

IMPORTANT KPIS AND REAL COMMUNICATION

CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

Welcome to Safety Culture Excellence. Today's topic: Important KPIS and Real Communication. My name is Shawn Galloway, and I'm proud to be your host.

Greetings everyone from the Delaware Water Gap, located at the border of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Today's topic is Part 4 of a 6-part Safety Process Communication Loop series. Again, as I've stated before, if you haven't listened to the earlier casts in this series, I encourage you to go back and do so. This week's podcast focuses on Key Performance Indicators for your safety process and truly understanding what real communication looks like. Here we go.



Shawn Galloway
President & COO

"When we see some processes that weren't sustainable, that didn't last long term, it's because they lost the lack of – they lost their support. Now, whether it's the support from management, or if it's the support from employees or supervisors, we generally see because we're not communicating the information back to them. We get a lot of information from these observation reports, but we don't do anything with them. There's so many processes we've gone in behind, and they've just either got stacks and stacks of observation checklists, or they've got all this data that nobody's doing anything with.

"Your data's there. And it's just like if you do a perception survey and you don't respond to that perception survey, or you don't give people a sense of understanding of what we learned from that, try to ask them again. The average response you're gonna hear is, 'I told you once. You gonna listen to me this time?' It's the same thing with observations. If you go out and your observers capture all this great insight but you don't respond to them, or at least give them a status of where we are in this, it's gonna be difficult. And you've probably all seen it in your own processes of, 'Well they keep telling me this stuff every time I go out there.'

"But the thing is, is are we prioritizing the stuff and taking it to management, and ask for help? And are we responding to the things that we can at least knock out and get some rapid results on? This is something that we encourage is at least some sort of balanced scorecards. Now by balance, it's heavy on the leading side. The lagging we've got down here as total recordable incident rate. You could also essentially call the site total of all precautions lagging indicators, because they're a results metric.

"But you gotta at least get back to the management folks some indicators of what's going on here. The average ones we see is actual number of observations completed a month. If the goal was 120, we hit 50 this January, we hit 70 in February, and it kinda tells us where we are. That then tells us, and this is something that we created, percentage of target observations completed per month. Tells you 42 percent; it's kind of a red, yellow, green scorecard. A lot of sites like this; a lot of sites don't. Whatever works in your site, have some sort of way to give the management or the corporate locations a sense of understanding of where we are.

"And a lot of that comes from information that's already collected in your process. The next one that we recommend is number of action plans initiated by site leaders, the steering committee, the team, whatever you wanna call them. And then the number of action plans completed. If you're not creating action plans from your process, you're not really responding to your data. Now, action plan could be, 'Wow, we see a trend here. Let's focus some observations between 10:00 a.m. in the morning and 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon.' That's an action plan right there.

"All the communication ideas that you come up with, identifying a – go out and talk to an observer about something, that's an action plan. But you gotta show people that we're actually doing something with this. And that'll help prompt communication and discussion amongst people that, 'Hey, we see some action plans. What were they?' Because people will start trying to get in the scorekeeping mentality if you start to give them a sense of score.

"Now, let's talk for a second on what some of these original perceptions of communication are. Generally, we look at communication as: you got a speaker, you got a listener. That's what Terry was referring to is the two parts of communication: a sender and a receiver. We generally look at communication through that I have a thought, and I wanna somehow convey this thought to you. So that gets encoded into words, and that's what you're hearing.

"But the words then gets encoded into sounds. The pressure changes in the air. It then decodes at your end, and it turns it back into words. And those words turn into meaning. And we look at it and say, 'Hey, message was received.' I said something, you heard it. Message was received. Unfortunately, that's not really how communication happens. That's just sending information. Communication can be defined as dialog. And that's what we're trying to encourage you guys to consider here, is that it's gotta be based on dialog. It can't be just sharing of information.

"So let's talk about what are the barriers to communication? If we put some things in place, what might get in people's way? But, you know, a lot of times we put things in place, and there's barriers that we run into. And that's what we're trying to look at, is you have to anticipate there's gonna be challenges in your process. There's gonna be challenges to communication. I shared with the guys yesterday: When I served in the Army, they taught us that it's a really, really good idea to be able to identify the snipers in the trees, and the landmines in the road, before you start down that path. You don't wanna get surprised by sniper fire.

"So, you have to look at the channels you put in place, your communication, your process itself. And ask yourself this: are you managing the resistance to the communication, or the resistance to the change, or are you trying to anticipate it prior to, and plan for? That's where good processes maintain their success, is they anticipate we're gonna have challenges. I was talking to a couple gentlemen last night about their process and how successful they're being so far, and how their site leaders have – their managers have stepped up to the plate. And they've done such a great job.

"Things have turned around. It's going very successful. And the caution that I shared with them is: anticipate he's gonna leave. Managers learn that the worst time to create an open wreck for a position and start recruiting for somebody is when you have an open position. It's called succession planning. You have to look at it the same way in communication. There's gonna be challenges. What might those challenges be? Brainstorm on those challenges. If you guys are successful in your initiative, you gotta realize that the average tenure in corporate America as a facility manager is about two to three years.

"People just – there's a lot of rotation in today's economy. People just move around, location to location. Some of you have the luxury of working with great leaders for a long time. But you have to anticipate and realize what happens when they leave. You have a great support mechanism up top. There's something that's called – there's a guy named Edward DeBono, and he's a great thinking on what's called 'lateral

thinking'. He's got something called 'the six thinking hats'. And it's a great communication and thinking strategies. But one of the things that he says - its kinda a 'what if' statement and he calls it 'Poe'. But he says, 'What if this were to happen?'

"And one of his claims to fame, was he worked with Lexus many, many years ago. And he said to Lexus, 'Poe, what if your tires are square? How do you build a suspension system if you have square tires?' And that's how the famous suspension system that Lexus put in their vehicles came to be. Because they looked at what might be challenges - essentially, what they refer to is 'out of box thinking' nowadays. But, what if your great support staff, the great systems that you have in place, fall apart? You don't want to identify that and all the sudden you lose a great support. And you say, 'Okay, how do we deal with this now?'

"You have to start looking at it. And even if you've got great communication, what could be the barriers that come in play here? But I encourage you to identify those things before you recognize the barriers. How conversation came about, is when groups of people, when we were forming mankind, when groups of people were trying to work together to create social norms, to create social structure out there, that's where conversation came from.

"We all, as cave men and everything, just made a lot of sounds. Conversation and dialog was first created in order for us to co-habitate as social beings there. But, unfortunately, we find that conversation, it's an art form. It's not something that everybody does very well. Communication's a process, not a one-time event, just sharing that information. So, we have to look at it and say, 'Are we really having dialog? Are we really having conversations with our observers?'

"One of the recommendations I make - how many of you at your site, and I know that asked the same question for the folks that were in my discussion yesterday, but how many at your site have observers that are in addition to your steering committee members? Essentially, you've got a group of people that are steering committee members; you've got all the people that are helping you. Okay. Good mixture out here.

"Identify a support mechanism for those additional observers. Maybe create accountability on each steering committee member to where their responsibility is to communicate with another observer. They're kind of like a coach to this observer, or they sponsor another observer. Because we try to look at them and say, 'Well, let's just share information with the observation team.' Or, 'Let's bring them in on a quarterly basis.' But we gotta make sure the communication's actually happening. We've gotta develop a system that ensures that we have communicated. And peer pressure, sometimes, can be a dangerous thing. But peer-accountability is much more successful than manager-worker-accountability.

"People wanna work with each other in their teams, and they don't wanna let their teams down. Make sure you develop a sense of accountability amongst your steering committee members to sponsor other observers that are out there. Start being proactive and identify those things. So, what communication really looks like, the first off, the speakers say, 'I've got a message to send.' And we've talked about how it was originally thought. The message goes out, and then the speaker looks - or the recipient says, 'You know, was this message received?' And that's a question we're also asking of them. 'Was this received?'

"So, what has to happen, is the listener then has to provide what's called 'evidence of understanding'. That

basically means they paraphrase back to you that says, 'I think I heard you. Did you say this?' And that's what we're looking for, is a qualifying remark. Did communication really happen? And think about that just when you're having your own conversation with folks. We talked a little bit about conversation yesterday. Are you listening to respond? Or are you listening to really understand?

"But we have to look at it and also give back an understanding of evidence of understanding. That's truly when dialog, when communication, really happens. And that's closing out that communication loop. People have a message to send. They let us know that that message was received, and it was clear, and it was understood. And we let them know that, yes, we understand that that message is clear. But that's what communication really looks like. Let's get past the thought that communication just means sharing of information."

Well, this concludes this week's podcast. Tune in next week for Part 5 of the series: "Workflow Your Safety Communication". In the meantime, have a great week.

Until next time, remember: "In safety, prevention trumps reaction." For more information on Safety Culture Excellence, or if you have a topic to suggest, please e-mail us at podcast@proactsafety.com.