

Applying Success Principles to Risk/Safety Management

**Patricia Kagerer CSP, ARM, CRIS
Vice President Risk/Safety Management
Jordan Construction
Dallas, Texas**

As risk and safety managers we must convince management that our functions are mission critical for the success of the organization and remain engaged by developing skills for implementing and measuring change within our organizations. This can be one of the most difficult challenges to achieve due to the many factors such as corporate culture, structure, human preconceived notions/opinions, attitudes, beliefs, mentalities of entitlement and internal/external resistance. These are huge obstacles to overcome but are necessary to tackle in order to achieve true success in the Risk/ Safety Management profession.

This paper will provide an overview of the key principles discussed in the book *The Success Principles TM* by Jack Canfield, and apply them specifically to the unique needs of the Safety and Risk Management Professional.

Goal

To provide a roadmap to a more successful, fulfilling career in the field of safety/risk management by reviewing timeless principles and strategies that will jumpstart or reinvigorate the career path for safety/risk management professionals and create opportunities for success in setting and achieving their goals in the workplace.

*Ninety percent of all failures come from people who have a habit of making excuses ...
George Washington Carver*

Take Full Responsibility for Your Current Situation

The first and most important step toward creating success is taking responsibility for our life. In order to accomplish this we must give up blaming and complaining. We spend most of our time blaming things outside of ourselves for our situation – the weather, our boss, the traffic, the president, the economy. Assess your current position at work and take full responsibly the

situation you are in at the present time. Is there a specific project that you were unable to achieve and you blamed it on management or line personnel? One of the great myths of American culture today is that we are entitled to a great career. The truth is that there is only one person responsible for the quality of your career path and that person is you. We tend to play the Blame Game. We look externally for the reasons that things did not go our way and find ways to blame something outside ourselves. The blaming and complaining must stop in order to achieve success.

The second step is to identify our excuses and give them up. When we make excuses we do not hold ourselves accountable. We place responsibility for outcomes outside of ourselves. One tool to use to identify when this is taking place is called $E + R = O$.

$Event + Response = Outcome$ - Give up all excuses and take the position that whatever you are expecting in life, the results you are creating, the quality of life you are experiencing, is a result of how you are responding to the events rather than the events themselves. When people don't get the outcome they want, they blame the event. When they blame the event for not having what they want it puts all of the power outside of themselves. There is nothing you can do about external events. What is just is, so what you have to do is change your response to get the outcome you want. Get yourself out of blaming and complaining and take responsibility.

Finally, people have a tendency to consistently complain to the wrong person. If I'm upset with my boss, I tell my coworker. It does not solve anything. You must confront the person in order to have feedback and do something about it. The person does not need to grant your request, but at least you communicated what you wanted.

Yellow Alerts

Do not be a victim in your life or your career. You may notice something in your life that acts as clues that things are happening or about to happen that aren't going to work out. For instance, you are hired as a safety professional for a company that doesn't care about safety. All the signs were there during the interview process but you chose to go anyway. You work for a company that only pays lip service to the process and blames you every time they are cited by OSHA or an injury occurs. Make sure you **PAY ATTENTION TO THE YELLOW ALERTS**. There are plenty of yellow alerts in life like your boss placing a classified ad for a new safety manager but you don't want to say anything about it because it might not be comfortable. Because it is inconvenient or uncomfortable, we tend to deny the yellow alerts rather than to act on them. We almost always have clues that things are coming so we are not really victims. We must start paying attention to the clues in order to act accordingly.

With that in mind ask yourself this question: If I were to take just 10% more responsibility for my role as a safety professional I would? Please write down your answers so you can capture it and commit to it and you can begin implementing this change.

The next step is determining what you want to accomplish. By asking the following questions and writing out the answers you are getting closer to a plan of action:

1. What is an area of your Safety Department that is not working as well as you would like it to?
2. How are you creating or allowing this to happen?

3. What are you doing that is not working that you need to do less of?
4. What are you currently doing that is working and you need to do more of?
5. What are you not doing that you could try on to see if it works?
6. What will you commit to doing as a result of this exercise?
7. When will you do it by?
8. Write it down!

You are now one step closer to deciding what you want. Make a list of three things you want to accomplish in the next year as a safety professional and write them down. Read them each morning so they are fresh on your mind before you begin your work day.

Goal Setting

Setting measurable achievable goals is critical to achieve success in the workplace. How we define our goals and look for ways to measure them determines our level of success. Does your organization continue to sustain injuries in spite of your best safety efforts? Are the goals that you have set to measure safety performance where you should be focusing?

For example for years safety professionals have used accidents, frequency rates, severity rates and dollar costs to measure the progress of the organizational unit. These results do not reveal whether the overall safety system is effective, diagnose what was working and what was not working or indicate when the system was out of control. Safety professionals are comfortable using these performance measures and their popularity continues even today. These results measures are ingrained in safety programs and most executives believe that they mean something and OSHA requires them. The corporate executive management team has been trained over the years to pay attention to these particular measures and they have grown accustomed to doing so. As a result, many object to losing the statistics as a way of measuring safety and many are not open to consider other measuring techniques.

The definition of a measurable goal -if someone outside were observing you they would know you had accomplished it. While traditional safety statistics meet this definition, is it truly worth accomplishing. A safety professional may want to implement more creative goals that truly measure safety performance such as:

- **Identify the stakeholder in safe work performance**— everyone- all levels of management and all workers.
- **Define safety process and procedure**—everything that is done to make safety "work": programs, training, audits, employee management, risk planning.
- **Innovation in safety**—Technological innovation, skill, and knowledge improvement, alignment.
- **Safety performance management**—Operational excellence, leadership, empowerment, performance standards, performance measurement.

This process establishes goals that ensure everyone within the organization will adopt behaviors and take the actions that will achieve these goals. The measure is also designed to ensure this occurs and provides an assessment of how everyone is doing in accomplishing the central vision.

The CFO has a process that effectively focuses all the efforts of the organization toward the vision and has the information with which to manage effectively.

There is a big difference between a good idea and a goal. A good idea states what you want. A goal states what you want, how much, and by when. For example, a safety professional may want to increase the awareness of safety for their superintendents by increasing safety training. That is a good idea. Increasing safety awareness by conducting superintendent safety training for 10 hours to be completed by 50 superintendents by June is a goal.

MTO—Model of Goal setting

When setting goals use the MTO technique – Minimum, Target Outrageous. Whenever you set a goal set a minimum, target and outrageous goal with it. For example: You want to have all superintendents trained by the end of June. That is your target goal. A minimum goal may be to have all superintendents in a specific region where you reside trained by March. An outrageous goal would be to have a complete training and orientation program established for corporate use by the end of August. This process allows you to almost guarantee that you can meet your minimum goal. By starting with the minimum most people become motivated to reach the target. Taking things in small steps makes them more achievable. Getting started gives people motivation to continue to move.

Our minds can handle only seven things at once before it shuts down. So what happens when we have a cluttered desk, constant stream of papers, to do lists, unanswered letters and other items that steal focus away from the task at hand. You look around and think Oh I should move that. I should put that away, I should delegate that job, and I should save that because I may need it in 10 years. You are moving your focus and your creative energy on your old junk which interrupts your creative energy and fractures and scatters it. These are referred to as the incompletes and messes. By handling the incompletes and cleaning up the messes you will have more time to focus on the really important items such as goals.

Make a list of all of your incompletes and messes. Prioritize them and tackle them once month or one a quarter. You don't have to think about the others because you know that they are on the list and will be handled in order of importance. Now we can apply the MTO model to our messes as well. What is one minimal goal that you can commit to in getting your desk cleaned up, your employee properly trained etc.? For further exploration please brainstorm about a list of things that just don't work, things that need to be handled, and things that you put off because they are not high priority but have piled up. I challenge you to work on this list and prioritize it so that you can start making progress and feel build confidence and self esteem.

Taking and Sustaining Action

Action alone is not enough to achieve goals because action alone can taper off over time. We have seen the world through certain lenses of who we are in our profession and what is possible to achieve. It takes more than 60 minutes to change that. It takes consistent repetition over time.

As Safety/ Risk Professionals we must create the vision for the company and evolve it into a core value. This can only be achieved through sustained action over time.

The first step in taking action is identifying what you want and recognizing that you must ask the appropriate authority for it. Take time to make a list of all the things at work you would like to ask for – assistance, appreciation, a raise, better relationship with your boss, respect, funding for a project. Once the list is complete identify who you need to ask and set a completion date next to each item.

Asking is not about the reply of no -it is about the asking. When you ask even if you get a no you are no worse off than you were before you asked. Asking is a skill and you need to practice. Practice at home with your family. Many times the first no turns into a yes later on. You must become comfortable with asking in order to move forward and set change in motion.

Building Self Esteem and Stronger Relationships at Work

The truly successful Safety/Risk professional has created a path where Safety and Risk Management are mission critical functions in the workplace. The only way this is accomplished is by showing operations the value you bring to the table. In order to be successful we must remember to define and recognize accomplishments and determine what an achievement feels like to us and turn those achievements into accomplishments for the entire organization. In order to accomplish this begin to:

- Listen to what keeps you up at night so that you can identify areas that you want to focus on.
- Exercise remembering what success really feels like. For many of us, a true feeling of success has not happened for quite a while. Look back in your past for a time when you really felt successful. You may have to go back in time all the way to Little League when your team won the championship. Get in touch with it and relive the experience in your mind. You will want to experience this feeling again in the work environment and when you do, you want to recognize it and enjoy the experience.
- There is true power in listening to your self and to others. Listen to your internal dialogue with yourself. Most of the time, we will say things to ourselves that we would never dare say to another human being. You must be aware of what you are saying to yourself and change the script to a more positive one. This takes time and effort but it is critical to the success of achieving your goals. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. That must change.
- Look for ways to create opportunities for recognition in the workplace. It does not have to be expensive to be worthwhile. A sticky note saying “Great Job” or a card goes a long way toward in team building and recognition. Our words are one of the best tools we have to influence the performance of others “Thank You” “Great Work” “I appreciate what you have done” is far more valuable than a coffee mug or safety points.
- Heartfelt gratitude is the key to success. We must appreciate where we are and the people who helped us get here on a regular basis. In doing so, we count our blessings and become present in our moment in time. Always focusing on the future without recognizing the journey guarantees burn out, blame, and complaining.

The following poem by an unknown author sums up the Success Principles best.

If you *think* you are beaten, you are.
If you *think* you dare not, you don't
If you like to win, but you *think* you can't,
It is almost certain you won't.
If you *think* you'll lose, you're lost,
For out in the world we find,
Success begins with a fellow's will –
It's all in the *state of mind*.
If you *think* you are outclassed, you are,
You've got to *think* high to rise,
You've got to *be sure of yourself* before
You can ever win a prize.
Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger, or faster man,
But soon or late the man who wins
Is the man WHO THINKS HE CAN!

Bibliography

Canfield, Jack Switzer, Janet – The Success Principles How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be. Harper Collins. 2005.

Canfield, Jack – The Success Principles Short Course Instructor's Manual. The Canfield Training Group. Harper Resources, 2005.

Furst, Peter. "Measuring Success in Integrated Risk Management" IRMI Expert Commentary, June 2006.