Tips for effective communication with frontline supervisors

Good communication is essential for productive safety professional-supervisor relationships. One of the most effective ways of building those relationships is open, clear communication. By using some of these tips you can foster a more positive, open and effective working partnership with frontline supervisors.

- **Put the relationship first.** Unless it’s an emergency, don’t open conversations with work talk. Take 30-45 seconds to ask about them and how they are. A little bit of small talk can go a long way to making interactions more comfortable and meaningful.

- **Skip the jargon.** Safety professionals often use technical terms and acronyms to talk about safety, but this can be incomprehensible to supervisors. Speak plainly and clearly, explaining what safety procedures entail and why they’re important.

- **Tell stories.** Conversations about technical issues don’t need to be dry. Incorporate anecdotes and pictures. People are more likely to engage with and remember a story than a series of facts and figures.

- **Highlight the benefits.** Safety is a positive thing for everyone – injuries slow down production and cause employees to miss work. Try to frame safety as something that boosts production and quality rather than costing them.

- **Follow up.** Don’t just have a conversation and walk away. Check back with supervisors to see how it’s going. If they know you’re going to follow up they’re more likely to do what you’ve asked.

For more information on strengthening the relationship between safety pros and frontline supervisors check out the Safety + Health article “Team Players” at safetyandhealthmagazine.com.