

What it means to be an OHS professional

Quotable Quote

"A health & safety problem can be described by statistics but cannot be understood by statistics. It can only be understood by knowing and feeling the pain, anguish, and depression and shattered hopes of the victim and of wives, husbands, parents, children, grandparents and friends, and the hope, struggle and triumph of recovery and rehabilitation in a world often unsympathetic, ignorant, unfriendly and unsupportive, only those with close experience of life altering personal damage have this understanding."

INITIATING CHANGE

- When initiating change remember "People support what they create"



Abstract

In this e book I have reflected on my experiences in OHS over many years and tried to explain what OHS means to me. I have included some comment from other OHS people about what OHS means to them. General comment is given on what being an OHS person is all about. I briefly mention some of what I think are the more important skills for OHS people and give some advice on managing an OHS career. I finish with my vision for what excellent OHS in Australia would look like.

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Introduction

Other than stints in the Australian Regular Army as a surveyor and the Army Reserve as a truck driver and infantry soldier I have spent the majority of my working life in field, corporate, project and consultant OHS roles. In my nearly 4 decades in OHS I have worked in open-cut mining, underground mining, construction, manufacturing, disability services, education, office environments and a few other industries.

Brisbane based OHS consultant, Geoff McDonald, has been my mentor, coach and guide for most of my safety career. I value his safety work much higher than any other I have seen. Geoff has had a profound effect on how I view and approach safety.

This is the third of 4 safety e books, the first is Guidance for the beginning OHS professional, the second Broader management skills for the OHS professional and the fourth is Lessons I have learnt about management, safety, life and people. The papers What makes a safety management system fly, 30 ways to stuff up a safety management system and What you need to know about health & safety leadership (Available on request to fgrobotham@gmail.com) have also proved popular.

OHS important concepts

“Because they go to work in Australia, 10 people per hour, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year have their lives permanently altered.” (Geoff McDonald)

1. Damage to people at work has a number of adverse outcomes:-
 - Financial loss to employer, worker and community
 - Pain and suffering
 - Dislocation of lives
 - Permanence of death

2. Damage to people from work falls naturally into one of three Classes.
 - Class I damage permanently alters the person’s life and subdivides into
 - fatal
 - non-fatal
 - Class II damage temporarily alters the person’s life
 - Class III damage temporarily inconveniences the person’s life (Geoff McDonald & Associates)

Some people indicate a fixation and emphasis on minor personal damage. In terms of cost and suffering Class 1 personal damage far outweighs Class II and class III. We get to hear about some of the fatal class I damage but little is known about the massive area of non-fatal class I damage. If you are talking about getting the best bang for your buck you must focus on class I personal damage.

Industry taxonomies (Collections of like) of Class 1 personal damage are a powerful tool for positive safety change. Standardised industry personal damage occurrence (Accident) reporting systems will assist.

No matter what your specialty is the most significant challenges will be with people. The people make or break an organisation.

I am a long-time critic of education for OHS people in Australia because I believe it has too much of a focus on technical OHS skills and not enough on the required broader skills.

I like the General George Patton quote “Lead me, follow me or get out of my way”

The following largely results from my critical reflection on my experience and learning, in a few areas it represents input from my network of associates, and I thank them for that.

Note-This e book is a follow up to my 216 page e book Guidance For The Beginning OHS Professional, which is mainly about OHS skills and my 45 page e book Broader Management Skills For The OHS professional.

Why “Do” OHS

During my time with BHP-Coal I had no responsibilities for the 2 underground mines; my attention was focused on the 7 open-cut mines where some excellent work was being done on OHS.

On the 7th August 1994 Moura underground coal mine suffered an underground explosion that saw 11 men entombed in the mine and the mine closed.

Those who complain about the effort and cost of implementing safety measures should have been around to see the slump in the company share price, shareholder dissatisfaction, pain and suffering, cost, effort, media crucifixion, ruined reputations, wrecked careers, psychological trauma, union backlash, enormous investigation effort, massive counselling effort, threat of regulator action, legal action against the company and company officials and strained relationships I saw.

Your organization probably does not carry out as high a risk work as Moura mine did but fatalities and serious personal damage has been known to occur in many relatively low risk work environments. Good safety programs definitely cost money, until you

experience a serious accident, you will probably not realize the cost associated with poor safety.

I would be the first to say there is a lot of bull-dust associated with implementation of safety initiatives. In my time in safety I have seen companies spend tremendous amounts of time, effort and money on dubious safety programs and get little return for their investment.

The challenge is to design your safety programs so they meet the specific, identified needs of your organization. Needs analysis and definition of scope is the starting point for most safety tasks.

The regulatory burden and penalties for non-enforcement of safety legislation are increasing all the time and companies need guidance to ensure they are operating at the required level.

I think one of my ex-managers said it well when he said "If you cannot manage safety you cannot manage"

What OHS Means to me Personally

In my time in OHS I have helped my employers cope with the aftermath of 13 fatalities, one case of paraplegia, one major stress case and a very serious burns case. Speaking from personal experience the most devastating thing that can happen to a company and its workers is to have an employee killed or seriously injured. The financial and more importantly humanitarian costs are immense. My focus is the prevention of permanently life altering person damage.

I have had some pretty tough jobs and have not always been successful. A major lesson I have learnt is that your communications and interpersonal skills are just as important as your OHS technical skills. Another lesson I have learnt is that one must be a life-long learner.

A very important additional lesson for safety is that under many circumstances the human being will do things with the least time, and least effort. This helps to explain why complicated safe working procedures may not be followed and long, ponderous paperwork will not be read. When you are investigating person damage occurrences (Accidents) keep this in mind, the reason why the silly bugger did what he did, may well be this.

My time in OHS has been frustrating at times, satisfying at times, always challenging and while I have dealt with some mongrels I have met some really great people.

Note -Whilst I refer to OHS professionals the cynic in me suggests OHS is not really a profession as we do not have a widely accepted body of knowledge. Certainly I would not regard many of the safety people I have worked with as professional.

What OHS Means to Other OHS People

Note

Names of contributors are not included unless permission to do so was given.

- Our job is to advise, guide and discuss workplace factors, without the ability to communicate all that is lost.
- Safety does not happen by accident.
- The problem with safety is that sometimes management and safety people engage in acts of public masturbation.
- It is easier to ask a dumb question than to fix a dumb mistake.
- Trust is everything
- It is more important to be respected than liked
- Communication and interpersonal skills are just as important as your safety skills
- Some people are very good at throwing safety terms and safety clichés around without talking about how it will actually be implanted into a system.

- A glutton for punishment and not smart enough to avoid the pain
- Someone who does not falter and drop their standards
- Anyone who believes constructive criticism is purely negative or meant to be an attack on an individual has, in my opinion and experience, something they are hiding or ashamed of.
- Safety culture-Behaviour is guided by values and reinforcement, not forced by rules and punishment
- Someone who is prepared to stand up and fight for what they believe is right, someone who is balanced and focused on total business efficiencies.
- U.S. Marine Corps-I will always place the mission first, I will never accept defeat, I will never quit, I will never leave a fallen comrade
- Failures in leadership are invariably failures in character rather than competence-General Norman Schwarzkopf
- There is nothing so difficult as initiating change
- Safety change-Keep it simple and reality test it with the workforce
- Successful leaders-Establish a mission, vision and goals, communicate in a manner that inspires, make followers feel part of something important and satisfying, give positive reinforcement
- Nothing is more central to an organisations success than its ability to transmit accurate, relevant, and understandable information amongst its members
- People want to know what is in it for me
- Executive management provides the impetus for safety performance. This means that senior management is not only committed to and supports safety, but that it insists on safety performance in a manner that is clearly understood and echoed at all levels

- The people are fashioned according to the example of their king and edicts are less powerful than the life (Example) of the king-Claudian, c365, Egyptian epic poet.
- Leadership-People do not care how much you know, they want to know how much you care
- People support what they create
- Australian S.A.S. Regiment-Who Dares Wins
- In my past experience OHS Practitioners are sadly lacking in negotiation skills. Having the ability to seek to identify the core problem related to safety issues, or presenting the right approach to obtain positive results and at the same time being mindful of the importance of the on-going relationship with the management groups, is often sadly lacking.
- Corporate safety people are often like seagulls, they fly up, crap all over you and then fly away
- Safety has 4 A's-Assist, Advise, Analyse, Audit
- Safety should be about change for the future, not blame for the past
- The safety professional should not be a policeman, be a teacher and mentor instead

Effective OHS draws from many disciplines-Learning, Management of organisational change, Human resource management, Psychology, Sociology, Statistical analysis, Marketing and Compliance are some.

SAFETY PROJECTS INTERNATIONAL INC SAFETY CREED, Ontario

- I pledge my knowledge, skill and integrity to the Promotion of Safety in all its facets and the Prevention of Accidents and the Protection and Health and Wellbeing, the Conservation of Property, Material and Resources and the Advancement of my Profession.
- I pledge my knowledge, skill and proficiency to the continual Extension of the Science of Safety Management so that the highest Standard of Excellence may prevail.
- I accept as a lifelong obligation the continual Improvement of my Knowledge, Skill, Ability and Proficiency for the Advancement of Safety and the Wellbeing of the Community I serve.
- I Undertake to Uphold the highest degree of Professional Conduct and Integrity - Protecting the Honour of my Colleagues as my own and that of the Profession, above all else, to the exclusive Benefit and Wellbeing of the Community.

It is an interesting thread, we have a comprehensive 14 page Code of ethics that all our CAA's must sign, let me know if you would like all 14 pages, below just a summary

CODE OF CONDUCT

- Safety Projects International “Certified Accredited Auditors “Shall Conduct Their: Relationships, business and social, - with the highest integrity;
- Moral Responsibility - for safety, health, welfare and Loss Prevention without regard to race, creed, color or religion;
- Private Affairs - with sound judgment which will not detract from the dignity of the Health & Safety profession;
- Employer Relationships - So as not to abuse their professional affiliations or offices to secure personal advantages and shall at all times avoid conflict of interest;
- Professional Relationships - with the highest degree of integrity, limiting their involvement in such endeavours to those areas in which they have specific training, knowledge and competence whilst maintaining the highest degree of expertise;
- Promotional Practices – Certified Accredited Auditors shall not participate or score audits in exaggerated or misleading statements, or of their qualifications, experience or standing and shall not present their work in a manner which may in any way reflect unfavourably or bring discredit to the health & safety profession.
- Articles, papers or any item for publication or media representation shall be factual, dignified and free from any derogatory implications to any party. Such articles, items or statements shall stipulate the author's degree of participation - if any - and give due credit to any contributory participants.

30 Ways to Stuff up a Safety Management System

1. Lack of management commitment, leadership and drive from the top of the organisation.
2. Lack of understanding and implementation of sensible safety legislation.
3. Lack of understanding and implementation of common law principles.
4. Too much concentration on lag indicators such as the Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate at the expense of leading indicators. Thinking minor personal damage is a good predictor of life-altering personal damage.
5. Not using the continuous improvement philosophy and other facets of Quality Management in your safety approach.
6. Lack of succinct paperwork. There is not much point in having detailed paperwork that is too much like hard work to read.
7. Using theory instead of real world approaches-Whatever you do reality test it with the workforce first.
8. Ignoring “When implementing change-Remember, people support what they create”
9. Not using face to face communications whenever possible. Research by Harvard professor T.J. Larkin suggests when communicating change with the workforce use the supervisor not senior management, use face to face

communications and frame communications relevant to the immediate work area and processes.

10. Not using a needs analysis to guide all your actions.
11. Ignoring the simplicity not complexity rule.
12. Not creating an expectation for people at all levels to perform in safety.
13. Not developing goals, objectives, targets etc. for the Safety Management System.
14. Not using Learning Needs Analysis to guide conduct of learning. Not using Adult Learning Principles & Process to guide facilitation. Using lecture style presentations and Death by Power-Point.
15. Not training formal and informal leaders in Safety Leadership.
16. Not having regular audits of the Safety Management System.
17. Not practicing Emergency Response Plans.
18. Not having simple, succinct Safe Working Procedures, aim for 2 pages at the most, use pictures, diagrams, flow-charts etc.
19. Not using team-building principles in your safety approach.
20. Taking yourself too seriously and not celebrating success.
21. Using enterprise “accident” experience to guide action rather than industry taxonomies of permanently life-altering personal damage.
22. Putting too much emphasis on the risk ratings from risk assessments, the reality is that a lot of risk assessment is very subjective.
23. Not having formal approaches to follow up on investigations.
24. Not having formal approaches to follow up on audits.
25. Spending too much time in the office instead of the field where the action is happening.
26. Using unscientific terminology. Probably the best example of a lack of scientific terminology lies in the terminology “accident”

The term “accident” implies carelessness (whatever that means), lack of ability to control its causation, an inability to foresee and prevent and a personal failure. How can we make meaningful progress on a major cost to Australian industry if we persist with such, sloppy, unscientific terminology?

The term “accident” affects how the general population perceives damaging occurrences and the people who suffer the personal damage. It infers the event is “an act of god” or similar event beyond the control and understanding of mere mortals.

The term “accident” is best replaced by the term “personal damage occurrence”. Instead of talking about “permanent disability” we should be talking about “life-altering personal damage”

27. Relying on tertiary OHS education as the panacea for the safety business.
28. Not developing a thorough, well defined body of OHS knowledge guided by the personal damage occurrence phenomenon and having an equal focus on practice as theory.

29. Employing OHS people based on technical skills alone. Effective OHS people need many skills over and above the technical skills, e.g. Communications, interpersonal, leadership, project management, learning, change management etc.
30. Looking for a small number of root causes in personal damage occurrence (“Accident”) investigations. Instead concentrate on multi factor analysis through essential factors methodology and the Analysis Reference Tree-Trunk method of investigation (Geoff McDonald).

20 Sure-Fire Ways to Stuff-up a Learning Program

“When reading your correspondence the reader must say “Wow” in the first third of the page”

“When listening to your presentation the listener must say “Wow” within the first 3 minutes”

The design, facilitation and evaluation of effective learning programs are very complex. There is much more to it than getting a bunch of people together and talking to them.

How to stuff-up a learning program-

1. Do not develop learning objectives to guide design
2. Do not use multiple sense learning
3. Do not make sessions interactive
4. Do not have supervisors reinforce the expectation lessons learnt are valued and will be put in practice .Do not have a plan to put the lessons learn into practice, after training projects are a good idea.
5. Do not follow up with learners
6. Foster “Death by Power-Point”
7. Do not use Action and Experiential learning models
8. Do not foster critical reflection
9. Do not allow learners to play with the concepts
10. Do not use humour to reinforce your messages
11. Put the focus on the facilitator instead of the learner
12. Stuff the learner full of information
13. Do not use the advantages of SAY & DO
14. Be academic rather than practical
15. Make learning hard work instead of fun
16. Do not have consequences for inappropriate behaviors
17. Do not treat learners with respect
18. Do not give regular meaningful feedback
19. Do not reward good performance
20. Do not use Learning Needs Analysis to guide program design

Doing the Impossible as an OHS Person

Depending on the circumstances the OHS person has to be the following-

1. A trainer
2. An auditor
3. A Mum and a Dad
4. A policeman
5. A coach
6. A mentor
7. A friend
8. A first-aider
9. A confidant
10. A referee, personal and between people
11. A counselor
12. A corporate conscience
13. A source of technical advice
14. A salesman
15. A problem solver
16. A project manager
17. A plan developer
18. A supervisor
19. An accident investigator
20. A report writer
21. A researcher
22. A rehabilitation coordinator
23. A fire management expert
24. A quality management expert
25. A checker of compliance with legislation
26. A risk manager
27. A marketer
28. A trusted ally
29. A human resources expert
30. A negotiator
31. A change management expert
32. A lover not a fighter
33. A statistician
34. A technical tester
35. A sociologist
36. A psychologist
37. A politician
38. A mediator
39. A rear end kicker

Bloody big ask!

The most important thing to do is work on developing your interpersonal and communications skills (I can give you some advice of this)

Reviewing the list above one could be excused for thinking the life of an OHS person is impossible. Remember the motto of the Australian S.A.S. Regiment is “Who dares wins.” Other relevant quotes are “It is kind of fun to do the impossible”, “You never know what you can get away with until you try” and “It is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.”

What OHS people do

- Depending on the role and level, OHS people may be called upon to carry out some of the following duties-
- Facilitating learning, facilitating problem solving groups and learning needs analysis.
- Developing, coordinating, implementing and evaluating OHS Management Systems and associated operational and strategic OHS Management Plans.
- Leading OHS project teams / Development of focused, succinct OHS policy and procedure.
- Incident investigation, report writing, researching OHS issues, compensation and rehabilitation management.
- Interpreting, giving advice on, facilitating learning and checking compliance with safety legislation.
- Managing human resource issues, E.A.P. and counseling issues.
- Carrying out audits and inspections / acting in a customer service role.
- Supervising other OHS staff, safety committees and safety reps.
- Managing downwards, sideways and upwards.
- Incorporating OHS into quality systems, risk management, in particular risk assessment.
- Prioritising, planning and organising work.
- Facilitating communications and interpersonal issues, using computers, managing contractor safety and giving advice in relation to personal protective equipment and chemical management.
- Basic industrial hygiene.
- Audiometric testing and giving advice on noise and vibration issues.
- Coaching and mentoring others, benchmarking and influencing the culture.
- Developing safety leadership management plans and influencing leaders on safety leadership.
- Marketing the OHS message.
- Developing safe working procedures.
- Acting as the corporate OHS conscience.
- Safety data analysis and reporting.

Some of the above can be learnt through formal study, some through short courses, some through practical experience, some by reading good sources of information, some through networking with peers, and some through a combination of the foregoing. All will be enhanced through practical experience and critical reflection on that experience (What went well, what opportunities for improvement were presented) Coaching / mentoring by an expert can be a powerful way of learning.

Prerequisites for the OHS person.

- A focus on the class 1 personal damage occurrence phenomenon
- An ability to question the validity and reliability of the smoothly marketed safety fads
- Passion and a fire in the belly
- An excellent sense of humour
- An ability to bounce back from the inevitable pressures of the role
- A robust personality and an ability to argue ones case under pressure.
- Life skills
- Compassion
- A good dose of humble
- Being a lifelong learner. Attend OHS and OHS aligned training, participate in discussion forums, join appropriate professional organisations, read widely, network with fellow professionals, be alert for anything you can do to increase your knowledge.
- A willingness to question the status quo
- An enquiring mind
- Admit your mistakes and when you cannot give a good response
- Keep in touch with the stakeholders regularly and adhere to promises made

Starting out in safety

Cannot get the job without the experience, cannot get the experience without the job. A common problem for new starters.

- Refer to Training & development needs of OHS personnel and Advice to new OHS personnel
- Get at least a Cert IV in safety and a Cert IV T.A.E., many employers will see this as basic qualifications, realise these are just learner permits.
- Recognise the best jobs go to those with tertiary safety qualifications
- Get a mentor
- Join a professional association, attend activities and get yourself known
- Get active on the LinkedIn OHS forums, there is currently some discussion that is relevant on the OHS Professional LinkedIn forum, be visible on the forums and promote your case
- Get a really good resume, the following section may help
- Learn how to manage job interviews, the following section may help

- Develop a highly advanced bull-dust detector, by the hell you will need it
- Net work with safety people, many jobs are not advertised and come from personal referrals
- Accept the fact that recruitment consultants will frequently stuff you around
- Volunteer to get experience
- Be a lifelong learner
- Once you have a really good resume register it with the major employment agencies, often they will source from their files instead of advertising a job.

First steps new job summary

A bloke starting a new safety job came to me for some advice on what to do in the new job, the following is a summary what I told him. There may be something in this for you.

Draft for discussion with your boss, recognise this just represents a starting point

Main objective for the first 3 months is to get to understand the business and the people, get the people to understand you and get the people to trust you. Attempting too big a change and / or changing things too quickly can create an adverse reaction and alienate the very people you want to make allies. Learn the context, culture and past before trying to make changes. Unless a crisis situation is apparent realise effective change requires a lot of effort and time.

John P. Kotter speaks of 8 steps for successful large scale change- Increase urgency, Build the guiding team, Get the vision right, Communicate for buy-in, Empower action, Create short-term wins, Do not let up, Make change stick.

Learn what others expect of you and need, particularly what your boss needs, help your boss succeed. Get some runs on the board quickly, particularly what your boss needs. Remember the customer is king.

- A. Discussion and brief from boss on requirements and organisational needs. What do you have to do to help the organisation achieve its OHS objectives? Clarify objectives and desired time frame. It may be decided to form a project team to oversee the management of the OHS processes, if so, a detailed project plan will be required.
- B. Send out brief e-mail self-introduction. Spend sufficient time in the field to build relationships and understand the reality of how the organisation is managed.
- C. Meet individually and collectively with the safety team before meeting managers (Refer to discussion guidelines) Work with the team on developing an appropriate team building activity. Adopt the roles of mentor / coach / advisor as well as team leader. I see an important part of your role is to help those in the safety team to develop their skills.

- D. Meet with business unit managers and their staff as the manager selects (Refer to discussion guidelines) Identify the business units OHS needs.
- E. Carry out a force field analysis with the senior management team and a representative number of the business units; this will give some input to strategic and operational OHS management plans.
- F. Get a feel for safety management system by reviewing recent safety management system audits. If an audit has not been carried out recently carry one out.
- G. Meet with the government regulator, unions and other stakeholders to get their perspective on implementing required OHS change in the organisation.
- H. A priority is to ensure, as a minimum, that safety legislation is being conformed with.
- I. Examine the adequacy of current OHS learning and if necessary carryout an OHS learning needs analysis with the view of developing a Corporate OHS Learning Plan. Put a particular focus on reviewing induction learning.
- J. In association with management and selected members of the safety team develop a strategic OHS management plan. Once this is developed work with the business units on developing operational OHS management plans.
- K. Ensure managers / supervisors / informal leaders understand and practice OHS Leadership. Run a series of short workshops on OHS Leadership. Pilot the workshop with the safety team before going live to others.
- L. Introduce the concept of “Safety Champions” and see how it is received. Need a corporate safety champion and one at each major business unit, the more management horsepower these people have the better.
- M. Assess whether there is an adequate return on investment to have The Brief Group conduct a Mock Court for the management team.
- N. Put the various OHS Management Plans into action and monitor their effectiveness through regular internal audits. Consider the advantages of external accreditation to A.N.Z.S. 4801.

I have a detailed document that puts meat on the bones of the processes outlined above.

Suggested myths and misconceptions

People cause accidents

We would not suggest that people are not essential in personal damage occurrences (Accidents) but the people cause accidents myth and misconception is often used as an excuse for not carrying out positive action. What often happens is we blame the person and forget about making positive changes to the machine and the environment. There are few occasions when it is appropriate to blame the person for their past actions, this is only appropriate when the blame leads to change in the future.

The people cause accidents philosophy has been reinforced in a number of ways over the years.

Heinrich - Although this belief has been part of our culture for centuries, it received official sanction in the writings of Heinrich, widely held to be the father of the industrial safety movement in the 1930's.

His domino theory whereby unsafe acts, unsafe conditions, errors and hazards combine to produce incidents has tended to focus on the person to blame and has been a serious impediment to meaningful progress.

- The Legal System - This reflects the belief that people cause accidents. The system is seen by many to be nothing more than a crime and punishment system, where people are held to blame and punished accordingly. No other factors than peoples actions are given consideration when judgements are made in damages claims arising from motor vehicle accidents.
- The Insurance Industry - Closely tied in to the legal system, seeks to identify some person to blame and pursue through legal channels for any claim.
- The News Media - Media scream driver error in motor vehicle incidents; they scream pilot error in aviation incidents without taking account of the other multitude of essential factors.
- Published Studies - Many published studies will have you believe 90% of accidents are caused by human error. The reality is all personal damage occurrences will have people essential factors and machine and environment essential factors.

The main aim of safety activities is to prevent accidents

Certainly safety activities aim to prevent personal damage occurrences. However we must take one step further by also seeking to minimise and control damage. A classic example being the wearing of seat belts and fitting R.O.P.S. to tractors.

Look after the pence and the pounds will look after themselves

There is a belief in safety that if you bring controls to bear on all minor injuries then the Lost Time Injuries will look after themselves. This belief has mis-directed effort with the result that inordinate effort is directed at minor incidents that have little potential for more serious damage. Certainly we should prevent minor incidents but remember to concentrate our efforts where we get the best results. The Pareto Effect says 20% of incidents will give 80% of damage. This 20% must be identified and concentrated upon. What you must do is direct your safety efforts where you will get the biggest bang for your buck.

In Managing Major Hazards Professor Andrew Hopkins outlines how a focus on Lost Time Injuries led to insufficient emphasis on high risk events. Papers are emerging questioning the wisdom of Zero Harm approaches to safety.

It cannot happen to me

There is a need for each and every one of us to subscribe to this theory, for the sake of our own psychological well-being and to be able to cope with situations outside our control. This belief is often no more than an excuse for taking no action. Often you will wonder why the silly bugger did what they did; sometimes it is because of this belief.

Punishing wrongdoers

I am not saying we should not punish people who do the wrong thing in safety. I am saying that the fact that we do punish wrongdoers will often lead to highly imaginative efforts to avoid punishment and thus make things harder. The history of the safety movement records numerous cases of punishing the wrongdoers not being effective. We should seriously consider the full range of options rather than making hasty decisions to punish the wrongdoers.

W.A.S.P. ethic (White Anglo Saxon Protestant)

This work ethic had its origins in the great religious upheaval known as the Reformation. The ethics emphasis is just reward for effort; conversely people who are hurt in accidents are receiving their just reward for lack of effort. The W.A.S.P. may side-track our prevention efforts.

Displacement activities

A displacement activity is something we do, something we put a lot of effort into but which there is no valid reason for doing it. Examination of the history of the industrial safety movement will reveal many examples of displacement activities. Zero Harm and some aspects of Behaviour Based Safety strike me as examples of displacement activities. The use of many safety posters and blood and guts accident photographs would also be included.

Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate is a valid and reliable measure of safety performance

I have personal experience with a company that aggressively drove down L.T.I.F.R. to a fraction of its original rate in a space of about 2 years yet killed 11 people in one incident.

The Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate dominates discussions about safety performance. How can a company be proud of a decrease of L.T.I.F.R. from 60 to 10 if there have been 2 fatalities and 1 case of paraplegia amongst the lost time injuries? The L.T.I.F.R. trivialises serious personal damage and is a totally inappropriate measure of safety performance. (Refer to the paper on this topic under articles on ohschange.com.au)

Managers understand learning needs

Every task that needs to be done by people must be done

- Safely
- Effectively
- At the right cost
- At the right quality
- In the right quantity

With appropriate consideration for people, for the community and for the Environment (Competency-Based Learning)

Detailed task analysis must take place to recognize the safety competencies required to perform all tasks (including supervisory) where gaps exist between required competencies and current competencies appropriate learning may be the most appropriate solution. After people attend learning exercises the supervisor should develop a plan, in association with the trainee to implement the lessons learnt. After, learning projects should receive consideration. A specific program of learning needs analysis is required to identify learning needs, do not rely on gut feel.

Risk Assessment

Notwithstanding the popularity of risk assessment techniques there are some limitations to the techniques that need to be realised. I have always been of the view that what you do to control risk as a result of a risk assessment exercise is more important than the risk rating. Placing too much emphasis on comparison of risk ratings will lead to inappropriate priorities. Risk assessment exercises are often subjective. With regards to developing controls I find Haddon's 10 countermeasures more effective than the hierarchy of controls.

Safety Procedures are the answer

The commonest mistake I have seen with safety management systems is the development of extensive safety procedures that the workers do not know about, care about or use. The procedures sit on the supervisor's bookcase or a computer program and are rarely referred to. The job safety analysis technique must be used to develop safe working procedures and involvement of the workforce is crucial. If your safe working procedures are over 2 pages in length worry, about whether they will ever be used. Use flow-charts, pictures and diagrams in your safe working procedures and base them on a very basic level of English. The K.I.S.S. principle applies.

Critical incidents or near-misses are well reported

Critical incidents (near misses, sometimes referred to as near hits) occur regularly in organisations but are not routinely reported for a number of quite valid reasons. Critical incidents must be surfaced through an organised process. Critical incident interviewers and observers must be trained and they should spend some time in the organisation identifying critical incidents. Exploring why critical incidents occur will

provide significant insight to guide the safety management system (Refer to the paper “Practical Application of the Critical Incident Recall Process” by this author)

Analysing enterprise accident data is a good idea

Unless you are a very big organization only limited insight into future class 1 personal damage will be gleaned from analysis of enterprise experience. Taxonomies of industry experience can be a powerful tool. The development of standardized, industry reporting systems is underutilized.

Conclusion

It is suggested some common approaches to OHS may be myths and misconceptions. The situation is probably best summed up by an ex-manager of mine who says the biggest problem with safety is that managers and safety professionals often engage in acts of public masturbation.

Safety Culture and How to Improve it

Introduction

I have been asked how to improve safety culture a number of times in recent years. This paper is the result of research into how to best respond to this question. I have turned to the Organisational Behaviour literature as well as the Health & Safety literature in my quest for answers.

Definition of culture

Culture is often defined as “The way we do things around here”. Schein (1990) defines organisational culture as the system of shared beliefs and values that develops within an organisation and guides the behaviour of its members. Culture (Woods) consists of observable culture, shared values and common assumptions. Culture is often reinforced by stories, rites, rituals and symbols.

Safety Culture

The safety culture of an enterprise comprises the beliefs, attitudes, norms and work practices of management & employees. Safety culture refers to what an organisation is like in terms of safety and health, it includes aspects such as management’s attitude and actions about safety and, in particular, the attitudes and beliefs of individuals and groups at work concerning the perceived magnitude of risks and the necessity and practicality of preventative measures. (Safetyline Institute)

A positive safety culture is one that, among other things

- Encourages and retains learning
- Promotes open & honest reporting
- Is just and is prepared to identify its own shortcomings as easily as it seeks to address any violation of orders or instructions
- Rewards innovation and accepts willingly constructive suggestions for continuous improvement of itself.(Di Pietro,2005)

Senior managers are the key to a successful safety culture. A true safety culture is established when safety is valued as highly as productivity. Managers and supervisors need to be held accountable for safety in the same manner as production.

Safety culture is about good safety attitudes in people but it is also good safety management established by organisations. Good safety culture means giving the highest priority to safety. Good safety culture implies a constant assessment of the safety significance of events, and issues, in order that the appropriate level of attention can be given. (Bastin, 2003)

Measuring and reviewing the safety culture

To review the culture of an organisation it is essential to go beyond checking that procedures are in place, to elicit an understanding of underlying beliefs and attitudes to find out what people really think It is important to understand perceptions of hazards by eliciting views on-

Perceptions of risks, of the effectiveness of safe working procedures and of control measures in general.

Their perception and assessment of their own & others beliefs, attitudes and behaviour

The steps taken to eliminate or minimise sources of conflict between production and safety

The steps taken to identify individuals prone to macho behaviour and erode any peer approval of risk taking

The status, importance and effectiveness of safety officers and committees

Whether the safety training is high quality and appropriate (Safetyline)

The National Safety Council has a Safety Climate Survey that impressed me as a good means of assessing safety culture.

Safety culture case study

The most effective safety culture change process I have seen was when I assisted management to lead 10 field safety staff developing and implementing 18 internal standards of OHS excellence, it put a massive increase in the focus on safety. What excellence in implementation of the standards would look like was defined and people were trained in this. I developed a detailed set of audit questions based on the foregoing and a detailed set of auditing guidelines and roles of auditors. Sites to be

audited were briefed on the auditing guidelines and auditors were trained on the audit questions and auditing guidelines. A series of annual Executive Safety Audits was introduced at the various sites with an audit team led by a senior manager to give the process significant management horsepower. The largest audit team I was involved in had 10 auditors and audited the site for 4 days. A quality assurance approach where NCR (Non-compliance reports) were issued was used and formal processes were introduced to follow-up on audit recommendations.

The technical basis, training and preparation for the audits were sound but the key to success was the fact the audits were driven by senior management.

Moving forward

The author has written a paper titled “What makes a safety management system fly” The original was published by the American Society of Safety Engineers, International Practice Specialty Newsletter, Spring 2002, Vol.1, No.3, and it is incorporated in a subject of an OHS course at the University of New Brunswick, Canada. This paper is suggested as containing insight into improving safety culture.

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Should cost effect how you control risk in your workplace?

Introduction

Included in the reasons why you control risks in the workplace are-

- To reduce the number of personal damage occurrences (Accidents)
- To reduce the cost of personal damage occurrences (Accidents)
- To reduce insurance premiums
- To abide by corporate policy

- To minimise common law actions
- To maintain employee relations
- To abide by safety legislation
- To ensure continuity of your business, particularly important for small business
- To maintain a good business reputation and keep the media off your back
- Most importantly-Change for the future, not BLAME for the past

My experience

I have to admit that in my many years in safety there has only been one occasion where I put a lot of work into measuring the cost of the personal damage occurrences (Accidents). This was because the extent of change required was large and I knew there would be a lot of questioning about proposed changes.

Sometimes I have used the legislation bogie-man but in the majority of cases I have appealed to the humanitarian side of my management and their desire not to see employees hurt. I guess that is a reflection of the sort of companies I have mainly worked for; I recognise it will not be that easy in a lot of organisations. One organisation I worked for had a blatantly callous disregard for the safety of the workforce with high potential incidents occurring far too often. Stopping these confined space incidents was my focus and cost did not come into the arguments.

My experience tells me it will often be difficult to justify implementation of risk controls by cost alone. You have to look at both the initial and ongoing costs.

Sometimes you may look at cheaper and less effective controls while you are getting around to implementing more effective and more costly controls.

Discussion

In the ideal world we would assess the cost of personal damage occurrences (Accidents) and come up with cost effective solutions. The reality is that is often a major accounting exercise to get a good handle on your personal damage occurrences (Accidents) costs and the costs of implementing changes. Workers compensation premiums are but one indicator. Some organisations come up with standard costs for every day an employee is off work; I have always suspected these figures are a bit rubbery. One organisation I worked for put a major effort into identifying their personal damage occurrence cost but abandoned it as too difficult and too costly.

Some of the factors to be considered when assessing the degree of controllability include-

- Technical feasibility
- Reliability
- Initial and ongoing cost
- Durability

- Extent of change required
- Impact on other activities

Personal damage occurrences (Accidents) costs

- Loss of production
- Overtime
- Cost of a replacement worker
- Time spent in investigation, discussion and training
- Legal costs
- Fines
- Workers compensation premiums
- Common law settlements
- Court costs
- Damage to equipment
- Consultant costs
- Administration
- Rehabilitation costs

Costs to reduce risk

- It may be necessary to form a project team to implement major change
- Training
- Analysis e.g. Job Safety Analysis
- Purchase of new or modified equipment
- Loss of production while new methods are implemented
- Meetings
- Provision of information to the regulator and others
- Administration

Conclusion

In the ideal world we would justify the introduction of risk controls through them being cost effective. This is not always easy and cost is just one of a number of other factors.

Advice to new OHS people

I make no apologies for the fact that I challenge the accepted wisdom in some of what follows!

Your journey towards being a very effective OHS person has a solid grounding in your studies but this is just the start of the journey. Tertiary learning is very important but it is hard to beat practical experience, particularly practical experience backed up by critical reflection.

I have had my difficulties at times but these have been more than balanced out with many successes and a great feeling of achievement. Reducing personal damage to others is amongst the noblest things one can do with your life.

You have to resolve to be a life-long learner; often learning in fields allied to your major discipline will increase your effectiveness in your major discipline.

Focus on Class 1 personal damage and use this in considerations of analysis. Class 1 damage is that which permanently alters the future of the individual. Minor injuries are not a good predictor of more serious personal damage. Taxonomies (collections of like) of your industry personal damage occurrences provide better guidance than enterprise experience.

Remove the term “accident” from your vocabulary, instead use the term “personal damage occurrence”. Accident is an emotionally laden term that infers blame.

Look for “Essential Factors” not “causes” (Another emotionally laden term) in ‘accident’ investigations. An essential factor is one without the final damage would not have occurred. Use the Analysis Reference Tree-Trunk method of investigation developed by Geoff McDonald. Do not believe the people who tell you “human error” (Another vague, un-useful and emotionally laden term) is responsible for the majority of “accidents”, even if it was true it is unhelpful. Every personal damage occurrence will have Person, Machine & Environment essential factors. Concentrating on Person fixes often leaves avenues of control in Machine and Environment underdeveloped. Often engineering change is more effective than attempting to change the people.

Use personal damage occurrences, not emotion, to guide your preventative efforts. Beware of the many fads that crop up from time to time in safety, they are usually emotionally appealing but may misdirect your efforts. My mentor, Geoff McDonald uses the term displacement activity, a displacement activity is something we do, something we put a lot of energy into, but when we examine it closely there is no valid reason to do it. The history of the industrial safety movements has had and continues to have many displacement activities.

Be a sponge and soak up all the knowledge and experience you can. Never be scared to ask for advice and experience, never stop learning.

OHS is all about change management; expertise in this area will serve you well. A motto from organisational change management theory that I have found very valuable in OHS work is “When initiating change, People support what they create” Major efforts in communication, participation and involvement are usually necessary.

One of the things you must develop is leadership skills. Leadership is the often forgotten key to excellence in all aspects of life. Developing excellent presentation skills will also be very important.

As I get older my critical reflection on practice tells me communications skills and interpersonal skills are just as important as technical skills. There is not much point having a great message if you cannot get it across, if you have great technical skills but cannot get along with people you will not succeed. The biggest problem with written communications is its length; generally I think you must try to get your message across in a maximum of 2 pages. Busy people do not have time to write more and busy people do not have the time to read more. Interpersonal skills can be enhanced by use of techniques such as appropriate self-disclosure and reflective listening. When it comes to presentations be aware of the pitfalls of lecture style presentations. Use interactive learning approaches. There are things you can do to improve your communications, interpersonal and presentation skills.

Finding yourself a mentor will be of real value and constantly discuss issues with your peers.

Speaking from personal experience the most devastating thing that can happen to a company and its workers is to have an employee killed or seriously injured. The financial and more importantly humanitarian costs are immense. OHS is a joint responsibility of management and employees.

My view from the trenches is that there are many things wrong with the way OHS is managed in Australian industry. Gut feel and emotion rather than solid research often guides action. Fads driven by emotion are a real problem. Quite frankly a lot of the government and company approaches to OHS are strangled by complexity. Many employers are more interested in profits than their employees. The unions adopt the moral high ground in safety but my experience is that maintaining membership numbers is more important to them. I am reticent to mention the role of academic institutions but I have developed a perception that in the academic world practice sometimes suffers.

*When I was a mine-site Safety Adviser I led a Critical Incident Recall process in the mine electrical department over a period of some 3 months and was disappointed with the resistance to change from some of the stakeholders. I persevered and was happy with the results. A few years later I went camping in the bush and 2 of the electricians from work were in the group. Around the campfire at night we got talking about the Critical Incident recall work and they explained to me that prior to the work some pretty dodgy work practices were happening and everybody was covering up for each other. They assured me that if they had continued as they were fatalities would have occurred. It is these moments that make the hard work of being a safety person worthwhile!

Many of the safety people I have worked with have been idiots who are a disgrace to the safety business. Many of the safety people I have met have been the most fantastic people you will meet anywhere. You will notice I do not refer to the OHS profession;

this is because I do not believe the body of OHS knowledge has yet developed to a professional level.

A major challenge is the development of a robust OHS Body of Knowledge; the Safety Institute of Australia is to be commended for beginning this development. My view is much more work is required.

OHS is a very frustrating occupation, there will be no shortage of knockers, you just have to focus on your goals and push through the crap. If you only save one person from serious injury it has been worthwhile.

One thing you will have to do to be a successful safety person is to challenge the status quo, this often gets you in a lot of strife, but frankly it is a lot of fun. Three favourite sayings of mine are” You do not know what you can get away with until you try”,” It is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission” and “Doing the impossible is very satisfying”

The issue of professional organisations is a vexed one. At various times I have been a member of an Australian, Canadian and an American OHS professional organisation, two (2) Australian Learning professional organisations and an Australian Human Resource Management professional organisation. I have not been a member of any for about 2 years and do not feel like I have missed out on much. I am considering rejoining an OHS, Learning and HRM. Organisation .I must say the non-OHS organisations can give a broad management perspective that the OHS ones do not do.

I was a Chartered Fellow of the Safety Institute of Australia and found going through the rigorous assessment process taught me a lot about myself on both a personal and work basis. At the end of the day I cannot give much advice on joining OHS professional organisations, it is up to you to determine the benefits for yourself.

I suspect the drivers behind harmonisation were more about reducing cost to industry rather than improving OHS. I generally believe a national approach to OHS is an excellent concept. Harmonised safety legislation may have some advantages but the current situation seems a mess to me given the piecemeal implementation. I find it difficult to recognise significant OHS advantages that have accrued from the work so far.

The fact that the Qld. W.H.S.O. concept was not picked up nationally and national data collection and analysis remains incomplete are amongst the opportunities that have been missed.

Many people will have you believe 4801 is the holy grail of safety management systems and the fact that they have a 4801 compliant safety management system means they are doing a good job on safety.

As far as I am concerned 4801 represents a very basic approach to safety management systems and any S.M.S. I would want to implement would substantially exceed the requirements of 4801.

I completed a few psychology subjects as part of formal study and found them fascinating and very useful. As an OHS person I have come to the conclusion that all this safety stuff would work well if only we were not working with the unreliable buggers we are, i.e. the fallible human being. The biggest challenge in any profession is dealing with the people issues.

Looking to the future I see the time when OHS people should have a basic understanding of how psychological theory relates to safety and an ability to use psychological techniques in safety. Dr. Robert Long has written valuable material on this topic.

Sometimes skills from other disciplines can be applied successfully to OHS; one such skill set is marketing. I have attended some marketing training and see some advantages for OHS.

Marketing is putting the right product in the right place, at the right time, at the right place. You have to create a product people want.

OHS people must have technical OHS skills. My experience is that broader skills such as leadership, communications, interpersonal and team building skills are also necessary. I have facilitated some team building interactive learning for OHS team members and believe such learning has significant benefit for both established and new teams.

Teams are small groups of people with complementary skills who work together as a unit to achieve a common purpose for which they hold themselves collectively accountable.

My web site ohschange.com.au discusses a number of safety related issues.

An ex-manager of mine, who has a way with words, says the trouble with management and safety is that management and safety professionals sometimes engage in acts of public masturbation! I apologise if anyone finds the foregoing offensive but my belief is it is an admittedly crude, but accurate, way of describing some of the things I have seen happen in both safety and general management.

The last thing I will leave you with are risk assessment and Zero Harm approaches to safety. I seriously question the effectiveness of both approaches and believe the safety people of the future will be amazed at why we believed in them so much. It will be interesting to hear what people are saying in 20 years' time.

I would like to finish by wishing you all the best. Nothing worthwhile is easy, but despite the occasional set back I have found OHS to be exceptionally rewarding and

you end up meeting some great people. I have found using project teams has been a fantastic way of driving significant safety change.

A final bit of advice is to have a well-developed bulldust detector; by the hell you will need it!

25 Factors for Personal Success

“When reading your correspondence the reader must say “Wow” in the first third of the page”

“When listening to your presentation the listener must say “Wow” within the first 3 minutes”

Learn the skills of reflective listening and appropriate self-disclosure will help with interpersonal relationships

1. Produce and expect succinct documentation
2. Have huge but realistic goals
3. Do the simplest thing that will work
4. Remember the 6 P rule-Prior Preparation Prevents Piss-Poor Performance.
5. Be a life-long learner and encourage those in your team to be the same
6. Ask for and give regular feedback
7. Use face to face communication whenever possible
8. Minimise the bureaucracy and bull-dust
9. COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE in a way that inspires
10. Communicate your expectations
11. It is often the relationships you build, not your technical skills that determine success.
12. Do not get too focused on work, your family should come first.
13. Believe in yourself. If you do not believe in yourself, how do you expect others to believe in you? If you want to achieve greatness, you have to first believe you are capable of doing it.
14. Concentrate on the things that give the biggest bang for your buck.
15. Get out of your comfort zone. When you are out of your comfort zone you are already growing.
16. One of the best ways to learn is through your mistakes.
17. Be grateful for what you have.
18. Persist until it pays off. Never give up.
19. Take 100% responsibility for everything that happens to you.
20. Do the simplest thing that could possibly work.
21. Set aside a time every week for personal reflection and maintain a reflective journal.

22. Plot the future. Have a plan for your personal and professional life.
23. Learn from the best.
24. Happiness is a choice. You have the power to choose your response to external events.
25. Excellence is deliberate, not something we stumble onto.

Personal note

Spend quality time with loved ones; go for walks and camping in the country or on the beach.

Have a pet. I have always said you can have an intelligent conversation with a Blue Cattle Dog and an Australian Stock Horse.

Be conscious of “catastrophising”. Some people put undue weight on the bad aspects of their life and let that overcome the good aspects of their life. This makes it difficult to develop strategies to move forward.

Why OHS People Are Less Successful Than We Hope

I am not sure this answers the question, I am not sure if it confuses or clarifies but here goes.

One of the reasons why safety people are not as successful as we hope is that we are not good at management of organisational change.

Attempting too big a change and / or changing things too quickly can create an adverse reaction and alienate the very people you want to make allies. Learn the context, culture and past before trying to make changes. Unless a crisis situation is apparent realise effective change requires a lot of effort and time.

John P. Kotter speaks of 8 steps for successful large scale change- Increase urgency, Build the guiding team, Get the vision right, Communicate for buy-in, Empower action, Create short-term wins, Do not let up, Make change stick. I have found this to be a simple, practical model for introducing safety change.

Some safety people are not well trained for what can be a very demanding role. You have to suck up as much knowledge as you can and resolve to be a lifelong learner in safety and safety related areas.

Some safety people are arrogant wankers with a serious disdain for the workers, why they stay in the safety business is beyond me.

Some safety people do not have the right personality for the job. Sometimes it is not easy and you have to toughen up. Put work into developing your interpersonal skills.

Another reason safety people are not as successful as we would like is that we are not good safety leaders, the paper What You Need To Know About Health and Safety Leadership is my attempt to provide some practical guidance on this.

I have found the most successful way to drive safety change is through safety project teams. Good leadership, carefully selected team members with the right skills, a good project plan and use teambuilding principles.

Another reason why safety people do not achieve is that we do not use teambuilding principles in our approach.

The history of the safety business is full of displacement activities. A displacement activity is something we do, something we put a lot of energy into but which there is little valid reason for doing it. A number of things I have seen safety people do over the years have been a bit of a wank.

Paperwork is often long, ponderous and bloody hard work to read. Succinct is the way to go.

Safety gets buried in bulldust, bureaucracy and paperwork. People give up because it is too much like hard work.

Safety people launch OHS management and OHS learning initiatives based on gut feel and what seems right rather than on a thorough, formal needs analysis.

Safety people sometimes use theory instead of real world approaches-Whatever you do reality test it with the workforce first. The solutions to safety problems often lie with the workforce, seek out their opinion.

Industrial relations issues sometimes take precedence over safety.

My motto is "When initiating change, Remember, People support what they create." Do not forget extensive consultation, involvement and buy in is necessary for effective change.

Use face to face communications whenever possible. Research by Harvard professor T.J. Larkin suggests when communicating change with the workforce use the supervisor not senior management, use face to face communications and frame communications relevant to the immediate work area and processes.

Some safety people spend too much time in the office instead of the field where the action is happening. You have to spend a lot of time up the sharp end to gain required knowledge and build the relationships. The excessive growth of safety paperwork and computer systems has contributed to this.

My last reason why safety people are not as successful as we hope is that many of the people we have to deal with are simply wankers with their own narrow minded, self-serving agenda. Even well developed and presented logical arguments will not sway them.

Why OHS People Become Cynics

Cynical- Believing or showing the belief that people are motivated by base or selfish concerns-selfishly or callously calculating-negative or pessimistic as from world weariness-expressing jaded or scornful scepticism or negativity (The Free Dictionary by Farlex)

I generally bring a positive outlook to most things I do. An ex-manager of mine used to tell me to bring him solutions not problems, I generally believe in this approach. I have had a small number of OHS positions where I was able to drive significant OHS Management and OHS Learning change. For these jobs my feeling was one of satisfaction rather than cynicism.

I have good reasons why I have succumbed to cynicism with some of my OHS work. It appears my safety life has been a succession of conversations with workers, supervisors, managers, union officials, employer organisations, professional associations and regulators about getting them to make badly needed improvements to their safety game. Safety is just not on the agenda with some people and they have to be brought to the table kicking and screaming.

Someone said it is a thin line between cynicism and realism.

After a number of years in OHS I have become a bit of a cynic, one of the reasons relates to the personal damage occurrences (Accidents) I have been exposed to. A number could have been easily and cheaply prevented if only people had got a bit organised!

Lessons learnt

Many are quick to blame the careless worker but often there are Machine, Environment and System essential factors as well as Person essential factors. Blaming people is often not all that productive in the bigger picture of preventing personal damage at work.

Many in management are unaware of or ignore their safety responsibilities under both statute and common law. Some in management engage in innovative rear-end covering after the occurrence of personal damage. Equipment manufacturers are often very slow in recognizing and rectifying faults in their equipment. The OHS person often has to be very determined to ensure needed safety change is carried out.

Feedback

As a young mine-site Safety Advisor one of my managers used to say I was like a mongrel terrier dog, I used to chew away on his ear about safety issues and most times

he would do what I wanted him to do, sometimes it was because I had convinced him I was right but sometimes just to get rid of me.

It would seem that at an early age I had adopted strategies to deal with my cynical environment.

General causes of cynicism

Cynicism often becomes apparent when there is felt to be a gap between rhetoric and reality. Some of the general causes about cynicism for me include-

- An overreliance on compliance with legislation as a panacea for safety problems.
- Having safety management systems without solid management commitment and leadership
- Training programs that are not interactive and not guided by needs analysis
- An overreliance on risk assessment
- An overreliance on B.B.S and Zero Harm approaches
- Overly detailed paperwork that is not read, understood or used.
- People with poor interpersonal and communications skills in supervisory and management positions.
- The people who are positive they have all the safety answers
- Lack of face to face communications and framing messages relevant to the workplace of the receiver.
- Attempts to dumb down what people do in safety. Complicated, detailed checklists that take away human decision making
- All things being equal the human being will prefer to do things in the least time, least effort way, attempts to disrupt this principle will lead to cynicism.
- Managers who do not do what they say they will do
- You quickly learn as a safety person that some people will lie to you, there is a need to test everything you are told against solid evidence. It has been said Australians can smell a bull-dust artist from a mile away.
- A real ethical dilemma for OHS people is to be seen as supportive of management safety approaches you know to be not well developed
- Some in management positions tend to focus on safety small picture issues rather than focus on the big picture items.
- The Yes Men who swap doing the right thing for sucking up to the boss

Two fronts

It has been suggested cynicism can come in 2 fronts-

1. Where we are cynical of the way OHS is managed (By business, regulators etc.)
2. Cynicism arising from individuals not wanting to participate, making false claims, using OHS as an industrial bargaining tool, taking short cuts etc.

Frustration

I recognize my cynicism about some safety roles is linked to my frustration at not being better able to manage the situation

Negative emotion

I have admitted to being a cynic but I must say it is a negative emotion. In amongst my failures I have had a significant number of successes, focusing on the positives and what I have learnt from them makes sense. I take the view cynicism is fine provided you learn from it so you can move forward.

It is suggested you need to manage cynicism at 3 levels, as an individual, as an OHS person and as a team member of your organization.

OHS SKILLS

The OHS person needs a mix of OHS skills and broader management skills, my 2 previous e books address this in detail. In this section I comment on what I think are some of the more important, required skills.

Skills of the excellent OHS professional

- Number 1 Interpersonal skills - Techniques such as reflective listening and appropriate self-disclosure can make a real difference. If you cannot get on well with people your technical OHS skills will go to waste.
- Number 1 Communications skills - The biggest and commonest mistake is written communications that rave on to many pages, succinct written communications is the way to go. Not much use having a great message if you cannot get it across.
- Number 1 Leadership - Some people say leaders are born, not made, I do not know about this but do know learning programs can enhance leadership abilities. The number 1 job of a leader is to transmit and embed high value standards. In modern business shared leadership is of more relevance than individual leadership.
- Number1 Get your priorities right-Recognise safety will never be the number one priority, safety must be fully integrated into other business functions

- Number 1 Humility - Be humble and recognise the knowledge and worth of the front line worker, they are the only ones who know how things really happen
- Number1 Broad thinking- Think outside the square and challenge the status-quo
- Number 1 Legislation - Recognise that while compliance with legislation is important it is only a minimum standard
- Number 1 Pareto Principle-Remember the Pareto Principle, the 80/20 rule, identify the 20% of things you do that give you 80% of your results and concentrate on them
- Number 2 A commitment to a continuous improvement philosophy and ability to implement Quality Management.
- Number 2 Change management-OHS management is all about change management and generic skills can be learnt.
- Number 2 OHS technical skills-Tertiary training is important but practical experience and critical reflection on practice is vital.
- Number2 Auditing-Well developed auditing questions are the important first step.
- Number 2 Project management-OHS lends itself very well to a project management approach for major change.
- Number 2 Learning-Avoid the lecture, use Adult Learning Principles & Process and promote interactive approaches and avoid “Death by Power-Point”
- Number 2 Team-building skills-These essential skills can be learnt
- Number 2 Time management skills-Relatively easy to learn this
- Number 2 Sharing-“People support what they create” Not involving the workforce in decisions about OHS change is the road to disaster.
- Number 2 Well developed bull-dust detector

Learning needs analysis

Introduction

Learning needs analysis is one of the basic tools of the effective learning facilitator, without its use your learning will be at best informed guesswork. A recent exercise emphasised to me the vital nature of learning needs analysis and I have revised my earlier paper. The exercise I conducted identified the vital role of interpersonal and communications skills in safety. The recent exercise also revealed a number of things

that initially looked like they required a learning fix, actually required a different sort of fix.

Learning needs analysis

Research has proven the effectiveness of structured learning needs analysis as a basis of designing learning events for all levels of staff. It is a bit like baking a cake, for the safety learning cake to taste superbly you must identify the ingredients so you can put them into the mix. In the safety area, management and safety personnel can provide some insight into course content but for effective learning this insight must be backed up by structured learning needs analysis. A learning need exists when there is a gap between what is required of a person to perform their duties competently and what they actually know that enables them to do so (Kroehnert, 10). Generally the learning needs analysis will highlight the subject matter needed to be covered during the instruction. The knowledge gained by the participants will help to increase their level of ability and allow them to perform their tasks at an acceptable level.

Learning programs

For structured learning programs to be effective they must meet a number of conditions. Three of these conditions are (Drummond, 2)

1. That skills to be acquired by those attending the learning are identified before the learning is started
2. The end results of the learning must be identified before the learning starts
3. There must be a work-based benefit as the result of the learning

In other words there must be a need for the learning before the learning begins. T.L.A. ensures only necessary learning occurs and is directed towards an identified need. Information must be gathered from a variety of sources. A careful analysis of the data collected from each source is required to clearly show

1. The job
2. The desired standards of performance in each job
3. Whether differences in performance standards or shortfalls in knowledge, skills or attitudes can be overcome by learning
4. The performance standards of the individual or group
5. The skills, knowledge and attitudes of individuals and groups carrying out their jobs relative to the work being performed

Care must be taken to ensure that the cause of the learning gap-the real need-is identified, and reaction is not just made to a symptom of the need.

For the analysis to be successful, four basic elements are necessary (Drummond, 6)

1. Identified learning needs must be supported by evidence for the

need

2. There must be commitment, support and participation by senior management towards the analysis and its results
3. There must be total support, participation and co-operation by department and section heads towards obtaining the data for the analysis
4. There must be support by all levels of management for the learning program that results from the analysis

The analysis of organisational problems may reveal that a learning solution is required but learning may not necessarily be the best fix. It is necessary to ask what causes the problem or situation.

Model

The following model is a representation of a six step process of identifying learning needs (Australian Institute of Training & Development).

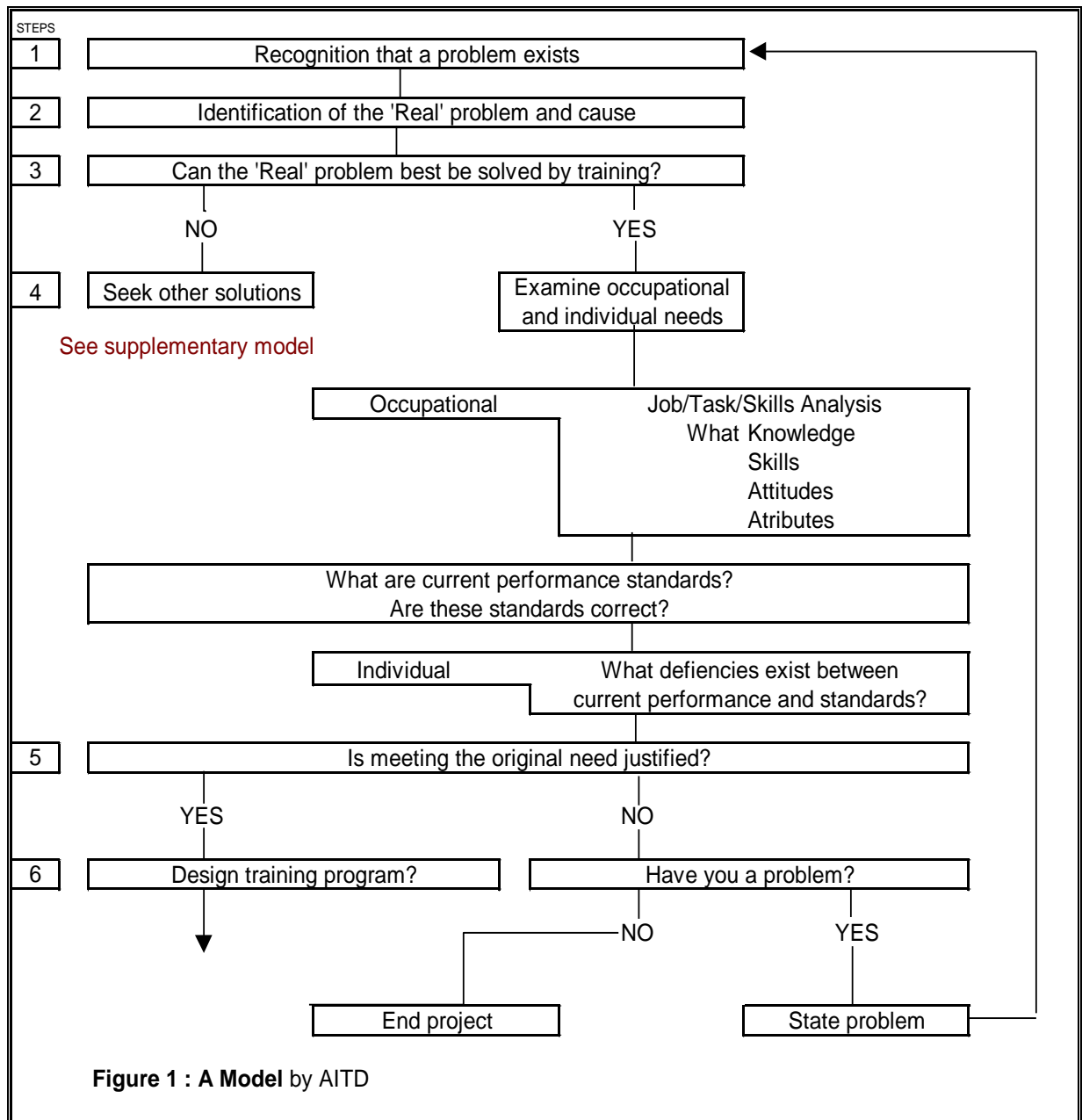


Figure 1 (Source: AITD *Six Step Process of Identifying Training Needs*)

A learning needs analysis is a vehicle of change(Drummond, 7) T.L.A. may be seen as a threat by some and as with anything which brings about change it is essential to involve as many people as possible and keep everyone informed about progress. To overcome these concerns the T.L.A. should be conducted in a series of well-defined steps.

1. Discussions with senior management
2. Establish the T.L.A. objectives and schedule
3. Identify the sources of information
4. Establish the data collection method
5. Schedule the collection of information

6. Analysis of the data & identification of learning needs
7. Development of learning objectives
8. Develop the learning plan
9. Prepare the T.L.A. report.

The T.L.A. report must cover the following points (Drummond, 12)

1. The learning needs identified
2. Which individuals or groups have the identified learning needs
3. Facts which support the needs
4. The training needs objectives
5. A proposed learning plan
6. An estimate of the costs of learning
7. A time-span for the learning
8. Cost benefits of the learning
9. Those needs which exist the cannot be overcome through learning

Example of a practical L.N.A. approach

The following is a simple approach to learning needs analysis that has been endorsed by the Q.U.T. Faculty of Education

To carry out a safety learning needs analysis form groups of 5 - 10 of your target groups and lead them in the learning needs analysis (the number of groups you facilitate must be representative of the total numbers in the target group) In some cases a structured questionnaire can be used to gather information instead of facilitating large numbers of groups.

Define the safety components (existing and desired) and standards of performance of the work the groups carry out

Brainstorm the KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS and ABILITIES (ATTITUTES) required doing the job to the required standard

Design the learning event to meet the identified KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS and ABILITIES (ATTITUDES)

A general guide to sample size for different staff numbers is as follows (Drummond, 20)

TOTAL STAFF NUMBER	SAMPLE
6 or below	100%
20	40 – 50%

50	20 –30%
100	20%

Conclusion

Learning needs analysis is one of the basic tools of the effective learning facilitator, without its use your learning will be at best informed guesswork. Without formal L.N.A. you may be driving really fast on your learning journey but could easily be on the wrong road.

References

Australian Institute of Training and Development, (1999) *Analysing Training Needs*, A.I.T.D., Lalor, Vic

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Learning revolution (Training is what others do to us, learning is what we do to ourselves)

Company X revolutionised their approach to learning. I was heavily involved in this work in my role as Senior Safety Adviser in the Brisbane-based corporate OHS department. The following are the steps that were taken as best I can remember it.

1. A Learning Manager was appointed with a reputation for challenging the status quo and practical outcomes.
2. Existing learning programs were examined and costed, many millions were being spent and it became obvious much of this money was wasted.
3. An exhaustive learning needs analysis was carried out. One of the 7 open-cut mines was chosen for this and for about 6 months operated at half capacity due to an intense focus on learning needs analysis. This worked formed the basis for the introduction of competency-based learning in the Australian mining industry.
4. Doctor Stephen Billett of Griffith University was engaged to research preferred and effective modes of delivering learning. Not surprisingly learning by doing coached by a content expert was favoured. A lot of people saw classroom learning as largely a waste of time. Carrying out authentic tasks in the workplace was seen as important.
5. External trainers and internal trainers, of which I was one, had to attend a week course with a unit that specialised in advanced learning techniques from

the Qld. Department of Education. This emphasised interactive techniques and Action and Experiential learning.

6. Consultants were engaged to prepare self-paced, competency-based modules in many areas. The modules were given to learners and they were assigned a content expert to refer to as needed. In the safety area there were 10 modules that gained National recognition towards a certificate IV in Occupational Health & Safety. My role was to do the T.N.A., write modules, liaise with the consultants writing the modules, assess learners, coach learners and where necessary facilitate the modules.
7. I completed some of the learning techniques modules and because a thorough approach was used in their development, was able to get exemptions from 2 of my subjects on the Bachelor of Education (Adult & Workplace Education) at Q.U.T.
8. A system was introduced whereby the supervisor had to engage with the learners to develop an action plan to implement the lessons learnt from a learning experience.
9. A matrix of mandatory and recommended learning for all levels of employees was developed. For example at some locations completion of a certificate IV in Occupational Health & Safety was made mandatory for all supervisors and managers.
10. The performance appraisal process put a high emphasis on learning with the result that individual learning plans were developed for all employees.
11. The organisation truly became a “Learning organisation” and a high value was put on learning.
12. A communications plan was developed to communicate processes to employees. Various available media were used to communicate learning change.
13. Development of the learning materials involved many project teams and a philosophy that “When initiating change, People support what they create” was used.
14. Assessors of the self-paced learning modules completed learning and set about assessing learners
15. I was never privy to the cost of this work but I am told there were massive sayings because people were not traipsing off to classroom sessions of dubious quality all over the countryside and the learning was really targeted to needs. It was summed up for me when I was sitting in a mine manager’s office that overlooked the coal stockpile and the mine manager said” There was a time when I had evidence the bulldozer operators did not always know what they are doing and the machines were not always well maintained, since this new training I no longer have these concerns”
16. The company X Learning Manager went on to develop a very successful International Learning consultancy business based on the company X approach. An indicator of his success that he pointed to was gaining the

contract to develop the complete learning system for Company Y, an American company with 350,000 employees.

The precursors to success were the very thorough learning needs analysis and the establishment of the preferred and most effective means of learning.

What the OHS Professional Can Do To Improve Safety Leadership

1. Learn as much as you can about general and safety leadership. Reference to the sources of information in this paper will help.
2. Carry out a survey to identify the workforce perception of company leadership, there are various ways of going about this. Sometimes there is value in collating the answers onto histograms, displaying the histograms to the people who completed the survey, discussing the results and trying to establish why the responses are the way they are. This is best done by as senior a manager as possible who does not react defensively to criticism.
3. Survey the leadership styles of your leaders, various instruments are available. Carrying out a force field analysis on safety leadership may help to focus issues.
4. Identify the relevant learning needs of leaders using a formalized learning needs analysis.
5. Based on the above develop a safety leadership project plan in association with the stakeholders. Form a project team to manage the plan. Get management approval for the plan.
6. Launch and communicate the safety leadership project plan. My general advice with communication is to use face to face communication wherever possible, use the powerful influence of the work group supervisor and frame communication relevant to the work environment of the group being communicated to. High powered communications from senior management about the goals, mission, vision and the objectives of the company will not have much of an impact with many of the workers.
7. Carry out interactive leadership learning using Action and Experiential learning models. The learning must have a focus on the reality of the workplace. My advice is to check out both the process and content of potential providers very carefully, there are some snake oil salesmen in this space. I know it is not everybody's thing but properly structured outdoor learning experiences can be a powerful means of leadership learning. Just ensure the focus is on the learning not the outdoor experience.
8. As a follow up to learning facilitation engage in authentic safety leadership tasks / activities / projects in the workplace. Progress must be regularly discussed, reviewed and evaluated, celebrate the success of these. McDonalds use WOW projects in their leadership learning.
9. Meet with the people who attended the learning facilitation and discuss what is going well and what opportunities for improvement have been presented. I

know it is not everybody's thing but I encourage leaders to maintain a reflective journal about their leadership experiences, used properly this can be a powerful means of learning.

10. Evaluate, communicate and celebrate success. Establish what was learnt in the process and how you would do it better next time.

The top 10 things that are essential for safety leadership

1. Leaders must visibly demonstrate commitment and focus on safety. Good leaders lead, great leaders develop other leaders.
2. Leaders must set the safety example.
3. Leaders must create high safety expectations.
4. High values and detailed standards of performance must be used
5. Leaders must listen to and involve the workforce
6. Leaders must do what they say they will do.
7. Leaders must value safety goals.
8. Employees must be made to feel they are part of something important and satisfying.
9. Leaders must reinforce, reward and celebrate success.
10. Everyone must be held accountable for safety performance.

"Good leaders are those who know how to motivate and challenge people at all levels of an organisation to achieve their best performance. In addition they support and provide the resources necessary to ensure it is possible to meet the goals that have been set".

Posted by Wayne J Harris, LinkedIn, OHS Professionals, Australia, 1/5/12

What good leaders do is create an environment that allows people to do their jobs effectively and with confidence and in my time I have developed 5 rules.

1. Agree with people what is expected of them;
2. Give them the knowledge to do what is expected of them;
3. Give them the tools to do what is expected of them;
4. Give them permission to do what is expected of them; and
5. Monitor them to see if they are actually doing what is expected of them. If they are, then give them a big pat on the back. If they are not talk to them and find out what is not happening and point them in the right direction.

The final thing good leaders do is have a vision and are consistent in moving toward fulfilling that vision. They do not make decisions based on opportunism"

Posted by Richard Hamilton, LinkedIn, Safety Institute of Australia, 4/5/12

Two questions for all OHS professionals

How do you rate on the above 10 things that are essential for safety leadership?

What will you do to ensure you are a safety leader not just a safety professional?

The 15 most common mistakes OHS people make

1. Some OHS people believe and promote the view that safety is the number 1 priority of business. The only priority of business is to make money or in the case of not for profit organisations to promote their services. Adopting the high moral ground in safety has its place but we must remember safety has to be integrated with the other factors in running a business.
2. Thinking compliance with safety legislation will solve most safety problems
3. Thinking minor personal damage is a good predictor of life-altering personal damage.
4. Not using the continuous improvement philosophy and other facets of Quality Management in your safety approach.
5. Lack of succinct paperwork. There is not much point in having detailed paperwork that is too much like hard work to read.
6. Using theory instead of real world approaches-Whatever you do reality test it with the workforce first. The solutions to safety problems often lie with the workforce, seek out their opinion.
7. Ignoring “When implementing change-Remember, people support what they create”
8. Not using face to face communications whenever possible. Research by Harvard professor T.J. Larkin suggests when communicating change with the workforce use the supervisor not senior management, use face to face communications and frame communications relevant to the immediate work area and processes.
9. Not using a formal needs analysis to guide all your actions.
10. Not training formal and informal leaders in Safety Leadership.
11. Using enterprise “accident” experience to guide action rather than industry taxonomies of permanently life-altering personal damage.
12. Putting too much emphasis on the risk ratings from risk assessments, the reality is that a lot of risk assessment is very subjective.
13. Not having formal approaches to follow up on investigations and audits.
14. Spending too much time in the office instead of the field where the action is happening. You have to spend a lot of time up the sharp end to gain required knowledge and build the relationships
15. Relying on OHS technical skills alone. Effective OHS people need many skills over and above the technical skills, e.g. Communications, interpersonal, leadership, project management, learning, change management etc.

Personal Characteristics of Safety People (With a bit of help from Steve Jones & Ray Wooster)

Safety professionals need to:

- Be passionate about safety
- Be tenacious
- Have Endurance
- Have patience and control
- Have the ability to manage and follow through
- Have powers of observation
- Have technical aptitude
- Be attentive to detail (where the devil hides)
- Have a good record keeping skills
- Be self-confident
- Have some business acumen
- Have broad shoulders and a thick skin
- Have an inbuilt bulldust meter

Critical Incident Recall Discussion Paper

Introduction

Many people will tell you near misses or near hits (Better referred to as critical incidents) are reported in their organisation. My experience is that unless proper procedures are put in place to surface critical incidents you will only get to hear about a fraction of them.

Critical incident recall is an awesome technique particularly suited to high risk environments. The technique will not work unless there is a climate of trust created between management and workers. Communications must be open & honest and managers and supervisors must be prepared to put up with a lot of criticism and not react defensively. In the interests of getting to the truth there must be no disciplinary actions. The senior department manager must be prepared to put his reputation on the line. The potential for some to push industrial issues is high with this technique, open & honest communication and a determination to improve will defuse this.

Neither management nor workers will be prepared to commit to the work required in this technique unless there is a general realisation that problems exist.

Why critical incidents are not reported

Critical incidents are not routinely reported in an organisation, for a number of quite valid reasons. These reasons include:-

- a. Peer pressure not to report these incidents.

- b. Embarrassment at having to admit making what is perceived to be a mistake.
- c. In an organisation that has an active safety program; people may not wish to appear to be ruining the safety record.
- d. The significance and possible outcome of critical incidents may not be realised.
- e. Fear of punishment may be a factor
- f. Complacency or the 'she'll be right' attitude is highly likely to be a factor.

Background to the critical incident recall work

This work was done in the electrical department of an open cut coal mine. Prior to this work an electrician was seriously burnt in a 415 volt switchboard explosion. Some of the essential factors were production pressure, inexperience, suspect high voltage testing equipment, the ergonomics of the switchboard and test and prove dead not carried out.

The investigation revealed several areas of concern and it was decided to try a different safety approach.

What was done

All department members attended a short learning session where the Person, Machine, Environment concepts were explained. If I was to do this again I would include a case study of a complex class 1 personal damage occurrence to bring out the principles. The process they would go through was explained.

Some department members were trained as critical incident participant observers and observed what was happening in the workplace, some department members were trained as critical incident interviewers and interviewed their workmates. It was essential that those chosen for these tasks were trusted by the workforce. The identified critical incidents were communicated to management.

It was planned to let the above process go for 6 months but after a short period of time the frequency and severity of the critical incidents set the alarm bells ringing.

Over a period of some two months, a list of in excess of 30 critical incidents was compiled and presented to senior department staff. Examples included the following:-

- Connecting a wrong trailing cable to transportable sub-station.
- Examples of high voltage isolation being ignored to save time.
- Access permit paperwork being completed after job.
- Using multi-meters with blown fuses and thinking circuit dead.
- Examples of uninformed use of modiworx high voltage tester.

- Connecting power whilst offsider still working on circuit.
- Drilled through wall into a live 6.6 kV cable.
- Changing energised fuses and spanner contacted live contacts.
- Only one person placing danger tag, when a number of people were working on the job.
- Examples of production pressure, defeating 'tag left on' requirements of isolating procedures.
- 'Test and prove dead' ignored.

The list of critical incidents was evaluated and it was considered that approximately 30% of the incidents could be eliminated due to factors such as misunderstanding and exaggeration of the seriousness of the situation. However a number of the critical incidents accepted as being factual were counter to the basic and accepted methods of approaching electrical tasks. There was considerable concern that these incidents had occurred in the department.

It was decided that it was appropriate to devise a questionnaire to be presented to all department staff, in order to gain insight into why these critical incidents were occurring. The questionnaire was based on the assumption that physical health, social health, mental health (knowledge) and motivation are essential elements for safe operation.

The questionnaire focused on the following areas:-

- Social aspects of work.
- Motivation (safety).
- Motivation (job satisfaction).
- Ancillary safety aspects.
- Knowledge (availability).
- Knowledge (special areas).
- Knowledge (safety procedures).
- Equipment and installations.

Basic details of the questions used are on page 48.

The questionnaire was then presented to, and discussed with department members; the emphasis on the discussions being that the company was taking a 'no blame' approach and was interested in finding out why critical incidents were occurring so that they would not re-occur. Punishment for past actions was definitely not part of the process. The results of the questionnaires were collated and further meetings of department staff were carried out in order to clarify issues. The following is typical of responses obtained, which allowed supervisory personnel to develop priorities for action within the department.

If I was the electrical superintendent, the first thing I would do to improve safety would be:-

- Improve toolbox meetings.
- Have more education.
- Improve vehicle safety.
- Improve housekeeping.
- Update plans.
- More importance on safety and less on production.
- Improve communications.
- Enforce safety more.
- Have more resuscitation training.

The worst feature of safety is:-

- Production pressure.
- Insufficient checking.
- Foremen not recognising dangers.
- Others' bad work habits.
- Condition of vehicles.
- Lack of knowledge of isolating procedures.
- Bad housekeeping in electrical workshop.
- Slow action when safety matters raised.
- Resuscitation training.
- Negative attitudes.
- Changing trailing cables.
- Working by yourself.
- Not wearing personal protective equipment.

The critical incident process to date revealed a number of equipment, procedural and personal areas that required increased emphasis. Specifically the following areas were addressed.

1. Training - Routine and non-routine electrical procedures. Rescue and resuscitation.
2. Isolating - Procedures-Normal isolation and high voltage procedures were streamlined.
3. Maintenance - General electrical and vehicle maintenance was improved.
4. Plans/Diagrams - Existing material was updated and requirements for additional information highlighted.
5. High Voltage Testing Equipment

In what was a very brave move considering the industrial climate the senior department manager led a series of meetings with the workforce where he displayed the histograms and asked for feedback on reasons why the responses were the way they were. The manager was advised that no matter how severe the criticism he was not to react defensively. In these circumstances if a senior person is criticised severely

you will usually find someone in the work group will come to his rescue if he is being fair dinkum, if that does not happen the facilitator can come to his rescue.

Notwithstanding 1 - 5 above, the biggest benefits were obtained through improved communications throughout all levels of the department. A new spirit of openness between staff and wages was developed; the benefits of this are considerable, but unable to be measured in real terms.

Questionnaire Details

The majority of questions graded responses between the extremes of 'Strongly Agree - Strongly Disagree' and 'None of the Time - All of the Time.'

Questions that required this graded response were as follows:-

1. The industry places great importance on safety.
2. Working at is a good way to further my career.
3. My rescue and resuscitation training makes me confident I could give effective help to an electrocuted person.
4. The multimeters we use are ideally suited for all the purposes for which we use them.
5. The electrical part of the is very good to work on.
6. Electrical foremen are considerate, give help when needed and look after our interests.
7. The wages people in the electrical department at are a good lot to work with.
8. The modiwark high voltage tester is a sensitive and reliable instrument.
9. The isolation procedures (using danger and out of service tags) are complicated and difficult to apply in some situations.
10. tries hard to be a leading organisation in safety.
11. When working in the area, I am confident of what to do, and how to do it.
12. The electrical superintendent is approachable, fair with his men and looks after our interests.
13. The High Voltage Isolation Procedures (using access permits and switching sheets) are complicated and difficult to apply in some situations.
14. When I need technical information for a job, it is readily available.
15. Identification methods (eg. colour tags, plug numbers) are difficult to apply in some situations.
16. When working in the field, I am confident of what I do and how to do it.
17. When working in the I am confident of what to do and how to do it.
18. My work is organised so that I can have friendly contact with a number of people.
19. The electrical part of the is very good to work on.
20. The Safety Department should play a greater role in enforcing safety standards.
21. My fellow workers are conscientious about safety and ensure their safety and mine.

- 22. My job does not enable me to develop my skills and knowledge adequately.
- 23. The electrical part of the is very good to work on.
- 24. When I ask my boss about electrical problems, he explains it in a way I can understand and remember.
- 25. Working at gives good opportunity for promotion within the company.
- 26. The electrical staff are conscientious about safety and ensure their safety and mine.
- 27. Toolbox talks are a good forum for raising and resolving safety problems.
- 28. People from other departments are easy to get along with and are helpful.

The following questions were given to Apprentices and Trades Assistants only.

- 29. The tradesmen I work with do a good job of helping me understand what is going on and help me learn what I need to know.
 - 30. I personally am conscientious about safety and ensure other people's safety and mine.
 - 31. I get good satisfaction from the work I do.
 - 32. Toolbox talks are being held because they have to be and are not genuine.
- All department members were asked to respond by providing their written comments to the following questions.*
- 33. The best feature of safety in the Electrical Department is
.....
 - 34. The worst feature of safety in the Electrical Department is
.....
 - 35. If I was the Electrical Superintendent at the first thing I would do to improve safety would be
 - 36. Other comments I would like to make are
.....

Personal note

About a year after this work was done I went camping on a cattle station with a group of people from work, included in the group was an electrical foreman and an electrician. Around the camp fire after more XXXX Gold than was safe & healthy we got on talking about the work that was done. Both of them said prior to the process there was some very dodgy things happening that would have inevitably led to a fatality.

The Blame Game

Far too many people involved in OHS, including some OHS people, spend too much time playing the blame game.

OHS should be about Change For The Future, NOT Blame For The Past.

When you pick up the newspaper and listen to the television or radio you will find terms like driver error, human error and pilot error used frequently as if this was the definitive reason why “accidents”, more precisely referred to as personal damage occurrences, occur. We are surrounded by this every day and it is an accepted part of our society. Society wants to find out who was to blame so they can be punished and the media whip up frenzy with juicy stories.

Authorities such as the police may have a focus on human error so they can find out whom to blame and penalise after car crashes. When it comes to common law claim settlements the legal authorities will seek to apportion blame so they can allocate settlements accordingly.

OHS people can become fixated on the blame game during statute and common law claim hearings. They may be involved in arguing the case for the employer and apportioning blame on the injured employee. Sometimes decent humanity goes out the door.

Incidents have occurred where management performance was less than satisfactory yet the employer seeks to play the blame game with employees.

Permanently life altering personal damage (Class 1) can be fatal or non-fatal, the people involved suffer enormous disruption to their lives. Some would argue it is unethical to also burden them with the blame for the consequences.

Having been involved in managing the aftermath of some permanently life altering personal damage an observation of mine is that some organisations indulge in imaginative rear end covering after the fact. I am reminded of the Annual Report of one major company who went into great detail on how they had reduced L.T.I.F.R., a footnote mentioned briefly there had been a number of fatalities.

Now I am not going to be silly enough to say people are not part of the personal damage occurrence process, of course they are. A major objection to the human error concept is that there is usually a focus on the “errors” of the individual who was damaged and people do not look at the contribution of others who developed and managed the overall system being worked in. The term human error often misdirects effort in safety. With personal damages occurrences I have investigated I have found that people have done what on the surface appears to be some pretty stupid things, often when one delves into the reason why they have done these things you find the environment and the equipment have contributed to the decision making process. I must admit there have been occasions, not many, when I have walked away from an investigation, after trying to do a thorough, professional and objective job, and thought what the person did was just dumb. Of course we all do dumb things at times and are usually not damaged in the process.

If you look at Geoff McDonald's Analysis Reference Tree-Trunk model of personal damage occurrence investigation you will find every personal damage occurrence will have Person, Environment and Equipment essential factors, the percentage contribution will vary. The trouble with the human error concept is that some organisations will concentrate on people fixes and forget about the equipment and environment fixes. Often fixing the person is the least effective way of getting meaningful change. For critical issues it is often more reliable to depend on things instead of people. Often working on the Person in association with working on the Environment and the Machine will be appropriate.

In the paper *Three Images To Guide Work Safety And Health*, Geoff McDonald indicates that the apportionment of cost for permanently life altering personal damage in 2005-6 was-

Employer 7.5%

Employee 78.6%

Community 13.9%

One has to ask if it is ethical for the employee to be saddled with the majority of the cost of the more serious personal damage

The above recognises there is a part to play in training workers and have supervisors enforce that the learnt behaviour occurs. You need to recognise that a "Least time, least effort" approach is a natural tendency with human beings and this is sometimes responsible for the behaviour you see.

The belief in human error as a major cause (another emotionally laden term) of "accidents" is one of the many myths and misconceptions that hold back the progress of safety and contributes to a poor body of knowledge. It is sloppy, unscientific and emotive terminology.

Safe Working Procedures

Safe working procedures are the central plank of many organisations approach to safety, despite the fact they are notoriously unreliable without training, follow up and supervision.

I do not know about you but when I get a new chainsaw, mower or car the last thing I do is refer to the instruction manual ,I want to try it out! Sometimes I think we are too optimistic with our expectations for people to follow safe working procedures.

One argument I have heard is we do not need specific safe working procedures, instead we need procedures to do the job efficiently, which includes safety.

One organisation I was associated with had an incident where an employee was nearly killed. After an audit the government regulator gave the organisation 6 months to

make a quantum improvement in their work procedures. The regulator said they would shut the operation down altogether if big improvements were not made. When approached for advice I proposed all department members be trained in a 4 hour practical course on job safety analysis and we form teams to use job safety analysis to develop safe working procedures. The notes for the course and a brief outline of the content of the course can be found under job safety analysis, OHS articles on www.Ohschange.com.au

The procedures were subsequently developed and I got the job of reviewing them with the frontline staff that developed them. As well as developing some excellent procedures it put a much needed focus on safety and boosted management credibility with the workforce. The regulator was pleased.

Safe working procedures must be simple and succinct, aim for 2 pages at the most for simple tasks, use pictures, diagrams, flow-charts etc. The debate rages about how much detail to put in safe working procedures, I guess it is a balance between having the necessary detail and not having so much information that they will never be read or followed.

At one organisation the corporate safety people developed a S.W.P. for a particular task, there were good reasons for this. I was given the job of introducing it to the workers. There were 6 pages of complicated, close text and I, with a reasonable grasp of the English language, unlike some of the workers, simply could not understand it. Somehow I could not see the workers reading the document by the light of their torch or truck headlights in the middle of the night in order to carry out the task.

The corporate safety people were ropeable when I said I was not going to introduce it to the workers and it needed to be revised, they refused to revise it. Apparently I was a trouble maker. I gave the job of revising it to one of my crews.

Two (2) pages with simple short steps and a diagram and the blokes were happy to use it because it made sense through their involvement. I had my manager on side and he forced the adoption of what our blokes developed through the whole organisation. Naturally I was not popular with the corporate safety people. The manager got the quality bloke to issue a non-conformance report on the original procedure through the quality system that created a bit of excitement.

Practical Tips For Learning Facilitation

This short paper is an extract from the paper Adult Learning Principles and Process-Back to Basics which is available on request from fgrobotham@gmail.com

Strategies for learning (Excellence in Training)

Build skills

- Break tasks into several steps.

- Spend a few minutes giving personal help,
- Provide opportunities for participants to show what they can do.
- Involve participants in a meaningful manner.
- Direct participants to specific help & support.

Build respect/confidence

- Use positive reinforcement.
- Show participants respect.
- Make time to really listen to participants.
- Never get participants to do things outside of their capacity.
- Provide opportunities for participants to tell others what they are interested in.
- Use names.

Natural prime retention time

First seen or heard is best remembered, last seen or heard is next best remembered, the middle is hardest to remember and needs to be highlighted to increase retention. Always have a strong opening and conclusion and incorporate activities in the middle.

Learning styles

Some people are visual learners (pictures, written words, diagrams etc.), some are auditory learners (hearing the written word) and some are kinaesthetic learners (involvement, action, discussion etc.). You should attempt to use all 3 modes when communicating with people, this will increase their motivation.

You should try to establish the learner's preferred learning style, not over use your own preferred learning style, give the opportunities for learners to use their preferred learning style and develop methods that reinforce each learning style.

Session design for success

- A. Anticipatory step
Some activity that focuses attention on all, builds readiness to continue, builds in some small success for the participants and may link to previous work or the topic of the session.
- B. The objective
Tell the participants what you will be doing, why you are doing it and what their job will be.
- C. Development
This provides new learning built onto previous knowledge. Wherever possible participants should be able to see an example of a finished product.
- D. Checking for understanding
Trainers check for understanding to ensure success for learners and assess if remediation is required.
- E. Guided practice to unguided practice
On-site coaching is effective and should align with what their job will be.

F. Summary / conclusion

Focus back on key concepts and link to the next session.

Considerations for quality learning

Effective learning is an ongoing process not one-off event. Learning does not have to be structured; often an informal chat with content from within your own organization will be beneficial. Active involvement and support from the supervisor is essential. Regular learning accompanied by self-analysis, constructive criticism and stimulation by leadership to improve is required. Systematically identify internal needs and resources before seeking outside assistance. Assess learners competencies and use these to assist their and others learning. Involve the learner in the evaluation of the learning program. Modelling behaviour of successful work mates is a good avenue to explore for learning. Short & long term evaluation of learning programs is essential.

In his text “How to create and deliver a dynamic presentation” Doug Malouf makes the following points

The 10 major mistakes speakers make

1. Failing to speak to time-set a time limit, stick to it, be ruthless with self
2. The material is not suited to the audience-research 3 people, what do they know, what would they like to know
3. Information overload-limit the information, bit size pieces, leave something out
4. The material is too technical-do not use jargon, know your audience, pitch it to their level
5. Poor preparation-you’re on before you are on, trust no-one, check everything
6. Failure to practice speech-practice to an imaginary audience
7. Distracting visuals/ verbals / vocals
8. Inappropriate pace-vary your speed
9. Lack of eye contact-maintain
10. Lack of enthusiasm

Laurie Kelly of Mindworks, a Brisbane-based company specializing in training trainers gave the following practical tips to trainers during a course this author attended

- Change state every 10 minutes-Get up & stretch, move camp, go & get, otherwise have participants move
- To gain an understanding of a group’s existing knowledge-ring some a few days before-hand, discuss a topical question in groups, traffic lights (cards, green agree, yellow undecided, red disagree), sit down, stand up, show of hands

- Relaxation-at least 8 glasses of water a day, cross legs, cross hands twist hands to chest, relax for a minute, eyes closed-join fingers place on chest for a minute
- Time keeping for breaks-get groups to appoint a time keeper
- Use music at beginning, breaks switch off to focus on task.
- Ask to visualise a quiet place where you would like to be as a change of pace half way through the day
- List things you had to do to get here
- List things you could be doing instead of being here. Put them in an envelope at the back of the room and pick up when you leave.
- Have a box of chocolate frogs for helpers
- When asking for input in a circle use cards to nominate instead of going around in turn
- Pre-reading-At night read the manual and prepare 5 questions for the group
- Appreciative enquiry-Find out what worked well and build on it.
- Evaluation, what am I pleased with? What have I still got to do?
- Put borders around chart using different colours ,use heaps of colours on charts, place charts around room & use to revise or after lunch have an ideas so far session
- Do not write on white-board yourself, ties you up and you lose eye contact with the group, nominate person with birthday in August
- Philosopher's walk-At the end of the day go in pairs and discuss the learning's from the day that are displayed on the charts around the wall.
- Use shiny paper not butchers paper; butchers paper draws ink out of pens.
- Have a table-What I know, What I want to know, What I have learnt-helps to engage learners in a topic
- Round Robin (alternate to brain storming)-List ideas/responses on a sheet, ask groups to designate 3-4 top ideas, groups feedback responses to facilitator and whiteboard-affirms, participation, piggy backs new ideas, ownership
- List plus, minus, interesting on a sheet

References

See the main paper Adult Learning Principles and Process-Back to Basics which is available on request from fgrobotham@gmail.com

Job Safety Analysis by George Robotham

Job Safety Analysis (J.S.A.) is a simple yet highly effective technique that is under-utilised in industry. J.S.A. aims to prevent incidents and losses by identifying and controlling potential loss situations.

Note

An alternate approach to Job Safety Analysis is to carry out a Job Analysis. Instead of trying to identify “hazards” in the second stage one tries to identify “unwanted outcomes” These “unwanted outcomes” can be a range of issues, productivity, quality, safety, environment, training etc.

J.S.A. should be used with **critical** tasks-

1. High risk tasks
2. Tasks with an incident history
3. New tasks

J.S.A. is based on the principle that any job or task can be separated into a set of relatively simple steps and that the hazards associated with each step can be identified. Solutions to control hazards at each step can then be developed and written into safe working procedures.

The advantages of J.S.A. are -

1. S.W.P.'s can be developed for skills training and use on the job
2. Developing J.S.A.'s helps to raise the safety awareness of workers
3. Assists in making observations of safe behaviour
4. Involves workers in the safety programme in a relevant, meaningful manner

J.S.A. Technique-Summary

1. Select the job or task to be analysed
2. Separate the job into its basic steps
3. Identify all the hazards / potential losses associated with each step
4. Evaluate your options for hazard / loss control action
5. Establish controls for each hazard or other potential loss area
6. Prepare a Safe Work Procedure

J.S.A. Technique-Detailed

Step 1 - Task Selection

- Identify critical jobs and set priorities for analysis
- Train your selected team in carrying out J.S.A.

- Inform people who are involved with the process what you are doing and why
- Encourage workers to contribute safety improvement ideas
- Where possible involve the people who normally carry out the task in the J.S.A.

Step 2 - Separation into Steps

- Separate the selected tasks into 10-15 basic steps and record each step on the Job Analysis Work Sheet (page 61)
- Each step or activity listed should briefly describe what is being done not how to do it
- Usually 3-4 words for each step
- Use an activity or verb / action word first
- Do not omit steps

Step 3 - Hazard Identification

Examine each step to identify any hazards or potential incident or loss sources. Include hazards associated with -

- Machines
- Tools
- Supplies
- Worker action or lack of action
- Job procedures
- Work environment

Start with the question “What would happen if...”

Apply the hazard identification check- list-

- Struck by
- Contact by
- Struck against
- Contact with
- Caught between
- Caught on
- Caught in
- Fall to below
- Fall same level

- Over-exertion
- Exposure

Step 4 - Evaluate Hazard Controls

- Develop suitable controls
- For every hazard there must be a control
- Refer to Haddon's 10 countermeasures, the Hierarchy of Controls and the A.C.I.R.L. 9 Box Model for controls

Step 5 - Establish Controls

There must be a clearly defined procedure for controlling hazards

Step 6 - Safe Work Procedure

A Safe Work Procedure is prepared from

- Steps outlined on the job analysis sheet
- Hazards identified
- Recommended equipment, including P.P.E.
- The procedures for controlling the hazards at each step

Developing controls

The traditional wisdom when developing hazard controls is to use the Hierarchy of Controls. The author's experience is that a better result will be achieved by using either Haddon's 10 Countermeasures or the A.C.I.R.L. 9 Box Model. The main advantage of these approaches is that it expands your options for control

Hazard Control Model

Various hazard control strategies and models have been developed by safety professionals over the years. One of the most effective but still easiest to apply is that devised by American researcher Bill Haddon.

Haddon's model for hazard control is as follows:

Countermeasure 1	<p>Prevent the marshalling of the form of energy in the first place.</p> <p>E.g. Ripping seams - instead of blasting, substitution of radiation bin level sources with ultra-sonic level detectors, using water based cleaners rather than flammable solvents.</p>
Countermeasure 2	<p>Reduce the amount of energy marshalled.</p> <p>e.g. Radiation – gauge source strength, explosive store licence requirements, control number of gas cylinders in an area</p>
Countermeasure 3	<p>Prevent the release of the energy.</p> <p>e.g. handrails on work stations, isolating procedures, most interlock systems</p>
Countermeasure 4	<p>Modifying the rate or distribution of energy when it is released.</p> <p>E.g. slope of ramps, frangible plugs in gas bottles, seat belts.</p>
Countermeasure 5	<p>Separate in space or time the energy being released from the susceptible person or structure.</p> <p>E.g. minimum heights for powerlines, divided roads, blasting fuse.</p>
Countermeasure 6	<p>Interpose a material barrier to stop energy or to attenuate to acceptable levels.</p> <p>e.g. electrical insulation, personal protective equipment, machinery guards, crash barriers</p>
Countermeasure 7	<p>Modify the contact surface by rounding or softening to minimise damage when energy contacts susceptible body.</p> <p>E.g. round edges on furniture, building bumper bars, padded dashboards in cars.</p>
Countermeasure 8	<p>Strengthen the structure living or non-living that would otherwise be damaged by the energy exchange.</p> <p>E.g. earthquake and fire resistant buildings, weightlifting.</p>
Countermeasure 9	<p>To move rapidly to detect and evaluate damage and to counter its continuation and extension.</p> <p>E.g. sprinkler systems, emergency medical care, alarm systems of many types.</p>
Countermeasure 10	<p>Stabilisation of damage – long term rehabilitative and repair measure.</p> <p>e.g. clean-up procedures, spill disposal, physiotherapy</p>

Note

Generally the larger the amounts of energy involved in relation to the resistance of the structures at risk, the earlier in the countermeasure sequence must the strategy be selected. In many situations where preventative measures are being considered the application of more than one countermeasure may be appropriate.

Countermeasures may be 'passive' in that they require no action on the part of persons, or 'active' in the sense that they require some action or co-operation on the part of the persons, perhaps in association with a design related countermeasure (eg. seatbelts).

Passive' countermeasures tend to be more reliable in the long term. A short term solution to an immediate problem may require the adoption of an 'active' countermeasure eg. Toolbox sessions on replacing guards over a mechanical hazard, the long term or 'passive' countermeasure might be the fitting of interlocks to the guard so that power is off when the guard is off.

Further reading

Haddon, W 'On the escape of tigers an ecologic note – strategy options in reducing losses in energy damaged people and property'; Technology Review Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 72; 7, 44-53, 1970.

Training in J.S.A.

The author found an approx. 4 hour training program very beneficial in training teams to carry out effective J.S.A.

Course content included-

- Theory of J.S.A. backed up by a video illustrating how to carry out a J.S.A.
- Demonstration on carrying out a J.S.A.
- Guided practice in teams carrying out a J.S.A
- Discussion-What went well / What opportunities for improvement were presented
- Unguided practice in teams carrying out a J.S.A.
- Discussion-What went well / What opportunities for improvement were presented

Conclusion

The commonest mistake the author has seen with safety programs is the development of extensive safety procedures that the workers do not know about, care about or use. The procedures sit on the supervisor's bookcase or a computer program and are rarely referred to. The job safety analysis technique must be used to develop safe working

procedures and involvement of the workforce is crucial. If your safe working procedures are over 2 pages in length worry about whether they will ever be used. Use flow-charts, pictures and diagrams in your safe working procedures and base them on a very basic level of English. The K.I.S.S. principle applies. The organisation's Quality system would dictate the format of the Safe Working Procedure.

Do not think your safety efforts end when you have written a safe working procedure, procedural controls in isolation are notoriously ineffective.

Reference

The New South Wales Coal Association-The Supervisors Guide to Job Safety Analysis

Job Analysis Worksheet - Refer next page

JOB SAFETY ANALYSIS	Job Title:	JSA No.	New		Date:
		Page of	Revised		Date:
	Title of person who does job:	Supervisor:	Revision number		
Company:	Department:	Plant / Location	Analysed by:		
	Required or recommended Personal Protective equipment:		Reviewed by:		
			Approved by:		
Sequence of basic job steps	Potential Hazards	Recommended action or procedure			

Personal Damage Occurrence (“Accident “) Investigation

Introduction

Personal damage occurrences (“Accidents”) may be a source of learning and improvement for the safety management system if they are well investigated and appropriate corrective action implemented. The term accident is an emotionally laden term that infers blame, the term should be avoided.

Why do we investigate?

- Statutory requirement - Various safety legislation requires specified events is to be investigated
- Corporate policy - Various company policy requires investigations
- Aid to common law actions - Common law determinations require detailed evidence
- To maintain employee relations - The majority of employers will say our people are our greatest assets and investigation is part of caring for employees
- Most importantly - Change for the future, not BLAME for the past

Analysis Reference Tree-Trunk Method of Personal Damage Occurrence Investigation (Developed by Geoff McDonald)

I have used this technique for ages and believe it produces very high quality investigations. I have been trained in a few other investigation methods and have read widely on the topic, I still keep coming back to A.R.T.T. For a number of years I used to teach a 2 day course on this method and some excellent investigations resulted. The course also allowed people to challenge the more common beliefs about safety.

There are 2 mental shifts required to use A.R.T.T.

Mental shift 1

Look for essential factors not causes. An essential factor is one without which the final damage would not have occurred. Cause is an emotionally laded term that infers blame.

Mental shift 2

Essentially the personal damage occurrence is represented by a tree-trunk lying on the ground, at the end of the tree-trunk you have Person elements, Machine elements and Environment elements, along the length of the tree-trunk you have 6 time zones and the annular or growths rings of the tree represent a number of Ergonomic elements. Instead of looking for “causes” you look for “essential factors” (an essential factor is one without which the final personal damage could not have occurred). The idea is to look for essential factors where the various categories of the model above intersect.

The model is very easy to use and usually at least 30 essential factors will be found in each personal damage occurrence. This widens your options for control over some other methods of personal damage occurrence investigation.

Brisbane-based OHS consultants, Intersafe conduct reportedly excellent courses on the essential factors methodology and A.R.T.T.

Team approach

The type of investigation conducted depends on the seriousness or complexity of the incident, but it is best done as a team so all parties can contribute their skills and expertise to achieve the best result. Investigators are collectors of evidence and must base their conclusions on that evidence. Take the time to choose the right people to conduct the investigation.

The following people should be considered for the team:

- Safety representatives where they exist;
- Line manager/supervisor;
- Safety person from the worksite; and
- People with the relevant knowledge.
- One person who knows little about the Person, Machine and Environment

Investigation procedures need to be systematic. For any investigation the team should:

- Act as soon as possible after the incident;
- Visit the scene before physical evidence is disturbed;
- Not prejudge the situation;
- Not remove anything from the scene;
- Enquire if anyone else has moved anything; and
- Take photographs and/or sketches to assist in reconstructing the incident.

After the initial investigation is complete the team should:

- Identify, label and keep all evidence. For example, tools, defective equipment, fragments, chemical samples etc.;
- Interview witnesses separately;
- Check to see if there have been any “near misses” in similar circumstances;
- Note down all sources of information;
- Keep records to show that the investigation was conducted in a fair and impartial manner;
- Review all potentially useful information, including design specifications, operating logs, purchasing records, previous reports, procedures, equipment manuals, job safety analysis reports, records of training and instruction of the people involved and experiences of people in similar workplaces/industries; and
- Reconstruct the incident (while ensuring that another incident doesn’t occur) to assist in verifying facts, (Worksafe W.A.)

The best investigation approach I saw was where about 10 people per shift were trained to be part of investigation teams, this ensured a reasonable number of people were available at any one time taking account for normal absences.

General investigation tips

- Provide first-aid and medical care to injured persons and make the site safe
- Ensure Emergency Response Plans are activated
- Conduct an assessment to determine level of notification, investigation and reporting
- Report the event as required by local regulations and site procedures. Many organisations have a matrix outlining what types of incidents are reported to various company officers. Workplace Health & Safety Qld and the Police may have to be notified
- Secure the site until the organisations and D.W.H.S. investigation is complete.
- Notify next of kin
- Investigate and report essential factors.

Sources of information include original design, design specification, drawings, operating logs, purchasing records, previous reports, maintenance logs, procedures, verbal instructions, inspection and test records, alteration or change of design records, job safety analysis, records of previous training and job performance of the employees and supervisors involved. Never make assumptions, it is appropriate to develop a hypothesis and test it against available evidence.

- Have relevant persons sign a written statement
- Use open questions.
- Take heaps of photos from many angles
- It may be appropriate to develop a sketch or diagram
- Take samples, tag & preserve them
- Do not move evidence
- Identify the people involved and isolate and separate them. Interviews at both the scene and a quiet place will probably be required. It is essential to put those being interviewed at ease
- It may be necessary to recreate the incident with due regard to safety
- Report the findings
- Develop a plan for short- and long-term corrective action using Haddon's 10 countermeasures
- Disseminate key learning's to stakeholders
- Implement the corrective action plan
- Obtain sign-off by management
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the corrective action
- Make changes for continuous improvement
- Notify other sections of the organisation and your industry about the circumstances of the incident.

Implementation of recommendations

The investigation is not over until the recommendations have been implemented. Investigations often do not reach their potential because recommendations are not implemented.

Some of the factors to be considered when assessing the degree of controllability include-

- Technical feasibility
- Reliability
- Initial and ongoing cost
- Durability
- Extent of change required
- Impact on other activities

Hazard Control Model – Please refer to page 57

Meetings with the stakeholders using the above model to develop controls can be beneficial.

Conclusion

Personal damage occurrences (“Accidents”) may be a source of learning and improvement for the safety management system if they are well investigated and appropriate corrective action implemented. Investigation is best done in teams and appropriate training in investigation techniques is necessary. The Analysis Reference Tree Trunk method of investigation is the best method I have experienced. Some of the material in this paper is adapted from 2 accident investigation texts by Ted Ferry.

PERSONAL DAMAGE OCCURRENCE INVESTIGATION KIT (To be left in vehicle)

Note

This is what I regard as the ultimate kit; it will need to be tailored to your situation

- Digital camera with spare batteries
- Micro cassette recorder with spare batteries & tapes
- Tape measure (up to 50 metres)
- Specimen containers
- Number of sealable plastic bags
- Clipboard & writing paper
- Copies of accident report forms
- Stat. Dec. Forms witnessed by a J.P. may be necessary
- Disposable gloves
- High visibility barrier tape
- 4 cans Florescent spray pack paint (various colours)
- Dolphin torch & spare battery
- Stanley knife

- Marking pens
- Biro
- 2xPortable flashing yellow lights
- 6xWitches hats
- P.P.E. and high visibility, reflective vest
- First-aid kit
- Water
- Identification tags
- Compass
- Lock-out padlock may be needed
- Magnifying glass
- Paper towelling
- Danger & Out of Service tags
- Workers compensation claim paperwork
- Bag to carry stuff in

Communications skills

Introduction

An observation of mine is that despite having great OHS technical skills a number of OHS people are let down by their communications skills.

As I get older my critical reflection on practice tells me communications skills are just as important as OHS technical skills. There is not much point having a great message if you cannot get it across, if you have great technical skills but cannot get along with people you will not succeed.

Keep it succinct

The biggest problem with written communications is its length; generally I think you must try to get your routine messages across in a maximum of 2 pages. Busy people do not have time to write more and busy people do not have the time to read more. Concentrate on the MUST KNOWS. I am sure some safety people must be paid by the word, the result is long ponderous written communications. You can be certain that if it is too much like hard work to read it will not be read.

Professor T.J. Larkin's book *Communicating Change*

After receiving their communications employees should return to their jobs, change their behaviour and perform better. The change should be immediate and measurable. If the communication changes behaviour it is good communication, if it does not it is bad communication.

The goal of communication is improving performance, it should change the way employees do their job. If communication is to change behaviour it must be grounded in the interests and desires of the receiver. To be noticed communications must contain something that interests

the receiver and touches their values. Communication must be what interests the frontline employees not the bosses.

There are 3 very important principles for effective workforce communications-

1. Use the supervisor not management
2. If it is not face to face it is not communications
3. Focus on the local work area

Effective communications

Effective communication skills are fundamental to success in many aspects of life. Lots of jobs require strong communication skills and people with improved communication skills usually have better interpersonal relationships. **Communication is a two way process so improving communication involves both how we send and receive messages.**

Improving communications

- Try to see things from the point of view of others
- Offer words of encouragement and praise. Make others feel wanted, valued and appreciated.
- Learn to listen - Listen to the words being spoken, how they are spoken and non-verbal messages
- Beware of others emotions-
- Attempt to resolve conflict-Use your listening skills to understand both sides of an argument. Encourage people to talk to each other.
- Use humour - No one likes a grouch. Try to be friendly, upbeat and positive. If you smile and stay cheerful people are more likely to respond positively to you.
- Minimise stress - Try to remain calm and focused
- Only complain when necessary-People will not be drawn to you if you are always complaining. If you must complain focus on the issue not the person

Conclusion

Communications skills are a key requirement for OHS personnel; you are encouraged to learn about them.

Interpersonal skills

Introduction

An observation of mine is that despite having great OHS technical skills a number of OHS people are let down by their interpersonal skills.

As I get older my critical reflection on practice tells me interpersonal skills are just as important as OHS technical skills. There is not much point having a great message if you cannot get it across, if you have great technical skills but cannot get along with people you will not succeed.

7 ways to improve your interpersonal skills

1. Be happy
2. Make it obvious you care about others around you
3. Be an active listener-We have 2 ears and 1 mouth, they should be used in this ratio
4. Settle arguments
5. Make others laugh
6. Put yourself in their shoes
7. Do not complain

The following 3 techniques are invaluable-

Appropriate Self-Disclosure

I was introduced to and practised appropriate self-disclosure in a Psychology subject. You will find in a new relationship if you reveal a little bit of you (provided it is appropriate) the other party will reveal a little bit of them (provided it is appropriate), if you then reveal a little bit more of you (provided it is appropriate) they will reveal a little bit more of them (provided it is appropriate), and so the cycle goes on. This is very simple, incredibly effective and I use it all the time to build relationships. Of course if you really hang all your dirty washing out it will probably stuff up the process.

Reflective Listening

On a counselling subject I was introduced to and practised reflective listening. This is a very powerful technique to get to the core beliefs of those around you. Someone says something, you may say "If I understand you properly you think x", this gives the other party the opportunity to expand on their view or "Correct me if I am wrong but I think you are saying y".

The formula

There will be times others do things that annoy you, often they will have what they think are good reasons for what they are doing and they will have no idea they are annoying you. A good formula for these situations is to express your feelings as follows-

"When you A, I feel B, because C, and I would like you to do D, because E"

The only person who knows how you feel is you and most people will not know how you feel and many will be happy to adjust their behaviour accordingly. If this does not happen at least you have the basis for ongoing discussion.

I suggest all safety professionals read up on these techniques, it can make your life much easier!

When it comes to recruitment a good understanding of interpersonal skills can make the difference between not getting and getting that dream job.

People Skills by Bolton is a good reference, to get the best value out of the book you need to work through some of the exercises in the chapters.

The use of humour

Humour can be used effectively in formal and informal presentations and in general interaction in business and non-business life.

- Avoid humour that focuses on religion, politics, race, class, sex, age, physical appearance. To use any of these will run the risk of upsetting someone. I hear you asking what the hell else is there that I can use. The only safe butt of your humour is yourself!
- Introduce the humour in the general flow of your conversation.
- For a major presentation rehearse and listen to yourself on a tape recorder.
- Like many things in life humour follows the 7 P rule-Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Piss-Poor Performance.
- Try to use humour that relates to things others see as an annoyance.
- Quotations from famous people are often sources of humour, you can search these on the internet, Laurie Lawrence's web-site has a lot of quotations.
- Stretching the truth is forgivable.

If you are a communicator who uses effective humour, presents well and has a relevant message you will be invited back.

Set the example

One of the best ways of influencing others in safety is through you setting and living the safety example. You will gain respect. While a simple competency on the face of it setting the example is very important. No matter how good a line you talk, if you do not match it with your behaviour you will gain no respect. As a leader you are constantly watched by those you work with.

Conclusion

Great interpersonal skills should be part of the OHS person's tool-kit. There are a number of techniques you can use to enhance your interpersonal skills.

Tool-box meetings

Regular, short, sharp, tool-box meetings can be an excellent means of getting the safety message to employees and resolving safety problems. These talks are a visual commitment to safety, open lines of communication and help to meet legislative requirements for consultation.

A search of the internet will reveal many sources of packaged, prepared tool box talks, many free. Whilst these have their uses they cannot beat analysing your audience's needs and presenting something to meet their needs.

- The following advice is given for the conduct of these meetings-
- Find a quiet area free of distractions
- Use open-ended questions to promote involvement, positively reinforce responses to questions and comments
- Remember the 6P rule-Prior Preparation Prevents P—s Poor Performance
- Present topics that are immediately relevant to the needs of employees
- A bit of humour does not go astray
- Research your topic and generally be organised
- Audience interaction is always a good idea
- It helps if those presenting have had some training in personal presentation skills.
- Avoid lecture style presentations wherever possible
- When you cannot answer questions raised find out and provide feedback to the group
- Have a set agenda and publish minutes, including to relevant noticeboards. The minutes record discussion and outline agreed actions
- Topics can include a review of incidents, observations on practice, safety alerts, legislative updates and safety initiatives
- A guest speaker or relevant audio-visual presentation can add variety
- Tool-box meetings can be used to revise essential topics from inductions
- Having a set time every month has advantages
- The OHS professional can be a guest presenter and source of relevant material
- The meetings can be general safety training, an explanation of a new safety initiative, a review of existing work procedures or a general safety motivation tool
- Duration is generally 15-30 minutes
- Generally conducted by the supervisor helped by the OHS professional as necessary
- Thoughts are varied on whether the meeting should be strictly about safety, my view is that safety should be the dominant content
- Be wary of people “saving up” their safety concerns until the tool-box meeting. Encourage prompt reporting of all safety concerns
- Have an attendance sheet where participants sign off
- Thank people for their participation
- Lead with enthusiasm, passion and your own personal style
- State your objective for the meeting and after the meeting evaluate to ensure the objective has been achieved

- Involvement of senior people in the meeting can demonstrate commitment but may inhibit discussion
- Start and end on time
- Some organisations publish a 6 or 12 month schedule of tool box talks and provide training resource material to supervisors. Tool box talks may also be held prior to undertaking high risk or difficult tasks or when problems are noticed. Some organisations have a quick tool box meeting at the beginning of every shift to discuss the safety implications of the work to be done on that shift
- You must create a no-fear, no-blame environment where people are prepared to honestly speak their mind without fear of recrimination
- Define responsibilities of the parties
- Establish ground rules
- Manage disruptive behaviour
- Summarise key points at the end of the meeting
- Celebrate success and do not take yourself too seriously

Teambuilding in OHS

Introduction

My motto is-When Initiating Change, Remember, People Support What They Create. Working in teams is an essential part of most management functions. In the OHS area OHS people may work as part of a broader H.R. team, lead a team of other OHS personnel, lead safety project teams and coach / mentor a broad range of personnel. Skills in teambuilding are essential for OHS people.

Teams

Teams are small groups of people with complementary skills who work together as a unit to achieve a common purpose for which they hold themselves collectively accountable.

Effective teams

- Have clear visions, missions, objectives, roles, rules & goals
- Open to new ideas
- Build trust internal and external to the team

Creating high performing teams

- Create an expectation of high performance
- Be direct and uncomplicated
- Carefully select team members
- Never move slowly on critical personal issues
- Constantly upgrade skills
- Build trust through appropriate self-disclosure
- Consider “What’s in it for me” from the perspective of the other person

- Create short-term wins
- Celebrate success
- Have fun
- Be a bit crazy when appropriate (calculated risk-taking is good!)
- Do what gives you the biggest bang for your buck

Safety project teams

I have found safety project teams using change management and project management methodologies are a great way to drive significant safety change. Having a well-developed project plan and someone with significant management horsepower on the team will always help. Giving the team a budget and responsibility to introduce change is often appropriate.

Teambuilding workshop

With one organisation I facilitated a teambuilding workshop with a particular focus on newly appointed OHS personnel. The workshop aimed to define and clarify the roles of the various parties in the OHS mix. Participants were the Department Manager, the H.R. Manager the OHS people reported to and existing and new members of the OHS team.

Objective of the workshop

To build a highly effective safety team that will lead the organisation to safety excellence.

Process

1. Existing team members gave a 10-15 minute presentation on-
 - a. What they do
 - b. How they do it
 - c. What the challenges are
 - d. What they would like to do if they had the resources
 - e. What assistance they want from the team leader to help them perform at a high level
2. New team members discussed the challenges they saw integrating into the safety
3. There was some discussion from senior personnel of their expectations of safety team members
4. Discussion on “Where to from here?”-What additional assistance is needed to participants in their journey to build a highly effective team?

Results

All participants reported that the workshop assisted to clarify their role in the team. We all got to know and understand each other better.

Conclusion

Teambuilding is an important part of the OHS person's role. You are advised to read up on the topic.

Managing Your OHS Career

Getting a good OHS job is highly competitive, you need to have an excellent resume and know how to manage job interviews well. I get beer money from helping people prepare their resumes, it never ceases to amaze me how poor the old resumes they present are. I always advise people to do a lot of self-analysis prior to coming to see me to get help in preparing their resume. Job interviews can be very difficult and you need to put in a lot of preparation.

Even though I do it myself I urge caution with professional resume writers. Some are excellent wordsmiths and you can end up with something that, on the surface, looks incredibly smooth but has little factual basis. My advice is to Google resumes and otherwise read up on it, do the required self-analysis, prepare a draft resume and only then go to a resume writer to have it tidied up.

Resume template

Before preparing your resume & selection criteria

If there is a contact person nominated (Usually the contact person is someone in H.R. or the positions boss) it always helps to tailor your application to their wants if you ring & ask a few questions eg.-

1. Is there someone acting in the role? Particularly with government jobs you will know you will have to try very hard to beat whoever it is.
2. What does the Safety Management System consist of? Or some questions relevant to your specialty. The H.R. person will probably not know and if the boss gives you a waffle response you will know things are not highly developed
3. What are the main responsibilities of the position? Sometimes this is in the job ad. Try to get a copy of the position description but realise sometimes they will only give this to the people they interview.
4. What are the main priorities for the position for the first 6 months? This tends to cut through all the crap they have on paper and tell you what they really think is important
5. What training & development is available in the role?
6. Are there any unfinished projects left over from the previous person? Once again, cuts through the crap

In tailoring your application to the employer it is an idea to see what the company web site says about safety and training or your speciality. Most sites have nothing, some may have something very basic such as a copy of the safety policy but some, such as BHP, will have very detailed information that will give clues as to what they are after in their safety people. In a similar way environment, human resources, quality, leadership and some other technical topics may get a mention on the web site.

Most people are naturally shy and reticent about their achievements; this will get you nowhere if you are trying to get a job.

The first thing you have to do is identify your skills relevant to the type of employment you desire. Those skills must be conveyed to potential employers, do not be aggressive or arrogant; equally do not be timid and reticent. Give specific numbers and figures for your achievements. Show results.

Note

Define what you want in your next career move and what you value in a job. Define jobs and industries that interest you

Same job, same industry

New job, same industry

Same job, new industry

New job, new industry

Some recruitment companies use word recognition software and you should look for the key words in the responsibilities of the position, what you have to do and what they are looking for. If you do not respond with the key words in your application your response will not be selected.

The good books say you should tailor your resume to each role you apply for. Another approach is to have a broad, all-encompassing resume and be really specific in your response to the selection criteria.

Some people have a number of standard resumes e.g.

- Senior in their speciality
- Senior in their speciality with project management and / or training responsibilities
- Mid-level in their speciality
- Mid-level in their speciality with training responsibilities
- Junior in their speciality

Brief inserts on things like leadership / quality management / environment / human resources etc. if they see this is part of the job.

The majority of people are very relaxed about the preparation of a resume which is potentially one of the most important documents in your life. Developing a good one requires some effort and self-analysis but putting in the effort may just give you the edge you are looking for. The professional resume writers can give you the big words and flowery phrases but the self-analysis is the key. I urge caution with some professional resume writers, there is such a thing as appearing too smooth!

As a starting point I would advise you get together with a couple of people you trust, maybe over a coffee or a beer, and do a self-analysis about the issues in the following resume template. If you have spent under an hour on this you probably have not put in enough effort.

I can help you with the self-analysis but if you decide to come to me to help write your resume the more you can give me the better. You want to allocate at least an hour for your discussions with me.

Resume - Aim is to make pig poo look like strawberry jam

Hint - A work relevant graphic helps you stand out from the crowd

Major tip

Recruitment & selection uses “**Past behaviour predicts future behaviour**” The idea is to give plenty of examples of where in the past you have **successfully done the sort of things that you will be required to do in the new job**. Say what you did, how you did it and what the results were.

Full name (“Failure is not an option”) - Hint-A work relevant motto helps to make you stand out from the crowd

Personal / Contact Details

Name, address including post code, date of birth, place of birth, home number, work number (If appropriate), mobile number, e-mail address, languages spoken at home (If applicable), passport details (Where applicable)

Career objective-Do not be too specific as you may miss out on a job that does not fit the bill exactly. You may wish to include short & long term objectives.

Professional profile

Background / Overview of employment and a couple of really significant achievements you are proud of, quantify achievements

Leadership / Management style if appropriate

Details of jobs and achievements - if have gaps in employment listing years and not months and years helps to hide it.

List all the jobs you have had in the last 10 years describing in some detail what you did and very importantly what your achievements were. If you are just starting out in employment list your achievements from school, part-time work (Amazing how good a job at McDonalds looks if you work on it), volunteer work, other organisations you are associated with.

HOW DO I DIFFERENTIATE MYSELF FROM THE MANY OTHERS APPLYING FOR THIS JOB????????????

Core professional strengths / Competency summary-Could be some of the following plus others

- School /OP / university attended and what level, results, only mention if good
- Technical skills
- Current certificates-Where & when obtained e.g. Blue card for working with children
- Workplace health & safety, inductions, White card for construction work, First-aid certificate
- Leadership-The number one job of a leader is to transmit and embed high value standards
- Achieving excellence
- Working independently
- Teamwork
- **Communication**
- **Interpersonal skills--If mention nothing else always mention these 2**
- Computer skills-Mainly Word &Excel, maybe Access & Power-Point-Basic, Intermediate, Advanced
- Commitment to personal training & development, always say you are a life-long learner, the H.R. people will lap that up
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Commitment to equity and anti-discrimination
- Special skills

Personal attributes-Could be some of the following plus others

- Honest
- Persistent
- Analytical
- Thorough
- Determined
- Loyal
- Personable
- Always positive

Do not overdo it or they will think you are playing with yourself

Qualifications / Certificates & licences, if applicable

Publications, if applicable

Conference presentations

Awards / Honours

Professional memberships, if applicable

Hobbies / Interests/Affiliations/Particular work relevant awards you have attained in your private life, (Do not forget positions of authority in sporting clubs, Scouts, Guides, Rotary, Lions etc.), Good opportunity to showcase your leadership potential

Referees -Preferably previous Supervisors / Managers (Never rely on a referee; always have them checked out beforehand)

Summary / What you bring to the role

If you think appropriate you could make a concise statement on why you should get the job.

Job interviews-Guide for applicants

Chapter 7, Interviewing Principles and Practices by Stewart Cash has some good tips

Introduction

This paper mainly represents critical reflection on the author's experience being interviewed and interviewing others. Formal learning in broad H.R.M. and interviewing techniques has assisted.

Major tip

Recruitment & selection uses “**Past behaviour predicts future behaviour**” The idea is to give plenty of examples of where in the past you have **successfully done the sort of things that you will be required to do in the new job**. Say what you did, how you did it and what the results were.

The interview

A lot of interviewers sit there dead-pan and uncommunicative, often this is because they are new to the process and very uptight about it, do not let this throw you off, just relax and be yourself.

An important tip for interviews is to project an image that you are highly interested in the job and that you are generally high energy in your approach.

The following questions are often asked in interviews in the private sector.

“What was it about the job ad that attracted you to apply?” Pretty hard to respond if you have thrown the ad away or do not have an electronic copy. Sometimes the person who wrote the job ad will be the person asking the question so a bit of stroking is appropriate. You can talk about things like a good match for your skills, opportunity to learn more about X, an industry you have experience in, an opportunity to apply solid skills learnt in another industry to a new industry, opportunity to bring skills learnt in a high performing company to the new company, opportunity for a bit of travel if that is your thing, opportunity for lots of people interaction and so on.

“What do you know about our company?” If you have not looked up the company web-site if they have one or otherwise researched the company you are going to look like a bit of dill at this point in time. Always refresh your memory of company details just before going to interview.

“Why have you applied for this position? / What interests you about this position?” You might be tempted to say you need a job to pay the bills but this may not necessarily be the best response. You should have got as much information about the job as you could. I would talk about having similar experience in a similar job in a similar industry or how experience in similar roles would add value to the position with them. You could also talk about the new things you are keen to learn. Some organisations are going through change processes and you could mention this is an exciting process for you or how you found working at Y with similar change processes very interesting and learnt a lot. Probably does not hurt to mention the job is close to home if appropriate.

“Where do you want to be in 5 years’ time?” Be careful with this one. You want to demonstrate you are keen to learn, am ambitious and want to progress in your chosen field but if you are over ambitious to the extent that your ambitions are not achievable with that employer and the employer knows you are not a really long-term prospect you may not get the job.

“Tell me about your ideal job” Much the same caution as the question above

“What makes for an ideal supervisor for you?” The most dangerous question of the lot! Impossible to predict as the personality of your potential supervisor can vary so much. I always say general things like sets high standards for themselves and me, is thorough, has good communications skills, has good interpersonal skills and a sense of humour is a bonus. Getting into the specifics too much may reveal a clash of personalities.

“Tell me about yourself”.

“Why are you the best person for this job?” / “Why should we give you this job?”

“What are your strengths?”

“What are your weaknesses?” Hint, mention a relatively minor weakness and say you have realised it is a weakness and say what you are doing to overcome the weakness.

“How would your friends describe you?” Conservative if not obvious another approach is required, think about what is a good answer from the employer’s perspective.

“How would your boss describe you?” Conservative if not obvious another approach required. Think about what is a good answer from the employer’s perspective.

“Describe what good communications means to you”

“What motivates you?”

“Why did you choose to start working in x field?”

“What is your most significant achievement in x field?”

“Please give me an example of where you have gone the extra mile for a customer”

“Please give me an example of how you went about x”

“How did you contribute to accomplishing a team goal?”

“Describe how you found it difficult to build an effective working relationship with a customer / colleague?”

“Tell me what you have done to help a peer / team member to understand what knowledge / skills area to strengthen?”

“Tell us about a time when you faced conflicting priorities?”

“Describe the most difficult conflict you have been involved in or the toughest group you have had to work with?”

Government jobs usually stick to questions based on the selection criteria. Generally I would go to the interview with 2 examples of how I had successfully implemented the things in each of the selection criteria.

Towards the end of the interview ask the time frame for making a decision and appointment.

Ask when feedback from the interview will be available. Always ask for feedback, you will often not agree with it but it gives you an idea of how others perceive you.

Prior to an important job interview you should have a mock interview with friends.

It is a good idea to think about what some of the questions you are likely to be asked are and have a prepared answer in your head.

Be prepared for many interviews before you get a job nowadays, particularly if you are a mature or inexperienced applicant.

Towards the end of the interview you may be asked if you have any questions, have some prepared questions and do not take this lightly as it is an important part of the interview.

Some examples follow-

EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONS

1. What are the key responsibilities of the position? (Position description if not already received).
2. What are the main priorities for the position in the first 6 months?
3. What are the supervisor’s expectations of the incumbent?

4. What are the main impediments to success the role?
5. What learning and development would occur for the incumbent?
6. What are the 3 main attributes you are seeking in X workers?
7. If you feel the climate is right you could ask why the previous person left.
8. Can you tell me about a typical week for the person in this position?

Always a good idea to ring the contact person about the job beforehand, this may help you tailor your application to the requirements of the job.

Arrive in plenty of time to get yourself organised.

Leave home in time to allow for a flat tyre or the bus being late.

Always make an effort to appear clean & smart. Generally try to dress at a level slightly higher than the level you think the interviewers will be dressed at. Being a Queenslander and used to a casual lifestyle and dress I tend not to wear a tie. One recruitment consultant commented on this at interview and told me to ensure I wore a tie for the interview with the client. Coat & tie essential for interviews South of Tweed Heads. One interviewer commented adversely on my R.S.L. badge on my coat, stuff them! I wear a Wallabies tie, surprising how often this gets a positive response from interviewers.

You will find a number of recruitment consultants and other interviewers will have an exaggerated sense of their own importance and ability.

If you smoke lay off the fags at least 30 minutes before the interview and / or use a breath freshener. If it is a no smoking site they may wonder how you will survive all day without a smoke.

It is a really good idea not to turn up for interview drunk (saw it happen once) or otherwise smelling of grog. Some interviewers, particularly women, have an acute sense of smell.

Speak professionally, do not swear or use slang.

Listen carefully to the questions being asked and make sure your replies do not go off on tangents.

If possible try to bring along a number of good examples of your previous work.

After the interview sit down and try to identify what went well and what opportunities for improvement were presented. You may find it useful to write this down and review it prior to the next interview.

There are rare occasions when you turn up for interview and the interviewer has forgotten about the interview and is busy doing something else.

Always ask for confirmation of verbal arrangements with a letter or e-mail.

There will be times the interview does not “click” as far as communications and interpersonal issues go, there could be lots of reasons for this that have nothing to do with your abilities.

Ring the interviewer after the interview, thank them for the interview and re-confirm your interest in the position.

Do not be surprised if the job advertisement, recruitment consultant and employer make the job out to be better than it really is, there is a vested interest in attracting as many people as possible to apply. The suggested question about what are the priorities for the job for the first 6 months helps to get a handle on what the job is really about and what the employer is thinking is required.

Get specific instructions on how to find the place where the interview will be conducted, advice on parking may be appropriate.

Try to find out the names and positions of those who will interview you, helps you to pitch your responses at the right level.

A security blanket for many employers is experience in their industry. If you do not have experience in their industry put a bit of work showing how experience in your industry is relevant to theirs. A small number of employers will realise that no experience in their industry will bring a new set of eyes and approach to their problems.

A lot of organisations see workplace health & safety as very important these days. A few examples of how you have gone the extra mile in safety will not go astray.

Getting lots of knock-backs at job interviews can be very demoralising, you have to stay positive, learn from your experiences and try to do better next time.

There will be times when friends and relations of the interviewers get the job even though you are much better qualified; there is nothing you can do about that.

It is a fallacy that the best person for the job will always get the job, do not be too disappointed if you do not land that job, it is not necessarily a reflection on your ability. A senior Human Resources Manager in the Qld. Government once said to me “We have very sophisticated recruitment & selection procedures, I cannot figure out how we end up with so many idiots working for us”

Some employers make jobs out to be much better than they really are, be aware of this. Try to talk to some current or ex-employees. Check out the organisations web-site if they have one before going to interview.

The person who will make or break a job for you will be your supervisor. He or she will probably be an interviewer, make sure you are happy with their communications and interpersonal skills.

A lot of employers realise that an interview, in isolation, may not give a good result and will ask you for a demonstration of your skills-A welder may have to do a weld test, a safety

officer may have to do a safety inspection, a training officer may have to present a small training session, a word processing person may have to demonstrate their skills on a computer and so on.

Some employers will be disorganised at interview, you have to ask yourself if this is a reflection of how they generally do business. You should arrive at the interview all keen and prepared, do not be surprised if some employers are not keen or prepared. When you put in all the hard work you have to do to be prepared for an interview it will be a real downer if the employer is not equally prepared.

I had one interview when it was indicated I would have to do something I thought totally inappropriate for people in my occupation to do. For me saying I was not prepared to do that and walking away from the job was the right decision.

Employers will be impressed by enthusiasm, you cannot possibly know everything they will want you to know but if you demonstrate a keenness to learn that is a lot of the battle.

With large organisations who have many questions the interviewers will be so busy writing down your answers that there is little communications happening. This is very off-putting but gives you a chance to demonstrate your interpersonal skills.

Sometimes when you get feedback you will wonder why interviewers came to a particular conclusion, often it is because they did not ask the right questions. Sometimes interviewers ask broad general questions expecting specific responses; the fact that you cannot read their minds is not your fault. Good employment interviewing requires detailed preparation by the interviewers.

Whilst it has never been true for me in interviews I have conducted, some people say the decision to hire or reject depends to a large extent on the impression you make in the first 5 minutes of the interview, so come along prepared for this.

Sometimes you will walk away from an interview thinking that went great and later you get a call that you missed out, sometimes you will walk away from an interview thinking that was lousy and later you get the job. Impossible to predict until you get the call, so do not be despondent after the interview.

Sometimes you will be asked questions that appear really dumb to you; the important thing is they are important in the potential employer's mind.

You should read up on resumes and interviews, lots of stuff on the internet, alternately get a few books out of the library. Seek.com.au has some good advice for job seekers,

You should be highly prepared for your interview, the other blokes you are competing with will be.

Do not rubbish former employers.

Relax and smile, try to project an image as a dedicated, high energy professional.

Like many things in life getting a job follows the 7 P rule (Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance)

Despite E.E.O. and anti-discrimination legislation there will be jobs that are hard to get if you are female and if you are male. Discrimination because of age, too young or too old is real. Whilst I am hopeful it is decreasing I still suspect some employers will discriminate against indigenous people.

While it is not advertised for E.E.O. and anti-discrimination reasons there may be hidden criteria for jobs in particular industries or companies. It pays to ask a few questions before you go to the effort of putting in an application.

Once you have the interview it is always a good idea to ring and thank them for the interview, confirms your interest in the job, allows clarification of things unsure about and gives you a chance to expand on things you forgot to say at the interview.

A good general rule in life and particularly with job interviews is to avoid discussion on sex, religion and politics. If you do not know your audience discussion on these topics can be disastrous. Sometimes people will say something controversial to see how you react.

It is good to project an image that you embrace change but you do not want to come across as a stirrer if you are not sure that driving change is what the employer wants in the position.

When I was a young bloke my Father said to me "If you are going to be a bulldust artist you have to have an exceptional memory and be very good at it, otherwise you will get found out." Lying is not a good idea and while I have never done this myself, some people say there is not much harm in taking something that was relatively small and making it appear much bigger. Make no bones about it, job interviews are about impression management.

A commitment to personal training and development will impress some employers for some jobs. You need to be able to talk about what you have done to improve your skills and what further training you think is appropriate.

I know it sounds trite but saying you are looking for a job that gives you a chance to make a difference is appropriate for some jobs.

For male interviewees beware of the female interviewers with the low cut dress, this could be a test!

Be wary of the interviewers who appear over-friendly or appear to be flirting with you, they are probably messing with you to see how you react.

It does not hurt to ring a week after the applications close or a week and a half after the job was advertised to enquire about where the process is at. This confirms that your application was received and puts your application and the fact you are definitely interested uppermost in the reviewers mind. Do not ring so often after that, that you are a nuisance.

Recruitment consultants are paid by the employer and whilst they may express the view they are trying to look after you, the employing client is the priority. You can waste a lot of time through recruitment consultants inviting you to interview. I always ask for a telephone interview first before I commit to a face to face interview, if the telephone interview reveals a mutual basis for moving forward, I will go in and meet them.

Remember that the interview is as much about you interviewing them, as them interviewing you. They have to be happy with a decision to employ you, equally you have to be happy with them as an employer.

HANG IN THERE-THAT GOOD JOB WILL COME

Recruitment Consultants-The OHS Persons Friend or Foe?

Please note that in writing this I mean no disrespect to the many recruitment consultants who I am sure try very hard.

I am reasonably happy with my lot in life but still apply for OHS roles that appear interesting. I have varied and senior OHS experience in field, corporate, consultant and project roles in a variety of industries.

One of the things I notice is that experience in their industry is a security blanket for many employers. I would argue this may also bring a closed mind to avenues for improving safety that are used in other industries and an acceptance of the status quo. Sometimes in the effort of disguising the employer their industry is not mentioned in job advertisements. This makes it difficult for applicants to target particular industries.

Many recruitment consultants I have dealt with were quite young, had a poor understanding of OHS and a poor understanding of the world of work. They also get sucked in by what the employers tell them about how great a particular job is. A recruitment consultant sent me off to an interview with an employer and the feedback was that I appeared to show little enthusiasm for the role. This was true because the hype the recruitment consultant gave me about the job was not confirmed by my questions of the employer.

There is no doubt that between the employer and the recruitment consultant some roles are dressed up to appear to be much better than they really are. Recruitment consultants sometimes leave vital things the employer is looking for off the job advertisement.

I was interviewed by one recruitment consultant and had reservations, which I expressed, about whether I was the right fit for the job. The recruitment consultant was quite keen and organised for me to fly to Sydney for an interview with the employer. My reservations were reinforced by the employer. This said to me that the recruitment consultant did not read the brief from the employer closely enough.

A small number of recruitment consultants only ask you for your resume when you apply. I believe having the opportunity to respond to selection criteria as well, helps to target the process.

Recruitment consultants want to meet you prior to putting your name forward to the employer, I am sure there are good reasons for this. From the applicants perspective you can waste a lot of time on interviews with recruitment consultants. Most recruitment consultants are in the C.B.D. and it can be a time consuming and expensive process to get to them. Nowadays I ask for a detailed telephone interview first so I can assess whether it is worth meeting them. If I got with the times and installed Skype my life would be easier.

I have an impression some recruitments go on a fishing expedition and want to interview applicants some of whom they should have realised do not fit the employers specification.

A very small number of recruitment consultants specify that applicants must be a professional member of S.I.A. In some cases they do not recognise that other OHS professional bodies exist. My understanding is that S.I.A. has about 4,000 members of the approx. 25,000 practising OHS in Australia. There are a number of highly competent OHS people who are not members of an OHS professional body for a number of good reasons and tying to tie future employment to membership appears discriminatory. I do not accept the proffered argument that advanced standing in an OHS professional body is an indicator of competence.

I have put a lot of work into my resume and response to selection criteria and it is frustrating to have to respond to questions that indicate that not even a cursory look has been taken at what I sent in.

I have heard a number of OHS personnel express dissatisfaction in dealing with recruitment consultants. One bloke I know said recruitment consultants are basically just sales people. I never looked at it that way but now I think about it I think the argument has some validity.

Some recruitment consultants go to great lengths to have you believe they are acting in your best interests to get you the perfect job, initially such pronouncements gave me a warm feeling. Nowadays I take the view that the employer is paying the bill and that is where the recruitment consultants interest lie.

Some recruitment consultants convince employers of the need for psychological assessment and perform and charge the employer for them. We need to realise not all psychological test instruments are valid and reliable. From an applicant's point of view it is annoying to be told you have to sit an assessment when you have not been forewarned and allocated the necessary time.

I suspect the reality is that some employers do not want highly skilled OHS personnel who will question the status quo. Sometimes independent thinkers are not welcomed.

I have heard some employers say getting the right employees is too important to leave to a third party.

The cynic in me says obtaining a position is really a bit of a game and the best person does not necessarily get the job.

A senior H.R. Manager in a major organisation commented to me that we have very sophisticated recruitment and selection procedures, I just cannot figure out how we end up with so many dickheads working for us.

OTHER GENERAL STUFF

Professional associations

My objective is to provide guidance to professional organisations and their members with the view of ensuring effective professional organisations that are-

- Leading and monitoring professional principles, process and practice and promoting a body of knowledge specific to the profession.
- Encouraging and Prioritising research and development to advance professional knowledge and disseminating this knowledge to the stakeholders.
- Influential with government, business, unions and other key stakeholders
- Credible and increasing the profession's visibility and reputation
- Identifying and satisfying member needs
- Challenging the status quo
- Providing excellent learning for members
- Providing a pleasant and enjoyable social outlet for members
- Facilitating networking of members and enabling communication and connection
- Minimising disputes with members
- Being loyal to members and professional ideals
- Treating all interactions with dignity, respect and compassion
- Having an appropriate sense of humour

Recommendations for ensuring an effective professional organisation

It has been suggested that the following must be in place AND seen to be in place to have an effective organisation-

1. Dynamic, visible, accessible, caring leadership
2. Open, honest, focused and succinct communication
3. Transparent governance

If you do not have the above, you will have trust issues and when trust goes out the door you are in big trouble.

A major reason why professional organisations exist is to advocate for the profession. Liaising with and seeking to influence business, government, unions and other stakeholders is essential.

Professional organisations must have huge but realistic goals. One of the goals of an OHS professional organisation should be the minimisation of Class 1 personal damage occurrences

(Personal damage occurrences are more commonly referred to by the emotive and divisive term “accidents”) Class 1 personal damage is that which permanently alters the future of the individual. Another goal of an OHS professional association should be to encourage government to establish a nation-wide, consistent and practical Class 1 personal damage occurrence data system that is readily able to be accessed and interpreted. Whatever goals are decided upon there must be a determined effort to achieve those goals.

Professional associations must encourage and support research into the profession.

It appears the development of a body of knowledge specific to the profession is not generally facilitated well in some professions. Learning needs analysis and consultation with all the stakeholders is necessary. Development of the body of knowledge must be guided by both theory and practice. For an OHS professional organisation, for example, the body of knowledge must be informed by the permanently life altering personal damage occurrence phenomenon. A body of knowledge will be useful to guide universities and other education providers in developing learning programs really targeted at the profession’s needs.

Have an appropriate balance between strategic and operational approaches.

It is essential to treat everyone you interact with in a caring, compassionate and respectful manner even if you disagree strongly with them. To not do so will build antagonism, weaken trust and in a litigious society will land you in a lot of trouble. When people express opinions contrary to yours it is wisest to explain your point of view rather than leave the other person in limbo. Internal and external interactions of all parties must reflect the fore-going.

Management must be held accountable to members and their performance monitored. They must be conscious of the need to avoid the psychological process of group-think.

Professional organisations must monitor the latest thinking in their country and overseas to ensure they are aware of latest professional principles, process and practice.

Beware of displacement activities, a displacement activity is something we do, something we put a lot of energy into, but when we examine it closely there is no valid reason to do it. Some professions have many displacement activities.

Standards and / or requirements to maintain membership of the professional body may be appropriate.

It could be argued that those in management positions in professional associations are there primarily for their management skills not their technical skills. Notwithstanding this they will be seen as much more credible if they have technical skills aligned to the profession they represent.

Grading of levels of professional membership will be advantageous, reaching the highest levels must be seen as a significant achievement and assessment procedures must be rigorous and involve significant academic achievement, practical experience in senior, influential, positions and submission of a significant, work based reflective journal. There will be many

effective hands on members in organisations that may not have high academic qualifications, value their contribution through appropriate recognition mechanisms.

Credibility in organisations and their leaders is the most important quality people are looking for; credibility is the foundation of leadership. There is no place for big egos and self interest in leadership.

Trade shows at conferences can be a useful and satisfying adjunct. Political speakers at conferences need balance, the organisation needs to be and be seen to be apolitical. There is a fine line between consultants presenting the latest technical information and their marketing their products and services, procedures.

From an animal lover

Whilst living in Dysart, Central Qld. in a mining job, down in Brisbane on business, picked up a Smithfield blue heeler pup off the train from a cattle station at St George, made a mess in my hotel room overnight. I ran over him when he got between the wheels of my tandem trailer behind the F100.

Got Sally, red cattle dog, from the pound in Mackay about 2 years, must have had a bad experience as she would not go on the back of a Ute, lovely affectionate dog, died about 12

Kim, blue and black cattle dog, got as a pup, was a cattle dog when we had the cattle at the Prickle Farm, I let my neighbours run their horses on the Prickle Farm, Kim bit a horse on the hindquarters, next thing I see is Kim flying through the air after a horse kicked her, woke to a strange noise about 4am one morning, went outside and here was Kim having her litter of pups outside the bedroom window, died about 12

Bruiser, blue with a bit of red cattle dog, my oldest son named her Bruiser because of the patch over her eye, in recent times as I have been doing work on the computer Bruiser was content to sit by my side and have the occasional pat and talk. Bruiser died about 3 months ago, I think Bruiser was 13.

Dogs are not dumb! In the days when I used to take my current red cattle dog Rusty in the car with me she used to get off her chair and stand by the back door of the car when she saw me pick up the car keys.

Have not been taking her for the last couple of weeks and she has figured out me saying "Rusty stays" means she is not coming.

She has resigned herself to the fact that she is not going to go in the car and no longer bothers to get off her chair when she sees me pick up the car keys, I no longer need to tell her she is not coming.

Many years ago friends in Rockhampton had an ex-polo horse, Copper, big, strong, intelligent bastard, a real man's horse, I used to ride him hard and he loved it. When on the farm at Brookstead as a kid the old man had a horse, Bigger, that would only let the old man

ride him. My uncle Bob and the old man got on the grog one day and Bob decided he was going to ride Bigger, got unloaded several times before he stopped trying, like the old man Bob was an old bushie and a good horseman.

Never been a cat person. When I was in one job my female offsider, had 30 cats, can you imagine, 30 of the little mongrels! She was raving on about her cats one day and asked me if I liked cats, I said they were great in a curry. She was not amused and I got in a fair bit of trouble.

George's philosophy

Cattle dogs and horses have been the source of much satisfaction and fun for me. I have also learnt from them. They have been much more loyal than some of my so-called friends that have 2 legs. Most horses I have been associated with and cattle dogs I have had have been smarter than a lot of people I know!

You can have an intelligent conversation with an Australian stock horse and a cattle dog; sometimes people should be more like cattle dogs & horses!

Reflective journal

My parents were separated when I was 4 and my Father worked on oil & gas pipeline construction jobs all over Australia, consequently I did not see much of him as a kid. When he died, his Brother Bob, my Uncle, gave the obituary at the funeral and I found out a lot of things about the old man I did not know. I thought at the time it was a shame I knew so little about the old man. Subsequently my cousin Joe has done an excellent job on the family history and there is a lot of information I did not know about the old man on this. My Uncle Gordon was an Australian pilot seconded to the R.A.F. in World War 2 and flew bombing missions over Germany; he kept a diary of this.

When I did my Bachelor of Education (Adult & Workplace Education) we had to do a reflective journal of our placements in industry doing practical training work. The requirement was to describe what we did and comment on what went well and what opportunities for improvement were presented (i.e. the stuff ups) and comment how we would do better next time. It was said reflective journals were an excellent way for adults to learn.

When I completed my assessment to become a Chartered Fellow of the Safety Institute of Australia part of the process was to write a reflective journal of my work experience for 3 months.

I do some work for an organisation that conducts adventure-based lifestyle training for "at risk" youth. The young people have to do a reflective journal on their experiences, amazing what insights are often found in some troubled minds.

I have been maintaining a personal reflective journal for the last 10 years, started out trying to remember the first 40 years of my life and jotted it down, every now and again I recall

something extra about this and bung it in. From then on I have just commented on the things that have happened.

When I die my wife and boys will have a record of my life and some comment on theirs.

As well as a personal reflective journal I believe it pays to maintain a work reflective journal. The advantages of this include-

Reflecting on your work experiences and writing this down is a good way to learn (What went well and what opportunities for improvement were presented). The discipline of writing things down helps to clarify things in your mind.

Having a record of your experience and achievements is good for writing your resume, coming up with behavioural examples of achievements at job interviews and pay rise discussions with your boss.

Should you have to go to court or otherwise give a presentation on safety matters the reflective journal will serve as a good record.

I find the reflective approach considering what went well and what opportunities for improvement were presented is a very handy approach with many safety matters. For example I use it at the end of safety projects and safety learning.

Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace Book Review

Building Effective Relationships in Your Organisation- D& M Reina

Trust

One thing that runs through the leadership literature is the vital importance of trust. I have worked for a few people I did not trust and had a few occasions when people have acted like they did not trust me. Lack of trust ruins relationships and erodes effective management of organisations. I recently came across the text *Trust And Betrayal In The Workplace-Building Effective Relationships in Your Organisation*. It is a 250 page book, easy to read, practical and contains some excellent advice for OHS personnel. There is good discussion early up about the nature of trust and betrayal.

Trust model

The authors present a 3 part trust model

1. Contractual trust-Manage expectations, establish boundaries, delegate appropriately, encourage mutually serving intentions, keep agreements, and be consistent.
2. Communication trust-Share information, tell the truth, admit mistakes, give and receive constructive feedback, maintain confidentiality, speak with good purpose.
3. Competence trust-Acknowledge peoples skills and abilities, allow people to make decisions.

Advice is given on how to practically introduce the above types of trust.

Rebuilding and sustaining trust

One part of the book talks about how rebuild and sustain trust once it has broken down.

Some of the ways betrayals may occur include-disclosing corporate secrets, sabotaging corporate data, restructuring resulting in layoffs, delegating without giving authority, gossiping and backbiting, accepting credit for others work, repeatedly arriving late for work, not keeping agreements.

Healing betrayal

The authors talk about steps for healing betrayal

- Observe and acknowledge what has happened
- Allow feelings to surface
- Get support
- Reframe the experience
- Take responsibility
- Forgive yourself and others
- Let go and move on

There is discussion on how to practically implement the above.

Conclusion

Trust is vital in all relationships. This book offers easy to understand, practical advice on building and sustaining trust. It is not often that I come across a book I would recommend to fellow OHS people but this is one.

OHS Learning for OHS Personnel-George's Pragmatic Advice

I sometimes receive requests for advice on personal development for OHS personnel, here is my advice. I am aware my views are not conventional ones.

Rightly or wrongly I take the view that OHS Learning is often not very focussed because we do not have a robust body of OHS knowledge to guide the design of facilitation.

I have what I believe are good reasons to consider Ballarat University offers the best tertiary OHS learning in Australia.

Good OHS personnel need broad management skills (Interpersonal skills, communications skills, project management, quality management, facilitation of learning, leadership, teambuilding etc.) as well as their OHS technical skills.

Suggested Formal Learning for the OHS Person

Do the Diploma in OHS and then pick up a Grad. Dip. OHS of some kind. I would argue both qualifications are necessary to give a mix of the operational and the strategic.

Those not working may wish to do a degree in OHS. There are a small number of degrees in fields allied to OHS that have an OHS major, as well as OHS degrees. Tertiary OHS learning is conducted in various schools at universities e.g. Engineering, public health, management etc. That may help you choose a course with your particular orientation.

Consider whether there are good reasons for completing a Masters in OHS. A cynical view is that with a masters or doctorate you end up knowing a hell of a lot about not very much. Hopefully a good Masters will go further than this. Having an OHS masters may actually limit your potential to obtain some types of OHS positions. What are you really going to gain practically by completing this qualification? Will it make you any better at your job?

You may have a choice of completing your masters by research or coursework, or a mixture of both. There may be something you have a burning desire to know more about and this could be great for research, may be an opportunity to make a name for yourself.

In my case I made a conscious decision not to do advanced study in OHS after my initial OHS tertiary qualification. Instead I studied in areas aligned to OHS, management of organisational change and adult and workplace education. I am considering completing study in psychology, majoring in organisational psychology. I consider my management of organisational change and adult and workplace education studies and potentially psychology studies to be of much more practical use than studying an OHS masters. It is worth noting the foregoing areas have a robust body of knowledge.

Facilitating learning and problem solving groups is a major part of most OHS jobs. Get along to a Cert IV T.A.E. as a minimum.

Try to get along to short courses on safety, fire safety, interpersonal skills, communications skills, project management, quality management, facilitation of learning, leadership, teambuilding, management of organisational change etc.

With any learning you intend to attend check it out thoroughly first. Talking to past and current students is a good place to start. While distance education can be convenient and accessible in remote locations I prefer the face to face communications of facilitated learning.

Suggested informal learning for the OHS person

I am a big fan of books. Going to the local library and searching for management books will bring up many titles relevant to OHS. Also do searches for WHS, OHS, safety, fire safety, interpersonal skills, communications skills, project management, quality management, facilitation of learning, leadership, teambuilding, management of organisational change etc. books.

I tend to get about 20 out at a time and skim read the lot, half will usually be a waste of time, some I read in depth, some I make notes on.

Amazon is a source of cheap books, reading the reviews may help in your choice.

Get yourself a mentor, ask for the hard tasks and maintain a reflective journal.

Conclusion

To become an effective OHS person one must commit to becoming a lifelong learner in OHS technical fields and aligned fields. Practical experience backed up by critical reflection (What went well, what opportunities for improvement were presented) is a great way to learn.

Bureaucracy and Paperwork in OHS

Introduction

I believe bureaucracy and paperwork is strangling innovation and progress in OHS. Overly complex systems are being used and people give up because it is too much like hard work.

Some examples

One organisation I was associated with employed an outside consultant to develop safe working procedures in their mechanical workshop. This was done with little consultation with the workforce. When I did an audit of the implementation of the safe working procedures typical responses were- "Safe working procedures, stuffed if I know what you are talking about mate" and "O that crap, it does not represent what we do and we just ignore it"

At one organisation the corporate safety people developed a S.W.P. for a particular task; there were good reasons for this. I was given the job of introducing it to the workers. There were 6 pages of complicated, close text and I, with a reasonable grasp of the English language, unlike some of the workers, simply could not understand it. Somehow I could not see the workers reading the document by the light of their torch or truck headlights in the middle of the night in order to carry out the task.

The corporate safety people were ropeable when I said I was not going to introduce it to the workers and it needed to be revised, they refused to revise it. Apparently I was a trouble maker. I gave the job of revising it to one of my crews.

Two (2) pages with simple short steps and a diagram and the blokes were happy to use it because it made sense through their involvement. I had my manager on side and he forced the adoption of what our blokes developed through the whole organisation. Naturally I was not popular with the corporate safety people. The manager got the quality bloke to issue a non-conformance report on the original procedure through the quality system. That created a bit of excitement.

I started a consultancy job with an organisation and they said I should read through their policy, procedure and fatal risk protocols. I got to about page 50 of the 150 page documents before I gave up. All very thorough, well written, extremely detailed. All emotionally appealing but would it be read & implemented? Somehow I could not see the people up the sharp end wading their way through all the paperwork!

With one company I worked for, most of the managers and supervisors attended a time management course. This emphasised the importance of succinct communication. We were advised to restrict routine communication to a maximum of 2 pages, preferably less.

The thing that really annoys me is the rambling OHS papers one sees in some so-called professional journals. These are often academic in nature, designed to boost the ego of the writer, usually removed from the real world of work and tell us things experienced people will have figured out for themselves a long time ago. They also take an incredible number of words to say not too much. Often an academic wank!

One organisation I worked for had a large corporate OHS team that developed large policy and procedure, when they came to train the troops the deficiencies in what they had produced were very obvious. I had over 10 years in a corporate OHS role with one employer, it is very important in these roles to keep your actions grounded in reality by spending a lot of time in the field. My experience is that many corporate OHS departments add little to the bottom line and should be trimmed or abolished.

Two government organisations I worked for were buried in policy and procedure and making even small amounts of progress was incredibly slow and difficult. If they had been in the commercial world they would have quickly gone broke. People got to accept the situation and simply stopped trying to force progress; it was too much like hard work.

Another organisation I worked for introduced an overseas commercial safety management system. Those of us with field experience quickly realised the major weaknesses of the system. Rather than accept that they had been sold a dead duck the corporate people persisted with the system with little success.

Keep it succinct

The biggest problem with written communications is its length; generally I think you must try to get your routine messages across in a maximum of 2 pages. Busy people do not have time to write more and busy people do not have the time to read more. Concentrate on the MUST KNOWS. I am sure some safety people must be paid by the word, the result is long ponderous written communications. You can be certain that if it is too much like hard work to read it will not be read.

Workforce communication

Organisations put big efforts into senior management road shows, videos and glossy publications. The reality is that many in the workforce do not trust senior management and these efforts are perceived as a bit of a management wank.

- There are 3 very important principles for effective workforce communications-
- Use the supervisor not management
- If it is not face to face it is not communications
- Focus on the local work area

Conclusion

I believe bureaucracy and paperwork is strangling innovation and progress in OHS. Many safety efforts are removed from the everyday reality of the workplace. Theoretical and academic approaches have a tendency to overcome practice. Long ponderous paperwork is in abundance. Some organisations engulf themselves in bureaucracy and paperwork and make progress so difficult to achieve that people give up.

The 10 Commandments for the OHS Person

Introduction

OHS people often complain about lack of progress in driving OHS Management and OHS Learning change. Frankly this is often because they are not particularly organised and do not use appropriate processes. The paper OHS Change Management / Project Management provides some insight.

The 10 Commandments for the OHS Person

The following is a selection of techniques that have worked for me in driving significant OHS change. Use of some or all of them will assist in managing significant OHS issues.

1. Learn as much as you can about the particular issue. Google, visit a library to identify relevant texts, network with peers, examine credible sources of information (Legislation, Australian Standards, government guidelines etc.) and examine industry practice.
2. Carry out a survey to identify the workforce perception of the issue of interest. Sometimes there is value in collating the answers onto histograms, displaying the histograms to the people who completed the survey, discussing the results and trying to establish why the responses are the way they are. This is best done by as senior a managers as possible who does not react defensively to criticism.
3. Carrying out a force field analysis on the particular issue with the stakeholders may help to focus issues.
4. Carryout a needs analysis and if necessary a learning needs analysis.
5. Based on the above develop a project plan to manage the issue in association with the stakeholders. Form a project team to manage the plan. Get management approval for the plan.
6. Launch and communicate the project plan. My general advice with communication is to use face to face communication wherever possible, use the powerful influence of the work group supervisor and frame communication relevant to the work environment of the group being communicated to. High powered communications from senior management about the goals, mission, vision and the objectives of the company will not have much of an impact with many of the workers.
7. Carry out interactive learning using Action and Experiential learning models. The learning must have a focus on the reality of the workplace. My advice is to check out both the process and content of potential providers very carefully, there are some

snake oil salesmen in this space. I know it is not everybody's thing but properly structured outdoor learning experiences can be a powerful means of learning. Just ensure the focus is on the learning not the outdoor experience.

8. As a follow up to learning facilitation engage in authentic tasks / activities / projects in the workplace. Progress must be regularly discussed, reviewed and evaluated. Celebrate the success of these.
9. Meet with the people who attended the learning facilitation and discuss what is going well and what opportunities for improvement have been presented. I know it is not everybody's thing but I encourage leaders to maintain a reflective journal about their experiences, used properly this can be a powerful means of learning.
10. Evaluate, communicate and celebrate success. Establish what was learnt in the process and how you would do it better next time.

Dr. Rob Long's version of the 10 commandments takes a much more holistic view and, in my opinion contains some excellent wisdom.

Mine are more like this:

1. Learn about people and the psychology of risk. Understand why people make decisions.
2. Learn as much as you can about effective communication, Pitching, framing and priming.
3. Understand the complexities of culture; most incidents are culturally determined not behaviourally determined. The culture fosters and encourages the behaviour.
4. Don't carry out surveys if you don't understand survey methodology. Your conclusions and speculations will most likely be wrong and based on naivety of methodology and inexperience and poor communications knowledge.
5. Understand human decision making process, why people are motivated to do what they do, particularly the importance of the psychology and science of perception.
6. Learn how to research, chasing up Google and libraries is confined to your maturity in research skills and your ability to understand self and your own biases.
7. Investigate the nature of any incident (needs analysis) from the perspective of physical, secondary (psychological) and tertiary (cultural) perspective. If you don't know how to do so, learn how to do these. Any analysis from just a physical, regulatory and legislative perspective will only give a systems solution.
8. Understand that leadership and learning in risk requires study and experience. If you haven't learnt about the psychology of risk, start reading.
9. Stop listening to OHS 'noise'. It is a distraction and delusional and creates the idea that you are actually an expert in risk and safety.
10. Understand how language shapes culture and behaviour and work hard to eliminate wrongful discourse in your workplace culture and influence the organisation to use rightful priming in talking about risk and safety.

How OHS People can Maintain their Motivation

In my 38 years involvement in OHS I have been lied to by various people, have lost count of the number of times I have been called an idiot or worse, have had promises made that were never fulfilled, dealt with idiots and generally made no progress despite having well-reasoned arguments.

I have come to realise sometimes it is the relationships you build, not your technical skills, that determines success.

The above is frustrating but when I critically reflect on some of the things I tried to do as a safety person I have to recognise some of the things I tried to do were not all that smart. The paper *The Good, Bad and the Ugly of George's 38 Year Safety Career*, available on request to fgrobotham@gmail.com explores this further.

My mentor, Geoff McDonald, refers to displacement activities, a displacement activity is something we do, something we put a lot of energy into but which there is little logical reason for doing it. I have no doubt some of the things OHS people traditionally do are displacement activities, this affects how we are perceived. OHS people have a tendency to pick up and run with the latest safety fads without carefully analysing the evidence for its introduction. People embrace emotionally appealing initiatives without a solid basis.

OHS people want stakeholders to do something different from the current situation. OHS is inherently about management of organisational change. Very few OHS people have skills in management of organisational change so it is no surprise they struggle.

One supervisor I used to deal with said I never had good news. He said I always made his life difficult because I wanted him to do extra. One super indent said I was like a mongrel terrier dog, I used to chew on his ear to get things done, he said he used to do what I wanted sometimes because I was right but sometimes just to get rid of me.

OHS people need skills in safety leadership, many are lacking in this area. Personally I have doubts tertiary OHS education prepares people well for what can be a very demanding task.

How I keep my safety motivation at a high level

- I have resolved to be a lifelong learner on safety and safety relevant topics.
- I read widely on safety and safety relevant topics.
- I have developed formal and informal networks of OHS people and we regularly correspond. Interacting with fellow OHS people is a great way to learn and you can share success and failures.
- Every now and again I have a win, not as often as I would like but that recharges my batteries.
- I find the LinkedIn OHS forums of value.
- I thank others for their input and celebrate success.
- I find the hs-canada forum of value.

- I am a member of a private OHS forum with about 50 members, some very experienced safety people.
- Through my network I get a healthy supply of safety and non-safety joke e-mails, a bit of a laugh even though some would not be suitable in polite society.
- I have completed OHS, Management of Organisational Change and Adult & Workplace Education tertiary education.
- The Riskex safety blog is a good source of information.
- I write about OHS for an internet blog, I find that forces me to think about OHS.
- From my study of management of organisational change I have adopted the motto” When initiating change, remember people support what they create” Getting input from the stakeholders will give confidence about OHS changes you are trying to implement.
- It is not a good idea to take on a battle you have little chance of winning, having said that I get a lot of fun out of challenging the status quo. Sometimes you get in the poop but it is better than putting up with fools and mediocrity.
- It is a good idea to deal with the issue not the person
- When I was younger I used to let safety issues get very personal to me. Whilst I am still committed to safety I now find an overly personal approach can prevent effective change. There was a time my safety work took precedence over my family, big mistake
- I try to get variety in what I do and seek out the hard jobs
- Anything I do I put a lot of thought and planning into, if it does not work I try to identify lessons learnt and reconcile my

The lessons learnt

In a recent article on the Riskex blog Dave Collins reflected on this experience as a young engineer running a concrete plant. I thought his lessons learnt were excellent and so relevant to all types of management; it is all about the people.

1. Treat everyone with respect, despite their differences in back ground or appearance
2. Talk to them and find out what makes them tick, don't rely on what others tell you
3. Realise that everybody wants to do a good job – if they can
4. Think about and meet peoples basic needs before stressing about the big stuff
5. Despite what you think, “workers” are smart and resourceful, treat them like crap and they will find a way to bring down you and your plans – provided they can get away with it!
6. Find out what other hidden talents and ideas they have and let them use them
7. Realise that if you are a Manager then you work for those in your team – NOT the traditional arrogant arrangement
8. Give people goals and objectives, give them what they need and break down any barriers.
9. THEN GET OUT OF THE BLOODY WAY

Colin Powell on Leadership

Baraka Training and Management present a power point interview with General Colin Powell on leadership. Fantastic, down to earth, practical advice from a real leader. The following summarises the key points.

- Good leadership involves responsibility for the welfare of the group
- Being responsible means sometimes pissing people off
- Do not be buffaloed by experts and elites
- Never neglect details
- Keep looking below surface appearances
- Organisation charts and fancy titles mean next to nothing
- Fit no stereotypes
- Look for people with intelligence and judgement
- Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers
- The commander in the field is always right
- Have fun
- Command is lonely
- Leadership is the art of accomplishing what the science of management says is not possible

My vision for what an excellent approach to OHS in Australia looks like

- We get rid of emotive terminology such as accident, cause and blame. Alternatives are available
- We finally come to the realization that the focus must be on Class 1, permanently life altering personal damage. Minor damage is not a good predictor of major damage. If you are talking about getting the best bang for your buck you must focus on class I personal damage
- We come to the realization that enterprise personal damage occurrence analysis is limiting and it is much better done on an industry basis. Industry taxonomies of Class 1 personal damage are the way to go. The development of standardized industry reporting methods will be necessary.
- We use modern adult learning principles to facilitate learning. Safety people must have excellent presentation skills and skills in facilitating problem solving groups
- We lose the focus on A.S. / N.Z.S. 4801 and develop robust safety management systems
- We have a well-developed body of OHS knowledge to guide learning facilitation. Whilst the Safety Institute of Australia is to be commended for starting the process what has been developed so far needs more work
- We get rid of displacement activities in OHS. A displacement activity is something we do, something we put a lot of effort into but which there is no valid reason for

doing it. Examination of the history of the industrial safety movement will reveal many examples of displacement activities.

- We develop sensible safety legislation that adds value and is easily interpreted
- All stakeholders are involved in decisions about OHS
- OHS paperwork is focused and succinct
- OHS approaches are simple and reality tested with the workforce
- Formal and informal leaders are trained in and practice Safety Leadership
- We realize the limitations of the risk assessment process
- Safety people need to realize they have to be lifelong learners
- Safety people need to realize the importance of and develop their communications and interpersonal skills. Safety people need an empathetic approach to others
- The impact of psychological and sociological approaches on safety need to be realized and learnt
- Teambuilding needs to be practiced in safety approaches
- There is a highly visible commitment to safety from many companies
- Audits are thorough and searching unlike the common cursory approach now
- Safety committees and representatives have meaty jobs to do and actually achieve something
- Communication must be face to face and relevant to the receiver
- Get rid of Zero Harm approaches
- Decrease the reliance on the Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate and use positive performance indicators
- Safe working procedures are succinct and the workforce is involved in their development. Development of these through job safety analysis is practiced
- Safety people are committed to high ethical standards and excellence and a continuous improvement philosophy is used
- Safety people are humble, thankful for what they have and spend more time in the field than the office
- Safety people have skills in management of organizational change, quality management and project management
- Safety people have the skills to recognize and not be sucked in by the various safety fads that come along.
- Safety people put a focus on the people issues rather than the technical ones
- Haddon's 10 countermeasures is used instead of the hierarchy of controls to develop control strategies

- OHS personnel are trusted and valued advisors to management, supervision and workers
- Performance appraisal of staff place a high, practical emphasis on safety
- Tool box or safety meetings are well facilitated and add value to the safety effort
- Emergency response plans are thoroughly developed and practiced to ensure there are no surprises in the real thing

Conclusion

Rightly or wrongly this is what being an OHS person means to me. I have reflected on my experiences in the field over many years and tried to give a few suggestions aimed to help those also in OHS. The people issues are the most important ones.

Being flexible and empathetic and having a great sense of humor are imperative for the safety person.

Over the years I have seen a lot of safety displacement activities, I have seen management and safety people engage in acts of public masturbation and have seen supposedly clever people approach safety in ways my cattle dog, Rusty could have improved on (You have to bear in mind she is smarter than many people I know!)

I will leave you with a bit of my homespun philosophy. No matter how grim your outlook looks, if you look about you, you will find heaps of people much worse off.

DOGS

- Do you know the difference between dogs & people?
- If they have not seen you for a day dogs still treat you as if they have not seen you for a year!



George can be contacted on fgrobotham@gmail.com; he welcomes debate on the above (it would be indeed a boring world if everybody agreed with George)

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