



Making Safety Training Count

BY WARNELL VICKERS

What employee looks forward to safety training? Hardly anyone does! Expectations are often relatively low, and the training is viewed as a distraction because of the demands of the day. However, employees having low expectations are to every trainer's advantage because there is no place to go but up. Unlike other training employees may attend, relatively no one has high expectations for having a great experience when attending safety training. For this reason, this article will be about how to be an effective safety trainer.

Safety training is a key component to building an effective safety culture within any organization, but it's particularly important in the public sector. This is because public sector worker injury rates are often higher than in the private sector!

Safety training isn't intended to teach an employee the "how to" or the specific operation of doing a job. Every employee was hired because he/she possesses the knowledge and skills to do what he/she was hired for, to get the job done. In other words, he/she already knows the correct and incorrect way to do their job. Safety training isn't just about providing information, safety trainers have the responsibility to persuade and convince employees about making safety a priority, a value and the standard for every employee.



Both in the public and private sector, a trainer must understand that it is his/her job to passionately deliver a safety message in such a way that convinces employees to make safety a priority, a value and the standard. Even when a trainer has adopted this mindset, not every employee will make safety his/her priority. However, it all starts with the mindset of the trainer.

Just because working safely is the right thing to do, it doesn't mean that employees will automatically practice safety. How does a trainer convert an employee who isn't sold on practicing safety to become convinced about the benefits, advantages, and the long term pay-back? The answer is, safety training should be an experience that is interactive, engaging and relatable.

Making safety training interactive is about delivering a message that stimulates dialogue and discussion. When there is guided discussion, the information provided is heard and received with respect, which creates an experience to rapidly exceed the employee's expectations.

Another step to being an effective safety trainer is by making safety training challenging with thought-provoking questions and without intimidation. Trainers should ask questions that provoke new questions and allow employees to see how safety is interconnected to the employee's routine duties. Trainers should also find ways to insert humor into the training because laughter encourages participation. We always remember what was covered in the training when the trainer made you feel good!

Safety isn't one of the most exciting subjects in the world, but it is a very important subject. If not presented effectively, safety can be boring. A positive safety training experience does not necessarily have to be conducted by an expert on the subject, but enthusiasm in the delivery of the safety message is vital. A safety trainer must be engaging, informative, challenging, humorous, and passionate about the safety message. With those attributes, safety training can be exciting because it was presented in a practical, yet dynamic and useful way that is applicable to their operations or work environment.

We can raise the expectations (and subsequently the results) when public sector employees attend safety training, if the safety trainers have established a reputation for providing interesting and dynamic safety training. Safety training isn't an option, it's a necessity!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Warnell Vickers has over 39 years of experience as a Trainer and Safety Professional. Mr. Vickers is the Acting Manager of the Office of Safety, Risk Management Division at Miami-Dade County and administers a comprehensive Safety and Health Program which provides oversight and guidance for management, employees and operations of Miami-Dade County. Mr. Vickers manages a staff of Safety Professionals who conduct safety inspections and investigations to comply with Federal, State and Industry Safety and Health standards. He conducts safety training on a variety of topics including: Bloodborne Pathogens; Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation/AED; Computer Ergonomics; Driver Improvement; First Aid; Forklift Verification; Lifting Safety Material Handling and Awkward Movement; Distracted Driving; Hazard Communication; and Respiratory Protection.



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