

Foundations of Safety Sustainability at the Bottom of the Pyramid: A Case Study

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Introduction

Safety has evolved since the year 2002. It is influenced by governmental mandates coupled with innovative and analytical thought processes within the industry. It is therefore, important to design tools not only for prevention of severity, but also sustainability. Organizations change with the application of tools and development of skills over time, leading to injury free environments.

Compass Group is a contract foodservice company that offers services to many different clients in a variety of businesses. Compass Group has 476,000 employees worldwide and 175,000 in the North American division. It operates in more than 50 countries and has over 45,000 clients worldwide. Its safety program within the ExxonMobil portfolio is guided by National Safety Director Anita Muller. Muller has been the National Safety Director for Compass Group at the ExxonMobil portfolio since the beginning of its contract. She instituted the safety program and has driven it from the ground up by coaching the safety coordinators and the general managers.

This article shares best practices from Compass Group's zero-recordable accident culture. Sustaining at the bottom of the pyramid evolves with time and diligent strategy.

Background

Compass Group has a contractual agreement with ExxonMobil. The portfolio is comprised of 24 accounts, including four large refineries across North America, leading to a total of 290 employees. The initiation of the safety program began in June 2008. The safety program is behavior-based, focused on a continuously changing mindset with an expectation for personal ownership and accountability. Safety coordinators, with assorted college-level educational backgrounds, are employed at sites across the country and provide unique contributions to the program. Employees are coached on a self-interpretation of risk assessment and subsequent management. This leads to a conscious and deliberate connectivity between safety mindsets.

This case study is based on a robust safety platform designed for results at Nobody Gets Hurt. A tactical approach was required. The development of a successful safety program required

multi-dimensional targets. Compass Group at ExxonMobil has employed behavior based safety in a high risk environment. Kitchens can be a dangerous place where employees are exposed to extreme temperatures (hot and cold), sharp objects, slippery surfaces, ergonomic challenges, high turnover and nuances that create workplace incidents. The portfolio has almost five (5) years worked without a recordable injury. The application of knowledge, skills and tools has driven each individual unit to profile their safety culture at excellence with the aid of tools that have been designed to capture negative events at the bottom of the safety pyramid.

Alignment of Safety Performance to Sustainability

The alignment of safety performance to sustaining at the bottom of the safety pyramid is an outcome of disciplined execution. Above this area on the pyramid is an escalation into the red zones of loss management. Why do we want to strive for safety at the bottom? This is the field of unsafe acts, hazard identification and near-miss opportunities. Sustainability can happen, only if safety is managed as an integrated system in which every individual has a role in all aspects of the task and the entire process is aligned with the objective that I am responsible for my safety. All employees demonstrate leadership in safety and are skillfully engaged in the safety improvement process. Safety is incorporated within the business of the unit and is executed at the operational level as a whole. The safety initiatives are part of the daily routine and business functioning of the work unit.

The safety program is an outcome of behavior-based choices, continuously changing mindsets with an expectation for personal ownership and accountability. Employees are coached on a self-interpretation of risk assessment and subsequent management, leading to conscious, deliberate connectivity between safety mindfulness and pre-thought actions. To ensure the continued development and advancement of the program, unit Safety Coordinators with various college backgrounds, are employed across the USA who provide unique contributions with direction from the National Safety Director.

The key is constant culture training that a single unsafe act can lead to catastrophic injury or SIF. Within risk assessment the question asked is, “What is the worst thing that can happen to me while performing the task?” Awareness of the worst case scenario leads to a prevention of even the most minor injury. A Band-Aid is classified as a first aid and given just as much attention as a major injury. The threshold is extremely low and the slightest hurt, as a paper cut, is investigated vigorously with risk recognition and root cause analysis. The objective, here, is to prevent a similar incident from happening again.

Safety leadership is not just responsible behavior shown by upper management, but an expectation at all levels starting with the Associate or worker level. Within the Compass Group sites, an hourly associate is selected as a Safety Lead from the grassroots. This role is to assist the site in leadership as well as mentor safety to peers within the unit. Hazard recognition engages employees, supervisors and managers in identifying and mitigating risks. Failure to report a hazard can lead to disciplinary action, up to termination. Risk-based policies, procedures and rules are applied consistently with hazard classifications that are reviewed for the potential exposures. Furthermore, we continuously seek feedback at the worker level on their perception of risk and then design training modules and tools to mitigate said risks. Their perception leads to concerted action and understanding the hazards is as critical as personal subjectivity in risk

assessment. Risk assessment is subjective and coaching on the different levels of risk is employed as an analytical method. By comparison; we train that a risk is the measure of the probability that the hazard will occur again, if uncorrected and lead to harm.

Near-miss Data Collection

Near-miss data is collected in a meaningful way to capture precursors to losses. There is a formal process for near-miss reporting and tracking. Near-miss incidents are escalated to an investigation team within the Compass Group, and lessons learned are communicated across the portfolio within 24 hours. The root causes identified are transferred into solutions with documented verification and validation tools. The accumulated data is analyzed and profiled for the lessons learned. Trends and indicators are put into a global database. Areas of concern are recorded with an assessment of root cause analysis into the leading indicators. These identify proactive measures to protect all employees from injury. Again, the primary training goal is that safety procedures become second nature for frontline supervisors and employees so that a similar incident does not happen again. We have concluded that repetitive safety training provided daily with frequent quiz questions to validate the coaching is a best option.

Promotion of Behavior-based Programs

We promote behavior-based programs to encourage protective behaviors. Individuals perform best when they are respected, valued and trusted by someone who genuinely cares. Self esteem and safety have a direct correlation as is indicated in research studies. Self esteem is defined as feeling good about oneself, a value of self as depicted in the demonstration of safe behaviors. It is an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person appreciates and likes him or herself. The correlation between safety and low self esteem is intricate. Safe behaviors are protective behaviors. However, those with low self esteem have difficulty in the assessment of protective behaviors and become involved in risky behaviors. Caring behaviors within teams to watch over another's back stem from healthy self esteem. I am responsible for not only my own safety but also for the safety of those in the team around me. It is not mean to intervene and assist my co-worker.

It has been noted that there is a strategic methodology to sustainability at the bottom of the pyramid. The unrelenting focus on precursors as in lack of training, available tools and the psychological mind set play a huge role in the management of exposures. The strategy is driven from the top down and engages everyone continuously with caring, action, resolve and engagement. If caring is absent, then adequate risk assessment cannot take place.

Predictive Analytics

Predictive analytics has taken the process of safety from reactive-based on occurring injuries to a forward thinking proactive approach. A review all incidents and data with stand downs can reduce future incidents. We identify factors that influence incident levels and what actions organizations can take to optimize injury prevention and ensure employee safety. The analytical approach is supported by Job Safety Analysis [JSA] documents to create a self assessment for safe performance that is shared across the employee work force. This inspection process requires

an on-going critical evaluation of hazards by the individuals in the unit. It provides a true picture of the hazards, the required controls as per the JSA tool which can identify the risk mitigation steps.

There is a high turnover rate in service industries that cannot thrive without a robust short service program. The safety coordinator team members are entry level positions who are trained on understanding the psychological mind set related to safety principles from the start. The Coordinator participates in the interview process to determine if the applicant is a risk taker. We have a safety guidance protocol that provides Supervisors with the basis for coaching new hires to prevent serious injuries. All tasks are safe qualified first, with observations completed, prior to the independent functioning of the new worker. Each task observation is clearly documented and the solutions validated.

The challenge is for the safety professionals to understand causal factors leading to serious injuries with workable solutions. There are different causal factors with recordable injuries versus serious injuries and fatalities, which have to be defined on an individual basis. Serious injuries are associated with an underlying set of exposures and each of the situations needs to be examined at the unit level, not corporate level. Near-miss incidents are precursors where our management controls were inadequate or non-existent, and these could lead to serious injury fatality (SIF).

Best Practices

A best practice for Compass Group at ExxonMobil is the use of a database to index accidents and injuries within frequency thresholds and serious outcomes. All incidents, including hazards, are classified as potential precursors in an effort to understand their relationship to serious events. We have designed tools to prioritize potential high-risk incidents and develop Job Safety Analysis documents that identify steps in those tasks and drill down to the core details. All precursors that can lead to incidents are recorded, analyzed and addressed. The precursor is a root cause. Safety procedures are revised and continuous improvement takes precedence. Actual incidents and significant near-misses are investigated immediately. A detailed report is completed within 24 hours to identify root causes and contributing factors. Stand Downs are conducted to make all aware of the hazards inherent in the workplace. Solutions and feedback are provided to prevent a similar incident from happening again with verification and validation processes.

Conclusion

The avoidance of serious injuries and fatalities is realized through multi-faceted approaches at the bottom of the pyramid. Understanding the balance between personal and job factors, inherent risks in the immediate environment, potential severity and actual severity - all contribute to the avoidance of injury. Sustaining at zero recordable rates has required great team effort and consistent behavioral coaching as evidenced in this case study. We encourage others to do the same and prevent someone from getting hurt.

References

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