

STAYING ON MESSAGE AND FORGOTTEN COMMUNICATION



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Welcome to Safety Culture Excellence. Today's topic: Staying on Message and Forgotten Communication. My name is Shawn Galloway, and I'm proud to be your host.

Greetings, everyone, from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Today is Part 2 of a 6-part series: Safety Communication Process Loop. And like our other multi-part podcasts, if you haven't listened to Part 1, I encourage you to go back and do so first. So with that being said, here we go.



Shawn Galloway
 President & COO

"As it relates to organizational change, there's gonna be skeptics out there. And there's gonna be people that you want to try to get involved, and you want to try to communicate to, and they're still not gonna get involved. Probably most of you are familiar with the acronym CAVE person: Citizens Against Virtually Everything. If you want to give them a \$20.00, they'd prefer four \$5.00s. There's gonna be some people that, regardless of your effectiveness of the communication, it's not gonna be successful. But you have to look at it and say, 'We're trying to communicate to the entire population. How successful are we?'

"So, we try to develop these action plans. We try to develop communication processes, and that's what I hope to talk about today. There's been some great things that some of you have done, and there's some great opportunities to learn from that. I know that several of you, in this room, have done some very innovative things because I recognize your faces and I remember being at your sites. I hope that you're willing to share those ideas. Several of you have innovated with new things that have never been done before, and other sites have so much innovation that they're – it's a difficulty to try to create a new communication channel because there's so many of them.

"So, we then have to look at it and say, 'Well, what are the most important channels to tap into? And, how do we leverage what we already have existing?' But, the fallacy I see in a lot of these sites is: we perceive that we're closing out this communication loop. The biggest opportunity, for most of your sites, is to communicate with these folks, also. Many times, we're not communicating with the observers that are helping us out with this initiative, and that's what I was referring to this morning when I meant 'reinforce the supporters of change'.

"If you have an all-volunteer process, or if you went out and nominated some folks and asked for their help – said, 'Hey John' or 'Hey Joe, will you help me out with this?' And he says, 'Yes.' That's somebody who's supporting my change effort, supporting my initiative. If he gets involved, and I don't ever give him any information, and I don't give him a sense of score and how he's helping me and what his effort is helping us improve, Joe's gonna get burned out. The analogy that we like to use is: it's like going to a baseball game.

"If you're sitting there in the stands, as a fan there, and you're watching the baseball game go between two different teams. But, if all you see is a bunch of balls being thrown around in the field, bunch of people running the bases – If the teams don't share the score with you, you're gonna get pretty frustrated. You're gonna get tired of watching. We have to look at the people that have supported this, the people that are supporting us, supporting this team, supporting this committee. It's everybody, right? It's the managers, it's the supervisors. But the people that are at the front lines for you are your additional observers.

"If you have additional observers out there, how effective is your communication to them? Do they know

what's important, based on the data that's been collected? If they see something, and they give it to you, do you let them know, 'Hey, that was great. Go get some additional insight here; it would really be helpful if we knew that. That's the type of stuff that we need to be looking at.' I see some of the gentlemen back here from a site that I went and talked to their entire population about a month ago over in Blue Rapids there. It's great seeing you guys. One of the things that – when we went there is I had the union president of a site not too far from here that went with me.

"He gave – he shared a little story with the group there, and I thought it was pretty impressive. They had identified – the process is about four years old, started off at about a 4.6. They're under a 1 right now. Very successful, but they look at the most important things from their observations monthly, and they stay on message about those important things - both on 'What are the not-so-common safe practices that are observed that can be translated and shared with people?' but also, 'What are the critical at-risk exposure that we need to make sure we tell everybody about?' This particular site's a paper mill.

"They manufacture paper, and the rolls that they create out of the paper machine are several tons; and they're hoisted above people and they're moved around. Four years into this process, the thing that they had identified that was the most critical is they saw a lot of maintenance folks working underneath these suspended loads. Now, when you drop one of those several-ton rolls there, that's a really bad idea. It's not a place you want to be. They saw people working underneath there. They went overboard communicating to everybody. It was integrated into toolbox topics, it was shared through department safety meetings, it was shared in shift huddle exchanges.

"They shared it everywhere. They tapped into every potential exposure because – every potential opportunity of channel and the communication because they saw that that was the most critical. And, obviously, should something happen... Three weeks after they started communicating, they saw people start to change. They saw people moving away. And, darned it, if you wouldn't know it, the load dropped. They dropped a load at the site – cracked the cement. It was a pretty horrific thing when the load drops like that. Luckily, nobody was underneath that load. They don't know – the union president – he's the past president now, but the union president was sharing with the folks there.

"They're not 100-percent sure that the communication that they had – whether it had an effect or not. But they know nobody was underneath there, and they know that they – they believe that they changed people's decisions on where they were working by the communication that they stayed on top of. That's the beauty about what we're doing here in safety. You could look at it that it's a thankless job because the things that we're communicating – we see only the void of results because, hopefully, that void of results means that there's no accidents if we're communicating the right things.

"But we don't have that opportunity to further define and further refocus what we're trying to accomplish here if we don't communicate back with the observers that are helping us out. Once we can – that's truly when it – you start closing out this loop is when you actually workflow out. Get together with your committees. Write it up on a wall like you do a lean manufacturing initiative – like a 5S initiative – when you're mapping all this out. Do something creative like that. But get together and say, 'How effective is the communication? What do the channels look like? How do we really communicate?'

"Then, go out there and say, 'Is that really happening?' Because once you start communicating back

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with the people that are on the front lines there – it's like on a battlefield. If you're not communicating with the soldiers, they don't know what the commander's intent is. And that's something that the military uses called – they write CI at the top of it – that regardless of all the things that you're doing, this hill's the most important thing. And they stay on message about those things. When that priority changes, regardless of the loss of ranks and the theater of war, they still make sure that they find communication opportunities to get to the front-end soldiers there.

"And your observers out there, for lack of better analogies, are the front – the people on the front lines there and you've got to figure out ways to make sure that you're effective in that communication. Because once you do that, that's when you really start shaping things, that's when you get the information back to the folks. And it's not a matter of just the steering committee trying to publicize the results. And that's great, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that you should stop publicizing results. That's very important to get in a scorekeeping mentality, but the observers are a channel of communication, too.

"Too many of the sites that we audit other processes, that's something that's easy to forget is communicating back with these observers. So, what I hope to talk about today is maybe some workflow examples of how do you go out there and identify the channels that you have available. But just because you have channels doesn't necessarily mean that they're effective."

Well, this concludes this week's podcast. Tune in next week to Part 3, which is titled: "The Ways in Which We Communicate."

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.