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Best. Safety. Meeting. Ever!



Larry Pearlman

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January 25, 2017

I've probably been to 2,000 safety meetings in my career. It wasn't until 2017 that I experienced the best one I've ever seen. It was in a manufacturing plant in the Southeast. The energy level was incredible. The participation level was awesome. The messages were clear and relevant. The presenters were absolutely pumped. The attendees had a good time. There was even hooting and hollering to encourage the team. And then there was singing too!

Here's what the team did. A group of five ladies took it upon themselves to organize a safety skit. Their intention was to build awareness and drive compliance for clothing, PPE and tool requirements. Normally, this is a dull topic. But these ladies don't take dull for an answer. They created a skit where each of the ladies would strut out in front of their associates with something out of compliance. The audience had to shout out the non-compliance.

One at a time, the ladies walked out. There was laughing and some friendly teasing. There was joking and shouting. Sure enough, the participants would shout out the non-conformance. "Knife is not in a safe place," shouted one. "Shirt is un-tucked," shouted another. "Hair is hanging down," said another. The parade of safety violations continued and everyone was laughing. When the strutting was done, one of the ladies talked about each of the rules and why they were important. And when they were done, everyone clapped and there were shouts of approval and thunderous claps.

Here's why this was the best safety meeting I had ever seen:

- Ownership: The associates owned the topic and had the accountability to present to their co-workers as part of a system that gave points for participation.
- Independence: No supervisor told these ladies what to do. There was a management coach available if they needed support.
- Engagement: These folks knew how to engage their co-workers in a meaningful way. Ultimately, everyone in the room had a part to play and participated in the activities.
- Relevance: The participants picked safety requirements that were important and addressed ever present risks that they had to deal with.
- Clarity: The rules were clear. The narrator made sure of this. No ambiguity in what to comply with or how to comply with these safety absolutes.
- Fun: While safety is a serious matter, it's OK to make the context enjoyable and have a few laughs. These ladies incorporated singing and humor into their meeting.

For your next safety meeting, try empowering your employees to lead the safety topic and challenge them to engage their co-workers. Have a coach provide direct feedback. Provide guidelines to ensure the messages are relevant and clear. And have some fun!

Please note: The manufacturing site reference engaged Performance Solutions by Milliken.

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Leadership food for thought: How much do you trust someone with whom you have no relationship or respect?

All very good stuff. I thoroughly enjoy a good safety meeting. Shock value is just that. Good for the motivational mind jerk, but is left wanting when over. I, myself remember saying to a colleague many years ago, after the shock treatment of gory photos and sad stories, "That will not be me. I'm not that dumb." Ownership is key. Leadership is about instilling ownership.

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Founder/Director/Teacher/Author/Red Seal

A good safety meeting is one in which the people leave the meeting knowing more about safety than they did when they walked in. I have noticed that companies oftentimes hire consultants to give safety presentations. Some of the consultants are victims of terrible accidents (no limbs), which occurred because they knowingly ignored safety.' ...see more

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Larry Pearlman (He/Him) • You

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I like it. The 'survivor' story is good for shock value. Not much more. If the directives are not specific, the meeting is only motivational and it will not improve safety. Teach a skill, share a lesson, provide, feedback, assess vulnerability or direct behavior.

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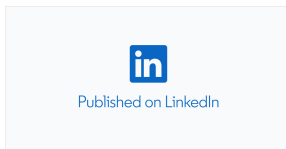
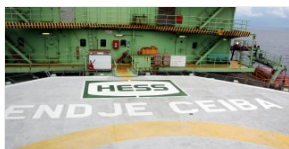
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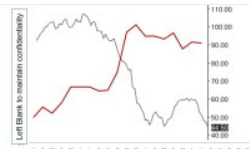


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