

INCREASING SELF-AWARENESS THROUGH FOCUSED SELF-OBSERVATION (PART 1 OF 3)



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

Welcome to Safety Culture Excellence. Today's topic: Part 1 of 3, Increasing Self-Awareness Through Focused Self-Observations. My name is Shawn Galloway, and I'm proud to be your host.



Shawn Galloway
President & COO

Greetings from Atlanta, Georgia. As several of our previous podcasts have stated, the world is becoming leaner and leaner. The workforce is becoming smaller and smaller in many companies, and the challenges to safety, greater and greater. Many of our engagements over the past few years have provided an opportunity to find new approaches to customize and reach success in previously difficult to near-impossible situations. The situations I'm referring to are the companies whose workforce are predominantly mobile and mostly work alone.

Workforces that move from jobsite to jobsite present many unique challenges, including the challenge of effectively managing safety. As we all know, creating self-awareness for safety is important, especially when you're working in environments where it's common to work without other co-workers present.



Terry Mathis
Founder & CEO

In this session, we're listening to Terry Mathis, the founder and CEO, lead a session that discusses how to increase personal safety awareness, and how this can be applied and used within the safety observation process. As in the other recorded seminars, you'll probably hear some editing, because of the open discussions and confidentiality we wish to show those who mention their company names. So here's how it went.

"One other use of self-observations is simply to supplement other observations to get the numbers back up. So, what if you don't have enough observers to get as many observations as you'd like to have in a particular area? What if you do some outside observations and some self-observations and you combine them?

"By the way, one of the companies that we worked with a number of years ago had something that they called a 'pocket observation', and this was their version of a self-observation. I just wanted to tell you a couple of stories specifically from the field out there. What would happen, they would need some additional observations in certain areas. Or, they'd want to understand an issue that was going on in an area; and they had a little pocket card that was shorter than the regular card, and they didn't ask you to give feedback. It's a self-observation. But what they would do is they would walk up to somebody, and they'd say, 'Derrick, I'd like you to do a pocket observation today.' And they'd take one of these things and put it in your pocket. And they'd ask you, since you had one, to fill it out during the day sometime, and get it back to them. And this was a self-observation.

"Now, there were observers that came into this area periodically, but they couldn't get enough of them there often enough, and they wanted to see things. They wanted to really enforce things. Sometimes, these pocket cards could be shorter than the regular card, just be the item that they're focusing on. So, we'd like to watch yourself today, and see if you're really doing a good job of this, or how safe you are on this particular aspect, and they supplemented them that way.

"By the way, how many of you use the ProAct Software for crunching your data? Other softwares have

INCREASING SELF-AWARENESS THROUGH FOCUSED SELF-OBSERVATION (PART 1 OF 3)



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

similar features, some do anyway. You can make additional variables. You have some programmable variables. Let me recommend to you that if you decide to do self-observations, you make a variable on your software and separate your self-observations from your other observations, so you can look at these things side-by-side, and compare and contrast them. That's a very valuable thing to do. You mix them all together, you can't tell which were which; and if you're having a problem with one, and not with the other, you can't really diagnose it very well. So make another variable, and say type of observations, self or other, self or regular, or outside or inside, however you want to designate that out there, and be able to divide that that way in your observation cards.

"Now, there's one other way to do this, and it's kind of backwards, but it's a way to cheat your software into doing something like this. You've got on the ProAct Software, you can divide your observers into observer teams. Make all self-observations a separate observer team, and call it 'self'. Who did this? Self. Not one of our regular assigned observers, but self. And that gives you another way to divide the data. You can divide it by observer teams, and see if it was the self-team or the other team. That's kind of a way to cheat your software into giving you one more variable in that particular software package anyway.

"Okay, let's jump into this. And again, as most of these sessions, I've got some stuff prepared for you, try to get through really this time, and time to talk about it at the end since I know the real time that we've got here on this one. Guideline: don't jump into self-observations. Look for other ways to do it. I have a lot of people say, 'Well, it's not easy, so we'll just do self-observations.' No, if it's not easy, but you can't find another way, try to do it that other way. Self-observations ought to be kind of a last resort because they do have some weaknesses. They do have some flaws or potential ones. If you can do it another way, you want to look for it.

"By the way, one of the things that makes self-observations work is a periodic outside observation. It can really help improve the accuracy of them. So, if you're looking for who could observe this one person, even if they can only observe them once a year, that might be worth doing as a reality check for your self-observations. We'll talk about those, and talk about the issues as you get into it. So, if you've got a driver out there, does anyone ever go for a test drive with them, or a check-ride with them? How often does that happen? If you've got a worker who works out there all by themselves, when do they make contact with other people or who does make contact with them? And could you use these people as observers? Is there an alternative way to do this?

"Now, what can you use self-observations for? Usually, one of two reasons. One is when there's no way to get outside observations. Nobody is there to do an observation except the person who's doing the work there themselves; but the other reason is to supplement outside observations. They work relatively well that way, and you can do it either way. You can do the majority of outside observations and a few self, or you can do the majority self and a few outside observations. And the combination of them tends to work well. Now, if you can never get an outside observation, it's very difficult to do accurate self-observations long-term. Even a once-a-year check makes them fabulously more effective, and makes them work better.

"So, if you're looking at this group of workers, where can they do it? By the way, just a few stories: lone workers on trucks. They get on a truck. They go out into the oil field. They pour stuff down oil wells. They pour stuff in pipelines. It's all chemicals. They have these chemicals on their truck. They work alone all day, all day. Now, the one time that they do make contact with other people, they come into the depot

INCREASING SELF-AWARENESS THROUGH FOCUSED SELF-OBSERVATION (PART 1 OF 3)



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

and load their trucks. Guess where 60 percent of their accidents came from? Loading and unloading trucks. And there's an opportunity to get an observation for the people right there while they're loading and unloading their trucks. So the people out in the field do self-observations. When they hit the dock, they get observed periodically in what they do.

"Now, what they do on the dock and what they do out on the field are similar. They're moving 55-gallon drums. They're putting – what do they call those things – spears down into them that pump them out and everything else. They're hooking them up to the pumps on the truck, pumping them into things out there. It's a lot of the same things that they're doing - handling and moving these drums around. So these two observations work relatively well together. So either of these are legitimate uses for self-observations.

"Now, what are some situations out there? Again, we talked about lone workers: people that are out there completely, highly mobile workers; workers that aren't necessarily alone, but move around so much that you can't find them. We considered a little bit both of these, the route drivers at Coca-Cola, and some of the other places. Try to go find a Coca-Cola route driver, even if you know his route, go store to store. You'll spend fabulously more time running him down than you will observing him once you get there, so is that a good use of time out there? Project work. Every now and then, you may have workers that work together in a group, and can be observed while they're working in the group. But for a while, you take them off, and stick them on this special project. Project work is another legitimate use for these kind of observations. Drivers, obviously.

"What if you have difficulty getting enough observations? You can supplement the outside observations with these. That's one of the others. Can anybody think of any other situations where you might want to use self-observations? Yes. Okay, interesting question. Everybody hear that? He said, 'Would it be useful to get people to do an observation on themselves just to give them the experience of doing it?' Yeah, even if you don't use the data, would people benefit from this?

"If you really think about how BBS works, ultimately, the thing that makes it work the best is self-observations. If the only time a worker is safe is that five minutes a month that the observer is sitting there observing them, you don't get any gains in safety from that. But what happens when another person observes you? You become more aware and more capable of observing yourself, and it's self-observations and self-coaching that generally drive the improvement.

"If you were ever in athletics in school, you had a coach. And your coach gave you some pointers on how to do things, but you had to go apply them. And your coach would probably tell you something a few times, and then you caught on to it, and you're doing it. The same thing happens in safety. Someone else can help you to realize something you don't realize yourself, focus you on it. But, eventually, either you're going to do it or you're not going to do it. And that's what's going to impact safety, not just that other person's influence on you for that five minutes.

"Yeah, there's a lot of problems with self-observations, and that's one of them. But one of the even stronger ones, and we'll get to that in a minute, is sometimes you don't even know. You don't even realize that you are doing it. It's so automatic. It's so habitual that you miss it completely, and that's one of the dangers also that can happen in a process like this.

INCREASING SELF-AWARENESS THROUGH FOCUSED SELF-OBSERVATION (PART 1 OF 3)



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

"An interesting thing, the question is, 'Are people more critical of themselves?' I got a set of data yesterday. The outside observations were 92 percent-safe. The self-observations were 59. Yes, people are fabulously more critical of themselves than someone else will be, but it's not just that either. They see a bigger sample of themselves than the other people see, and this is kind of an interesting one, too. And because they see a bigger sample, they see more fault. They find more fault with themselves than the outside observer will. You may look really bad all day long, but somebody may take a snapshot of you, and you don't look so bad in the snapshot.

"That's kind of what observations do. And you know, you looked at yourself in the mirror all day long. You said, 'I don't look very good today,' and somebody came around and took a snapshot. And they said, 'Hey, you looked okay.' Yeah, it's generally people are fabulously more critical of themselves than they are of others, and that's usually the way they get marked.

"So, you'll have a – that's why it's suggested, too, that you separate them because one of the things that could happen. You could start self-observations and say, 'Oh, my God! We're going to heck in a handbasket out here. Our percent-safe is just falling apart.' Well, it's not. It's just you're adding self-observations in, and they're going to be lower. They're going to be a lower percent-safe. So you may have had an 88, an 89, 90 percent-safe for a long time; and all of a sudden, you start doing self-observations. You mix them in with the rest of them, and you go down to 70 or something like that. So make sure you keep those separate. So, for that reason and a number of other ones.

"How do you get started on self-observations? Well, can you do a separate Pareto of just the people that you're going to do this for? We did a little separate thing just for the drivers. We did a separate Pareto analysis just of the driving kinds of accidents, and we came up with a different checklist for them. So, make sure you're focusing your Lone Ranger people out there on the stuff that's really pertinent for them. Don't borrow a checklist from the other folks that work in teams, and hand it to your people that don't. Because, very likely, their accidents can be different, if have you enough stuff to Pareto out there.

"So what if a lone worker ran into another vehicle on the road, and you're looking at this accident report. And you're saying, 'Why did this happen?' And the driver said, 'Well, I was in my lane. He's the one that came across the lane. I shouldn't have to dodge him.' What happened out there? Was this something that this driver thought about, and made a conscious decision, and said, 'I shouldn't have to dodge that guy. I'm just going to stay in my lane. If he hits me, he hits me.' The driver says, 'I don't know. It's just the way I always do it out there, whatever it is.' That's a habit. Or the driver says, 'You know, they asked me to pull up in here, and there wasn't enough space to make my turn once I got in there.' That might be a barrier. So you want to look at these kinds of issues out there. And what are they? You want to analyze this, if you can, ahead of time for the drivers."

Tune in next week for Part 2 of this topic, and I'd like to say thank you to those who have personally contacted us. It's been enjoyable talking to some of those that make up our audience. Continue to share your ideas, for they make us all grow smarter and more effective in our approaches. Thank you, and keep in touch.

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 email at us podcast@proactsafety.com.