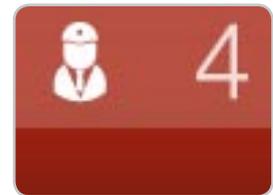


Our biggest asset: protecting our people



Information sheet from Seven steps > Step 4 > Further tools

Video transcript

Chapter 3 Observation and Active Monitoring

Rob Hallam – This section is all about active monitoring which means, actually, what a manager should be doing regularly to pro-actively manage the day-to-day safety culture. It's longer but it makes more sense.

Leigh Gardner – We've already talked about one method in the last chapter asking 'why' to get to the root of the problem, and that addresses the 'analyse before blame' habit of top companies. This chapter covers three more: challenging; modelling; and communicating about safety.

Rob Hallam – That last point 'communicating about safety' sounds pretty straightforward I expect, and all companies do these to a greater or lesser extent, but it's how well, and how often, that distinguishes the best companies. Having sex badly once a month doesn't make you a great lover and, er, I should know. We'll specify what we mean by 'well' as we go.

Leigh Gardner – First, before we talk about talking to people acting unsafely, something more upbeat: the use of praise. It's a golden rule of *The one minute manager*, one of the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and a vital component of *High Performance Coach*. If you've ever read a book on being effective or on making the most of the people around you, this is a key element.

Rob Hallam – A key principle is that you don't just stop people doing something wrong – you stop people doing something right, and reinforce that with some praise. Go into any organisation and ask the workforce if they get enough praise and the vast majority of responses will be to snigger.

Leigh Gardner – But praise is a hugely powerful tool of behaviour change, far more powerful than criticism, as proved by research scientists and psychologists all over the world.

Consider this situation:

Manager – Andy, Andy, sorry have you got a second, mate?

Andy – Yeah sure.

Manager – I just wanted to say, I know it is not your official appraisal until a month's time, but you know the meeting we had last week? I just wanted to say it's great that I can see you've picked up on all the points brought up there and you're really doing a great job. Keep it up.

Andy – Appreciate that. Thanks.

Leigh Gardner – Would something like that help the worker to pop out of bed a little more motivated in the following months? Yes!

Rob Hallam – Consider how much criticism I'd have to give you to match that praise. I would probably have to come and shout at you over breakfast every morning.

Leigh Gardner – So stop and praise the safe behaviour. And, of course, find something to praise when you stop to challenge someone, too. Now, some people are worried that praise in a mixed list of

feedback will be seen as part of a c**p sandwich, and a technique from presentation skills is useful here.

Dr Tim Marsh – Top and Tail technique: A good tip to doing this well is the top and tail technique. Instead of going up to somebody and start giving them a list of things that are positive but leaving an obvious 'but' hanging in the air, and they start thinking 'get on with it and get to the bad news'. If you give them an overview of the message in summary, the good bits and the bad bits, then you can go back and concentrate on the whole



message. Just like they do on *News at Ten*: tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you told them. The top and tail technique.

Mark Taylor – There are three ways of trying to influence unsafe behaviour. There is use of praise to try and encourage people to act safely. There is a means of trying to get people to avoid doing things unsafely. And there's a third way – punishment. Unfortunately, when we try to get people to avoid doing things unsafely we often try to use punishment and it is something completely different. For punishment to be effective, it has to be like a hot stove, every time you touch the stove you get burnt, without fail, and in the real world that means policing people or using the stick. However, more effective is the use of praise: all we have to do there is praise the correct behaviours now and again and that way we maintain it.

Leigh Gardner – To conclude we'd like to stress that the very best positive reinforcement you can give, links to the last chapter. And this is where a suggestion someone has come up with has been used. Going back to them and saying, "We did this as a result of your suggestion, so many thanks for your help", is about as good as it gets.

Rob Hallam – Even saying, "After discussion, we

found we simply can't do anything with it, but thanks a lot anyway". That's a lot more likely to generate future ideas than not explaining at all that something turned out to be impracticable.

Leigh Gardner – Nearly all organisations experience 'blind eye syndrome' to a greater or lesser extent. So why don't managers always challenge unsafe acts and conditions. Is it because they want to be popular with their staff so they don't like to criticise? To an extent, yes. Is it because they convince themselves it's best to write someone a carefully written e-mail so they can avoid face-to-face confrontation? Again, to an extent, yes.

Rob Hallam – Often, however, it is because people don't know for sure what they are looking for and don't want to make themselves look foolish or petty. We address this in chapter 1, giving some examples of everyday things and explaining how they're hugely important to a company's safety culture. Besides, if you follow the advice in this section, you'll see that you don't have to know more than the person you are talking to, you can just ask.

Leigh Gardner – First, let us deal with a common inhibitor - you are embarrassed. You don't quite know how the person you approach will react. Even if you use the 'why' technique. Maybe, scenarios like this could happen:

Scenario 1

Manager: "Oi. Why the hell aren't you using a spanner?"

Worker response = Physical violence: the worker punches the supervisor.

Scenario 2

Manager: "Oi. Why the hell are you using pliers to do that you should be using a proper spanner?"

Worker response = No verbal reaction, but thinking to himself: "Why don't you keep your stupid Management pig face out of my chuffing work?"

Scenario 3

Manager: "Oi lads. What are you doing using pliers for that, you should be using a proper spanner. Can you go and get one from stores?"

Worker: "Yeah. I'll go and get one."

Manager: "All right, thank you." (But after the manager leaves they carry on as before.)

To download this checklist complete the *Leadership and worker involvement toolkit* > Seven steps > Step 3 > Further tools



Leigh Gardner – Of course these scenarios never happen. Well, hardly ever... But it's the thought that they might be thinking they'd like to respond that way that inhibits us. So the easy thing to do is this.

Scenario 4

Manager simply walks on by...

Leigh Gardner – Now that is fair enough. In chapter 2 we explained the psychology behind yielding to this temptation. In the short term, it's a relief, but it is not good management, is it?

We also explained, in that chapter, how a good manager asks a genuine question in this situation and assumes the employee will have a sensible answer more often than not. This 'analysis' position takes an awful lot of the confrontation out before you even start.

Let us look at another example:

Manager: "Hang on, Andy, how come you're using pliers for that? You should be using a proper spanner really."

Worker: "I know, but the main toolbox is on the other site. We've ordered a few other tools but they've not come in as yet, and you yourself said this was a priority."

Manager: "I know they have been on back order for a while. Look, I'll go and chase that up. Can you stop doing that for ten minutes? Find something else to do? I'll get it sorted."

Worker: "OK."

Manager: "Thank you."

The Leadership and Worker Involvement toolkit is aimed particularly at small and medium sized businesses and is designed to help improve your health and safety and bring additional benefits to your business performance and productivity.

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