

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



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

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



Shawn Galloway
President & COO

Greetings, everyone, from Ada, Oklahoma, located in the rolling hills of the southeast part of the state. Today's topic is the conclusion of a talk that Terry gave back in April that focused on increasing awareness among a mobile workforce. Now, like our other multi-part podcasts, if you haven't listened to Part 1 or 2, I'd encourage you to go back and do so before moving forward, for I fear that you will miss some great information, and there's nothing like coming into a conversation after it's already begun. So, try to avoid that if you can. So, here's how the last part of this talk went.



Terry Mathis
Founder & CEO

"Self-observation should never be more than twice the length of regular observations, and the guideline for regular observations is about a minute per item on the checklist. About, and some people add a minute to that. So if you have four items on your checklist, you might be doing a five-minute observation. A self-observation should never run more than twice that long. It can run twice that long, though, because the things you're doing are not quite as repetitious as often.

"If you're sitting here operating a machine, you may be doing something several times a minute. If you're driving down the road, you may only do something occasionally. But, generally, over a five or ten-minute period, you'll see the key things that you want to see, whatever those are. We can get into the analysis of it a little bit, too.

"If you can record your data electronically, have some way of doing that, that's a good way to do it. If not, record your data at the next stop. Don't have your drivers put themselves in danger by trying to write this stuff down while they're going down the road. The electronically is almost more ideal, even if they get down there and you say, 'Well, here's a little voice recorder.' By the way, I saw a voice recorder the other day for \$19.95 at Best Buy. It doesn't have a lot of capacity, but plenty for an observation like this.

"So, what if you gave your driver a little checklist box and one of these digital recorders? They could pick it up and say, 'Okay, I did this. I did this. I didn't do that, and here's the reason.' And everything else. Next stop, they pull this thing up, play it back to themselves, and record it on a sheet.

"There are a lot of different ways to do this, but work it out. Don't ask the drivers to work out their own system out there of how they're going to do that, because then you don't know if the system's safe. Sure, and if you've got those opportunities, use them. Any time you get them together, any time you got opportunities to do it other ways, absolutely so. The more you can mix this up, the more you can supplement it and everything else; and generally, the better it works, also.

"So, have you thought about this? How would you have your workers record this stuff? Okay. You know, at some of the places, too, the radio controller for the trucks would call the driver and say, 'Okay, do an observation.' When the driver was through, he'd call back up, and he'd say, 'I did the observation, ready to record it for me?' And he'd read it off to the people at the thing, and they'd record the data, and actually enter the data there at the site. If you've got radio contact, that is high-tech, right? Maybe a little older

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



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

high-tech than you had before, but anything you can do to facilitate this; try to come up with the way that's safest to do it.

"By the way, don't have them call in on the cell phone while they're driving down the road and doing that. Illegal in some states right now anyway, right? Even hands-free is illegal in a couple of the states right now, so they're looking at that more and more. That's kind of interesting, too. Multi-tasking while you're driving down the road. You're already multi-tasking while you're self-observing. You're already using the conscious part of your brain, while the subconscious part of your brain drives you down the road. You're already using both parts of your brain; you don't need another task to do on top of that. So, don't overload anybody in what they're doing.

"Again, periodic reality checks; if you can ever get anybody to observe these people from outside, ever. If you do a once-a-year check ride, make sure that check ride is a reality check on the self-observations, also. Or, if you can pair people up periodically. Anything you can do to make it where they get a reality check because if their habits are engrained enough, they're missing them. And this other person pointing them out is all it takes to help you start to see what you're doing.

"What do you do with your data? How do you gather your data, and where does that all come back? Well, how do you compile this data, and how do you share it? You need to think about this up front. There's no magic answer to it here, but how does a driver get his own data back? How does he see, or she see, what's happened over the course of the month? How do they see how they're trending, what they're looking like, and everything else?

"You need to report this data back to the drivers, and you very likely are gonna have to do it in paper form. I mean, you're gonna have to print them something that you can hand to them that they can take with them. And say, 'Here's your printout. Here's how you did last month. Here's how you've been doing for the last six months,' whatever this is.

"So how's this data gonna get from the driver into the computer, out of the computer, and back to the driver? There's a lot of different ways it can happen, but if you're gonna do self-observations, you really need to think about that. Now, who's gonna look at this data, and who's gonna problem-solve this data for the drivers? It needs to be people who are familiar with the driving, or with the lone work that's happening out there. So, if you can't get these people together to do observations, how are you gonna get them together and form a steering team of lone workers, drivers, whatever?

"At this site, it was very easy because all the drivers came together first thing in the morning. They had a meeting before they took off, and jumped in their trucks, and went out to do things. That's where we had them look at the data. That's where they were taking a look at this, before everybody went out. Now, they can print reports, they can hand them to each of the drivers, and say, 'Here's how you're doing,' which helps the people to perform better.

"How do you trend this data? By the way, trends are an important part to communicate to people. It's not just 'How did you do yesterday? How did you do last trip?' How are you doing overall? This is what you really want to feed back to people. If you're trying to get them to form three or four habits of better driving or better lone working out there in the field, are they getting better? Are they getting worse? Are they

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



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

staying the same? That's the kind of data they need, not just how did you do on any one particular item, because they know that. They were self-checking. They know how they did on that one particular item. They need to know how they're trending overall.

"By the way, if the trends are not improving, one of the tools is more self-observations. And this is something that we don't really know as well as we do on the others. You know how many peer observations are enough. We've got that nailed to numbers out there in certain kinds of environments and other things. How many self-observations are enough? We don't know that nearly as well, nearly as scientifically; so how many would it take?

"First of all, it's a minimum of twice as many as outside observations. A minimum, so if you're observing people once a month in your organization, which is kind of in the ballpark of what we recommend, self-observations ought to be a minimum of twice a month. And, ideally, they ought to be weekly, because what happens if you do one a week? It becomes a routine. A week is a repeatable block of time. If you have to do one every week, okay. Then you have to do one every week, and you kind of get in the habit of that.

"If it's every other week, how long is it til you're saying, 'Well, is this the week I do one, or is this the week I don't do one?' Trying to remember and trying to ask yourself. If it's a weekly task, not hard to say, 'Okay, what's the day? Today's Wednesday. Have I done one this week yet? No, I haven't done one this week, so I still need to do one this week.'

"So again, this is part of the KISS thing. You wanna keep this as simple as you possibly can for these folks to get them in the mood out there. What I would recommend is you observe them outside monthly. If you're doing self-observations you make them weekly, or you ask the people to do them weekly. Anybody have specific things that they're looking at, or specific groups that you would like to go work with to do self-observations?

"Self-observations – you have to make them friendly. You have to make the data non-threatening to the people on the back end. That's an important part of this, too. If they say, 'Yeah, every time I make a – every time I mark myself as something unsafe, I'm gonna get in trouble, right?' Well, guess what they're gonna do? So, this isn't to get you in trouble; this is to help you. By the way, there's an old saying. It's always been a little awkward to me, but it's kind of a profound point: 'There's some behaviors that you don't get punished for, you get punished by.' You know what I'm saying?

"A lot of times, that's what behavior-based safety focuses you on. If you don't signal three times before you change lanes, we're not gonna write you up, send you home the day without pay. We're not gonna give you a traffic ticket or take your driver's license away. But, you know what? Your chance of getting hit goes up. Your chance of you hitting another vehicle or another vehicle hitting you goes up. So, you're not gonna get punished for this behavior. You might get punished by it. By doing it, you might get injured out there on the road, but that's the real danger. That's the real reason for doing these. And the more you can make this plain that this is what you wanna do, the better it works.

"Drivers are where we have the most experience with self-observations. There's a whole set of bus drivers – by the way, this is on the web if you'd like to look it up. It's the Los Angeles, I believe. Los Angeles

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



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

County has a set of bus drivers that do self-observations. And it's on the Los Angeles County – I forget, the Port Authority, or Transportation Authority, whatever they call it out there, has some reports from time to time. They show you what items they have on their checklist and what their data's looking like out there. That's one of the only ones I've ever seen out there on the web, but that one gets updated every month, and you can kind of see what real data looks like out there.

"Driving safety, by the way – any of you familiar with Smith System? Smith System has five behaviors that they put on their checklist. And one of the things that I would recommend to you, if you don't have any accident data, or it's not terribly reliable accident data; or for any reason, you're saying, 'I'm not sure what behaviors I ought to focus my drivers on,' I would recommend you take a look at Smith. They're on the web, also: Smith System. They call it Driver's Training.

"Those are pretty pertinent behaviors. They're pretty universally applicable behaviors, and Smith system has a really good history of having improved drivers out there on the road. And, by the way, guess what they ask the drivers to do after they've taken the training? They ask them to self-check, and ask themselves, 'Are they doing those five things out there?'

"So, this is a form of kind of self-observation BBS that's been out there in the world now for a number of years, and it's had a really good success. Now, they start theirs with training. You actually go to a driver's training, and one of their drivers gets in the car with you and explains what each of these five things are. You do a test drive with them, and they give you feedback on whether you're doing or not doing these five things. So, guess what the principle is they're following right there also? Getting an outside reality check to get you started on your self-checking. It's a very valid point, a very valid way that they do this.

"Now, their five behaviors are universally applicable to driving, but they're not necessarily the most important things for your site and your drivers. So, if you do have sufficient accident data to do a Pareto analysis, and say, 'Here's the top behaviors for our drivers.' If you have enough accident data, develop the specific checklist for your folks out there.

"Now: fieldwork. I've got a bunch of folks out in the forest, getting bitten by ticks and fleas, stumbling over stumps, and what all else happens to your folks? So, your percent-safe is not going up? Yeah. Well, what you don't want to do is give them a numerical goal, so they can go out and figure out how many safes and concerns they have to mark on themselves to hit it, right? You don't want to do that, but you want to challenge the people, and you want to say, 'Are we getting better at this out in the field?' And, if not, 'What are the barriers?'

"Theoretically, in behavior-based safety, if you start doing observations, even self-observations, you ought to see over a period of time an improvement in the percent-safe unless the reason for it is a barrier. Now, a very entrenched habit can resist it, too; or a perception where they disagree with it can do it, too. That's why you focus on those three things. But generally, just by doing it, challenging yourself to doing it, watching yourself do it, you will address your habits and your perceptions to some degree. And you ought to see some improvement in this.

"Just by measuring it, you ought to see some improvement in it. That's what they call the Hawthorne Effect. I don't know if you've ever gotten into that kind of study and everything. Just by measuring things,

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



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

you usually improve them. But the problem with this is that kind of metric isn't sustainable. Hawthorne effect improvements aren't sustainable long-term, and that's why you want a process to follow them up. You talk to people, and you say, 'What's the problem? Why are we not getting any better?'

"Hopefully, the data will start telling you that. If you're looking at a particular behavior, and you're saying, 'Well, we've been 75, 75, 75, 75, 75 for six months out here, what are the reasons people are telling us that they're not doing this?' Look at your comments on your percent-safe and say, 'Why are workers telling us that they're not doing this? And are we addressing those?'

"If they just say, 'Habit, just forgot. Forgot, forgot, forgot, forgot, forgot,'" you need to come up with an action plan to give them more reminders one way or the other. You put a little sticker in the truck that reminds you to do this. If you've got a logbook that you're going out there, you want to put a sticker every third page in the logbook to remind them to do stuff like that. There's all kinds of little programs you can come up with for reminders. Have them remind each other every time they have a meeting together, 'Are you doing this?' If it's not improving, there's a reason. There's always a reason for behavior. And if you don't change the reason, you probably won't change the behavior.

"So, that's one of the things you want to look at. That's why you're gathering that kind of data: so you can see those things and see what's happening. Now, if you look at your data and you don't understand it, go to your people and say, 'Hey, you're not giving us enough data to help us understand why this is happening. And what's it gonna take to improve it?' Because the improvement's what you're looking for.

"Now, every once in a while – and this is kind of interesting too – in self-observations, every once in a while, your percent-safe won't go up, but your accidents go away. I've seen that happen more often with self-observations than I have with peer observations. Generally, with peer observations, if your percent-safe doesn't go up, your accident rates don't go down. A lot of times with self-observations, people don't see themselves changing, so they rate themselves very similarly for a long period of time. But actually, in reality, just by doing these things, they actually are getting better and better at it. And so you'll see an impact at the downstream metrics.

"Other questions or comments? Yes, sir. Well, you might want to use them to supplement. If somebody comes around – if somebody's around half an hour, they can do the observation. And having another person do the observation is probably superior to doing self-observations. Yeah, no. If you're alone for a while, but you're not alone all the time – that's why I was saying, 'Look for alternatives.' I had a group that say, 'Our people work totally alone. There's no way we can do peer observations.' We started looking at it, and every day a timekeeper came around and made the rounds to all these people. Well, guess who can do the observation? The timekeeper.

"That's why I'm saying, 'Look for alternatives,' because self-observations should be a fallback position; not one that you go for first. If self-observations were as effective as peer observations, we'd use them. We'd use them more often than we do out there, but they're not. They're generally not. They're a fallback position. So, if they're all you can do, they're better than nothing. They're fabulously better than nothing, but they're not as good as a peer observation. So, if you can get it done with somebody else, get it done with somebody else. If you absolutely can't, or you can't often enough, supplement it with the self-observations in between. It's a lot better than just saying, 'Well, helpless case,' and working with that.

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



CUSTOM SOLUTIONS FOR
SAFETY EXCELLENCE

"Self-observations actually in some instances are quite effective, depending on what it is. And some people have used them to great results. In general, they don't work as well. We've done side-by-side comparisons of self-observations and peer observations, and they perform at about half the rate. Now, if a BBS process can get rid of 80 percent of your accidents, and a self-observation process can get rid of 40, and you can't do peer observations, would you like to get rid of 40 percent of your accidents? It's very much worth doing, but don't look for necessarily as good a result from self-observations as you will from a peer observation program.

"Yeah, if somebody doesn't want to do self-observations, your yes or no decision's gonna be made right up front; not every time you want one made, like out there doing the peer observations. Ask people. Get them together, and see if you can build consensus. And say, 'We'd like you to do this. Will you do it?' A lot of times, what you'll find is that they don't object to doing it; they just want to make sure that the right set of circumstances exists out there. They may want some kind of reassurance that they're not gonna get beaten up, and punished, and run in over the data that they're gathering. Or, they might want some kind of reassurances that this is just to help me improve, not to start gathering data to justify firing me somewhere down the line, or something like that.

"All kinds of wild imagination can creep in when you say, 'Hey, fill out this form on yourself.' But assure them, first of all, that you're not the IRS; that you're not out there to get them over this. And see if you can't get them to agree. Yes, you need to get them to agree up front to do these self-observations; and you can't press too hard, either. If they don't want to do them, and you make them do them, they're gonna pencil-whip them. Next stop out there, 'Yeah, I'll fill out a few forms, and turn them in to you, and mark myself all safe, and tell you how wonderful I'm doing.' And it won't be real. So you've got to – everything in behavior-based safety has to be cooperative, has to be volunteer.

"That's the only way that you can really make it work, and really make it effective. So, self-observations are no exception. If the people aren't willing to do self-observations, they aren't gonna do them. And if you make them do them, they're gonna find shortcuts, and other ways to make them happen. So you want to build cooperation. You really want to get the people bought into this."

Thanks, Terry. I hope you enjoyed that, for – I myself thought that was a very good topic, and I hope that you're able to take some of those ideas away, and figure out a way to implement them on your own. If this isn't possible, please consider us a resource. We appreciate all the information, and all the ideas that are continuously shared with us, and encourage you to do the same. If there's anything that we can do to increase the value to you, please let us know. I ask, though, that you do me a favor. Please share these ideas with your own family members, and continue to watch out for yourself. I wish you well, 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 us at podcast@proactsafety.com.