivated.

A better, long-lasting approach is one that surrounds the employees, and positively promotes, educates, enables and empowers them to make safe choices. Successful solutions focus on addressing what employees know, feel, and see to influence their actions. Whose job is this? It is everyone's job, because the solutions involve all people and all aspects of businesses. Leadership has a unique responsibility, in fact an obligation, to set the expectations, hold accountabilities, and provide the underlying education, tools and processes, all of which are designed to encourage safety behaviors.

This paper describes three tool sets that encompass all three aspects of influencing people's behavior, targeting what people know, feel, and see. Each of these three tool sets provide an aspect of motivation and help to educate, enable, and empower the employees to make safe choices. Together, all three perspectives are needed and have been proven successful to provide a complete approach to motivate employees to make safe choices. Remember, employees are

members and representatives from every business process, function, and level. Proven examples of each tool set will be described, along with the best ways to implement these tool sets.

Tool Set 1: What People Know

The knowledge of safety issues and risks within each job has two aspects for motivating people to act safer. First, what are the safety risks in each work task or process? Second, where are safety considerations identified and addressed within supporting processes, in order to be proactive in preventing injuries and motivating safe behaviors.? To answer both questions, begin by examining each of the 23 business processes (Exhibit 1).¹

<p><u>Human Resources Processes</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. New employee hiring2. New/transferred employee orientation (at all levels)3. Third-party employee selection, retention and management4. Discipline5. Recognition and reward6. Leadership skill development (business, plants, sites, team leaders/supervisors) and employees7. Leadership personnel performance reviews8. Labor/management, negotiation, and agreements9. Organizational design10. Health benefits and wellness11. Communications <p><u>Other Business Processes</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">12. Critical raw material and supplier selection and retention13. Operations14. New product development and changes15. New processes and changes16. Six sigma/lean/quality processes, projects and training17. Sales and Marketing18. Facilities/work environment management19. Contractor selection, retention and management20. Business Development and Mergers/Acquisitions21. Risk Management22. Security23. Sustainability

Exhibit 1. Twenty-Three Business Processes with Associated Safety Issues and Risks

¹ Hansell, C. "Successfully Aligning and Integrating Safety (SH&E) Within the Business." Proceedings of the ASSE PDC Conference at Baltimore, MD on June 13-16, 2010.

Safety Risks Within Each Work Process

Within each of these 23 processes, specific work tasks and activities can be identified. Then the safety issues and risks associated with those tasks and activities can be defined. For the most part, the Human Resource processes are administrative in nature and have minimal inherent safety risks. Employee training could present some safety risks, particularly for training that occurs in actual work processes or simulates actual work conditions. The remaining “other business processes” have inherent safety risks in the work tasks, such as in manufacturing and field operations, product development, laboratory or pilot environments, sales, facilities and work environment management, and security operations.

Once the risks are identified in the work tasks, they must be addressed. Conduct a thorough root cause to identify a system-based root cause and any contributing factors. Using a hierarchy of controls, first remove the risk if possible. Then substitute another task or activity to minimize the risks, as possible. Finally, manage any residual risk with administrative controls and personal protective equipment (PPE). Ensure the system-based causes are addressed, or the risk (whether the hazard or the exposure) will reoccur. This effort makes the actual work safer to perform. Document the final work process or task and any controls and PPE in new or revised operational procedures. Educate the employees in the final procedure, pointing out the inherent risks, and any controls and PPE, to safely perform the work. Of course, this work analysis, improvement and training, are ideally done before the employee begins work. On-going continuous improvement activity can further reduce risks in the work activities through reduction of hazards and/or exposures. This education provides the knowledge needed for employees to safely perform the work tasks or activities. Further, involving the employees in the improvement of their own work processes increases the quality and ownership of the result.

Proactive Safety Considerations in Business and Supporting Processes

The second form of knowledge, which motivates people to act safer, is where safety considerations are identified and addressed within business and supporting processes, in order to proactively prevent injuries and motivate safe behaviors. This concept is key in the creation of a safety culture. A strong culture will ensure that the right decisions are made, and actions and behaviors are taken, every time.²

The four key elements of a superior safety culture are:

1. Visible leadership drive, commitment and personal involvement:
 - Actively and personally demonstrates commitment to safety
 - Provides vision, education, tools, and processes to guide and facilitate safety progress
 - Sets expectations, roles, and responsibilities for everyone to be involved in safety
2. Active employee participation and ownership:
 - Employees are actively engaged in safety improvements and activities
 - Employees genuinely care about their own safety and that of peers and co-workers
3. Systemic safety integration into and alignment with business processes, tools and decisions:
 - Safety considerations and issues are integrated into all business processes and goals
 - Functional leaders know and understand their roles in facilitating and driving safety improvements within their functional areas of expertise

² Hansell, C. “Achieving Sustainable World Class Safety Performance and Culture.” Proceedings of the ASSE Professional Conference, Orlando, Florida, June 24-27, 2007.

4. Relentless drive to eliminate risks, using systematic tools (like six sigma and lean approaches):

- Disciplined analysis of all incidents to identify and remove system-based root causes
- Statistical analysis to provide details of incidents and performance trends

Note the third element of a successful culture is “systemic safety integration into and alignment with the business.” Integrating and aligning safety into the business is arguably the most important aspect of driving a new lasting culture. Active leadership drive and employee engagement are indeed important to create and build new expectations and successes. Integrating and aligning safety into the business facilitates and motivates new habits and behavioral norms, which are needed for a culture to take hold. If required actions or behaviors are difficult, unclear or too time-consuming, people will not do them, or at least not willingly and routinely. Likewise, if multiple, and even worse conflicting, process steps and options exist in current business processes, people will be confused and naturally take the easiest path. Integrating and aligning safety into the business solves these problems. The desired actions and behaviors must be clearly defined, and then embedded into the business processes, tools, decisions, and actions. It becomes motivating, easier, and faster to do the right and safe thing. Safety becomes woven into the way the company thinks and acts.

Referring to the 23 business processes, they can encourage, support and motivate the employee’s actions when safety considerations and the desired safe behaviors are integrated. For instance, consider the motivating impact of safe behaviors that are included in individual job objectives, recognition, and discipline criteria, and product and process changes. Also, consider that the term ”employees” includes people in all different functions, like manufacturing and field operations, warehouse, office, sales, engineering, maintenance, and research. Thus, the possible work activities and motivating criteria for safety are quite varied (Exhibit 2).

Business Process	Examples of Effective Safety Integration and Alignment Actions
Leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities (from CEO and senior leadership to supervisory levels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety performance is reviewed in detail at all senior leadership and local site leadership meetings. Safety topics include accidents and serious incidents: root causes, corrective actions, and closure of corrective actions; future operational activities or changes with possible safety impacts; incident and root cause trends; safety improvement projects, status, sharing of results across business and recognition for team members. Safety discussions are led by business leaders or management leaders, not safety. • Safety performance (both lagging indicator of rates and leading indicators) is included in personal objectives and performance reviews of leadership. • Company mission, vision, and values include safety behaviors, actions and results.
Business planning (from CEO and senior leadership to supervisory levels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety projects are included in capital expenditure (CAPEX), operating expenses (OPEX), appropriation request system, departmental budgets, and staffing (headcount) planning. • Safety reviews and considerations are factored into the

Business Process	Examples of Effective Safety Integration and Alignment Actions
	business timelines of new product, process and equipment purchases, installations and start-ups.
Recognition and reward—All employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for recognition of safety performance includes both lagging indicators (rates, costs, days away), and leading indicators of processes, activities, and personal actions • Recognition and reward criteria are designed to reinforce and promote desired behaviors of all leadership levels and employees: participation in safety programs, committees and improvement activities; identification and resolution of safety risks; timely reporting of accidents, incidents, and near misses.
Discipline—All employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unacceptable safety actions are clearly defined in the local and company discipline policies. • Safety violations receive the same thorough investigation and discipline consequences for knowing violations of safety rules, consistent with other policy violations.
New Employee Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety expectations and behaviors clearly defined. This includes following all safety and operational procedures, wearing the needed PPE, timely reporting of safety incidents, and participating in safety improvement projects
Process Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety is involved in assessing and addressing safety (SHE) impacts of changes in process rates, equipment and layout. • Process change checklist exists to include all possible SHE impacts, and is required to be completed with all issues addressed prior to process start-up.
Product Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety is involved in assessing safety (SHE) impacts of changes in product chemical composition, physical configurations, and packaging. • Product change checklist exists to include all possible SHE impacts, and is required to be completed with all issues addressed prior to product launches. Product literature (MSDS, labeling) is created, and product clearances are obtained, to support timely product launch.
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees are engaged in improvement activities and projects for safety (SHE) results. • Employees are engaged in work-process improvements for productivity or quality, including safety (SHE) issues as well.

Exhibit 2. Examples of Safety (SHE) Integration into Select Business Processes for Leaders and Employees Levels

Also note that Human Resources (HR) is the functional owner of eleven of the twenty-three business processes. HR is responsible for the human capital within an organization. As such, they are involved with every aspect of hiring, transfer, firing, development, motivation (both positive

through recognition and reward, and negative through discipline), organization design, health and medical benefits, absence management, labor agreements, and negotiations. Each one of these activities has direct safety implications. Safety actions and behavioral criteria can be incorporated into the activities to be a positive motivator for safe behaviors. With such a broad array of activities and responsibilities, it is evident how HR entwines with, and can positively impact, safety. HR is a critical partner for a successful and sustained safety culture within a business.

Tool Set 2: What People Feel

People are motivated to take safe actions when they feel respected, and a level of trust has been established with the organization. Trust is established when people feel respected, treated fairly and cared for.

Actions that **show respect** for the employees are:

- Engaging employees in meaningful safety improvement projects and other business activities (like process and product changes) that have safety implications
- Asking the employees for input and providing feedback of their safety-related suggestions and recommendations for improvements
- Holding employee skip-level meetings to gain employee input and insights
- Communicating status of employee suggestions, improvements, and news of safety-related issues and developments

Actions that **demonstrate fair treatment** are:

- Recognition and reward criteria that are clear, obtainable by the person within their scope of responsibility, motivated by safe behaviors and actions; administered fairly, impartially, providing the needed time and support to try to fulfill recognition criteria
- Discipline criteria that are clear, and administered fairly and impartially
- Educated with the needed knowledge and training, enabled with the needed time and empowered with the needed support to meet job requirements

Actions that leaders **care** about safety and the employees are:

- Everyone wears the needed PPE, including leaders and visitors
- Employees' injuries and illnesses are discussed as individual cases, not just as claims or numbers
- Status of the injured/ill employees is frequently inquired about and followed up
- Leaders have an "open-door policy" about safety issues and concerns
- Leaders ensure the employees have the correct and needed equipment, PPE and training before they begin work
- Communications are frequent about safety issues, improvements, projects, and new business rates or processes that may have safety implications

Tool Set 3: What People See

People are motivated to take safe actions when they see others acting safely, whether they be peers or leaders.

Actions leaders can take are:

- Fulfilling commitments to resolve safety issues and risks
- Providing funding and support for improvements and employee engagement activities
- Actively involving themselves in safety activities
- Exhibiting role model behavior by wearing the needed PPE and following the safety rules
- Demonstrating that safety is not sacrificed for production or business goals
- Demonstrating that safety is actively incorporated and discussed in all aspects of business.
- Quickly resolving unsafe conditions
- Providing fair and consistent positive recognition for safe actions and discipline for unsafe behaviors
- Enforcing expectation of timely reporting of all safety incidents
- Showing dedication to complete root-cause analysis and follow-through for corrective actions for all incidents
- Frequently communicating safety progress, successes, incidents, root causes, corrective actions

Actions peers can take are:

- Actively coaching and supporting coworkers for safer behavior
- Conducting peer-led audits, training, safety committees and improvement projects
- Providing peer coaches for new and transferred employees, and actively helping each other to act safe

Most Successful Implementation

During the planning of implementation, consider ways to introduce the safety expectations by making them *clear, easy and desirable* for your employees and the organization to succeed. Refer to the 23 business processes, work tasks, and remember that people are motivated by what they know, feel, and see. Safety considerations, issues, and desired behaviors must be integrated into the processes and work tasks. The 23 business processes span all functions of HR, maintenance, engineering, operations, procurement, and communications. Thus, engagement and ownership of the challenges, and the solutions, will only result from teaming with these business partners, especially HR. Provide help to make the needed actions:

- **Clear:** By setting expectations and accountabilities for desired behaviors and actions; new roles and responsibilities for how and when to integrate safety; and a communication plan. Safety becomes a strategic component of business and workforce planning.
- **Easy:** By providing tools, checklists; and modifying the existing 23 processes, tools, decisions, metrics to include S&H; and
- **Desirable:** By including safety integration into recognition and reward consequences and processes, as well as negative consequences for not integrating safety and driving the culture of S&H; and maintaining the visibility of safety in business meetings. Demonstrating the connection between safety culture and business success will encourage and reinforce the business value of S&H integration. Sites with strong safety cultures, including the successful

integration of S&H into the daily processes, also experience successes in productivity, quality, employee morale and teamwork and, ultimately, operating costs and customer relationships.

Conclusion

Using a strategic approach, employees can be surrounded by actions, people and processes that educate, enable and empower them to make safe choices. People are motivated by what they know, feel, and see. All three aspects need to be addressed for lasting success in motivating employees to make safe choices.

The most effective method to accomplish this consistent and self-driven motivation is to integrate and align the desired safety behaviors and actions into the existing business processes, tools, and expected behaviors. The goal is for the desired behaviors and actions to become routine, and rooted in social norms and shared values. It becomes part of the normal activity of the business, rather than separate steps to take after their normal work is done. It also makes it easier for people to do the right things and make the right decisions when it is built into the daily routines.

If we design and create the education, tools and processes so that all employees and leadership can have the safe, disciplined thoughts that result in safe actions, balanced with the real operational demands, we have embedded safety into the business and created a lasting safety culture.