

Welcome to Safety Culture Excellence. Today's topic: The Ways in Which We Communicate. My name is Shawn Galloway, and I'm proud to be your host.

Greetings, everyone, from Norwood, Massachusetts, located just southwest of Boston. Today's podcast is part three of our six-part Safety Process Communication Loop series. Machiavelli once said, "There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead and the introduction of a new order of things". You know, too often we find that there's multiple ways that we possibly could communicate, but we tend to just write it in an e-mail, stick it up on a wall, and we say the communication's happened.



Shawn Galloway
President & COO

We have to look at this and say, "Has communication really taken place?" So, this week, we're gonna be focusing on the ways in which we communicate. Certainly, we're gonna be discussing some of the historical manners, but I hope to bring some new ideas that might encourage you to innovate some of these on your own. The point here, as I've said before, communication doesn't just happen in sharing information. So, let's look at all the ways in which it's possible, because usually a multi-media communication tends to be best. Here we go.

"Let's think for a second; how does communication happen? There's a little bit of scientific theory in here, but I only sprinkled a little bit. I'm not gonna get too scientific because I want you to understand what some of the elements are. But hopefully, those elements will help you put the big picture together. But think about how we communicate. There's a lot of ways that we communicate: verbal. I'm trying to communicate right now through a speech. Hopefully, it doesn't just become a speech.

"Meetings. Meetings are, unfortunately, a great way to take – I think Terry said it the other day - it's a great way to take minutes and waste hours. We spend a lot of time in meetings, but you think about the – even the communication we put out in meetings, we ask a lot of workers when we go to, 'What was the most important thing that came out of that meeting?' A lot of times, people can't tell you. You think about the average safety communication that's put out there, even at talks at plant safety meetings. A lot of times, people can't tell you the most important element.

"And that's kinda where that joking theory comes from, that you tell somebody something seven times, and they'll tell you that they've heard it once. A lot of people recognize that it takes many exposure opportunities for the message to actually be sticky enough people can remember it. That's why companies in marketing, they look for what's called their 'exposure rate', the message that they're trying to put out there. And you have to think about it the same way.

"If something's hypercritical for somebody to really focus on, how many times are we communicating it to them? That really sets the priority of that particular focus. Safety's gotta be a value, but we have to recognize priorities are gonna change, and the landscape and safety's gonna continue to change. And that's why your process, the communication tools that you use, have to change. If you stick with the methodology, and don't continue to adapt that methodology year after year, that's setting yourself up for the perception that, well, that means this methodology will always fit the culture. Well, that also means that the culture will never change if the methodology's always gonna fit the culture.

"Your culture should be changing. It should be improving. Thus, you need to respond to it by modifying the approach. If the approach becomes an awkward fit, if the communication tools become an awkward fit to the site, if they're no longer effective, consider changing them. I'm not saying throw it out, but look at the options here. So, we look at how we communicate. We do a lot of this through verbal, news, a lot of TV. There's a company that I thought was a really good way to kinda raise personal awareness, kinda take people off of autopilot.

"What this organization did - and again, it's a little bit on the softer side of safety - they have, every year, a big family picnic. And they have all the workers come with all their families. What they decided to do, the safety committee, one year, is they had a video camera and they went around and they just interviewed some of the family members of these workers. Now, this site's a big location, and they have public TV. They've got messages coming across all the time, and it's different stuff. Sometime's safety's sprinkled in there.

"But what they did is, they interviewed a lot of these family members. And then, a couple months later, throughout the day, all of a sudden, you'd hear, 'Hey daddy, this is Timmy. Wanted to let you know that I love you. Hope you go home safe today.' To me, that was the soft side. Again, it's a little touchy feely, but that really had an impact. Because it was something that people didn't expect. They didn't expect the message from one of their kids, or their spouses, coming across the facility, the plant TV there. And that really had an impact.

"And that's what you gotta look at. How do we use these tools to really reach people and grab them by the heart? Because I truly believe that if you're gonna be successful in safety, I said it many times: you gotta make it personal. I shared with the guys the other day, or yesterday afternoon, that I heard that you can't talk about a broken record because nobody plays broken records anymore. You have to talk about a broken MP3 player. You look at the different ways that we communicate. Even non-verbal communication, the body languages, the gestures, the facial expressions, sign language, look about your own processes.

"When somebody comes up to you and you say to them, 'Hey, I just wanna let you know I'm gonna do an observation.' Okay, that's a good sign language. This is also communicating, 'No, go away.' That's a form of communication, also. But look at all the different ways that we communicate with people and how effective is that. There's a lot of non-verbal communication, written communication, the stuff that we do, e-mails. A lot of people say, 'We e-mail the results of the incident investigation.' Or, 'We e-mail the results of what we're trying to focus on.'

"The average site that we work at, and there's certainly some exceptions here, but the average site, most people, even if they do have access to e-mail, don't read it. Because how many e-mails do you get on a daily basis? And how many of them want your money in Zimbabwe? Send us your bank account information. I mean, there's so much spam that comes out there, and we're trying to compete with all this communication that's continually flowed to people. So, we have to look at it and say, 'Is e-mail really effective?'

"Some sites, e-mail's very effective. A lot of people read their e-mail. Safety committees put read receipts to make sure that it's happened. But you look at it and say, "Is what we're trying to communicate to people, do we ask for a receipt of communication, or do we ensure transfer of knowledge actually happens?" Many times, safety training becomes a receipt of communication and not a transfer of

knowledge actually happens?" Many times, safety training becomes a receipt of communication and not a transfer of knowledge. 'Here, sign here that you completed this training initiative.' And we're all guilty of that.

"We do a lot of training, and we ask for signature on it. But we don't go out there and say we've communicated something to somebody, does it change common practice, does it improve personal safety? Of course, a lot of books, there's great books, and if you want any of our recommendations, I'll be glad to e-mail you a list of the books that we highly recommend for steering committee members or safety professionals, and most of them are non-safety related.

"They're good business books. They're good business strategies that helps you understand the landscape and better ways to integrate what you're talking about to people. And whether it's a normal every day communication, every day discussions, or as it relates to business strategy, some great books that are out there.

"You'll also look at bulletin boards. Many sites have bulletin boards that you can tap into, that you can put the No. 1 concern that you've seen to communicate to people, or the No. 1 safe practice that you identified to folks to really encourage. But a lot of the bulletin boards that are out there just show you results of your frequency rates, or your dart rates, your total recordable incident rates. A lot of these sites put up a lot of posters, banners, signs. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that any of these are bad and stay away from them. Let's just think about your own processes. How many of these different tools do you actually leverage? How many of these do you use?

"Also, I'm not saying use all of them, because sometimes too much communication can be bad. Too much of anything is a bad thing sometimes, and you could over-communicate something to somebody. But, look for all the different ways. Some sites use a poster all the time, and every month they put up a new poster. Unfortunately, too frequent, people stop paying attention to it, also. But I go to a lot of sites where the poster, you have to kinda dust it off to say, 'Oh, it's a safety poster, 1983 or something like that.' But how effective are the posters that we put up there? And of course, the newsletters.

"Newsletters in some sites are very effective. I know many of your sites here, the newsletters are absolutely critical to what you're trying to accomplish there. You guys know it's a leaner world. We just don't have the resources to create these newsletters at many of your locations. Let's see: what are all these things that are possible? How do we do that? PowerPoints. Personally, I don't like PowerPoints. It's an effective way, but it's certainly not the most effective way to communicate things. A lot of people put PowerPoints up, and they put their entire speech, and they basically just read off of PowerPoints. A lot of people do that.

"Not everyone's comfortable with using PowerPoints, but PowerPoints should send a message, and should at least be an idea of what you're wanting to cover. It shouldn't be too full of information. Again, we're even guilty of that sometimes, because we look at it and we say, "Let's just add more value. Let's put more information in there." And then we get at the end of the talk, and we're having to hurry through a lot of this stuff. But sometimes, you can put these PowerPoints out, and with the message that we send to people is, 'Look at all the figures that we've got. Look at all our rates. Look how well we've done.'

"And we send that organizational metric, even in percent-safe sometimes. Sometimes we only send people the results, the scores. But, even sometimes, the percent-safe doesn't necessarily tell people, 'How are we continuing to improve? What can we do to really impact our own personal safety?' And, showing the percent-safes, I'm not saying that you shouldn't do it, I'm just suggesting that there's other things that you need to communicate as well.

"About a month ago in North Carolina, and driving throughout North Carolina – is anybody from North Carolina in this room? Okay. What I liked about North Carolina is this sign that I saw here. And it said, 'Kingston seatbelt use. Last month: 89 percent. Record: 95 percent.' And, right away – personally, I always wear my seatbelt - but right away when I saw this, I kinda looked at it and said, "Yep, I got my seatbelt on." Signs, posters, PowerPoints, they're all antecedents because they prompt you to do something.

"Training, as I mentioned this morning, that's largely an antecedent. It prompts you to do something. But we gotta have a consequence. We gotta have a consequence for the communication. Let people know what we're actually – how we're doing things. But I kinda like this, and even the government does this, and how they accomplish this – I did a little research after I pulled over to the side and took this picture there, as I drove all the way across the state there. But I did a little research, and what they do is: anonymous observations. They kinda stand off on the side of the road between 8:00 and 5:00, and they record.

"The gentleman from North Carolina, if he knows more about it, please, by all means, offer that up. But, from what I read in North Carolina, observes between 8:00 and 5:00, and they do anonymous sampling. And just by observing people as you're coming out in traffic, or as they see them passing, and they write down the amounts that they actually see. And they give people feedback on a monthly basis. 'Hey, we're getting better to our score. The record's 95. We're only at 89 percent right now.' So that's a good communication to people that helps them, kind of out of the blue. You don't expect it, boom: you get stuck by a sign about seatbelt usage.

"Regardless that that's a law in many states, we're obviously still not 100 percent. I like what he did in this one. This is from several months back when he shared this with our organization. But in this particular approach, he's got his half-time stats, he's got the logo of the site up there. And he's got the overview chart that puts the percent-safe. It talks about here where their percent-safe is. And it tells you the difference, of course, in safe and lucky. We didn't have any accidents this month; there's our percent-luck. Just because we didn't have any accidents, we can't call that safe.

"Now, they kinda know what they should be working on. Line of fire at that time looked like, I think, it's about 88 percent. Select proper tool and equipment for the job is 85 percent. It lets people know their personal score. But, what I like about this is there was a couple of things that they highlighted: notable safe work practices and behaviors. I think that that's a good idea: let people know what I caught you doing safe. That sometimes can help change those habits as well, because we start defining positively what safety really means.

"Well, safety means ergonomically using the right lifting techniques. And they also put this month's focus area, pre-job inspection, 5S shift change, daily check consistently complete, proper tool for the job, gauging pool from cell to cell, and set a back up cabinet. Jerry, would you mind sharing with the group, has

worked well at the site as far as noticing the best practices, also? Has that been perceived well by the folks? He says it's very positive. They review it at the meetings and the employees really like it. It's an effective tool.

"What he is saying is that they review it at the management departmental meetings. And they post it on their bulletin boards and share it. And they update it with real-time information. And if you didn't hear, they look at it like a football team: what's our halftime stats in this? So, this is a good idea. And this is something, because generally what we communicate to folks in safety is what they're doing wrong. That's usually how we communicate back to folks is, 'This is what you're doing wrong.' This is where the opportunity is to improve.

"Now, that's what I meant this morning by 'managing by exception'. Now, there's two parts, again, by managing by exception. That's by looking at the most important things, both strengths and weaknesses. But, unfortunately, in safety, we tend to focus on the weaknesses. I think this is a good idea that they did here, because they're focusing on the strengths. What are the things that are maybe not common, but really good ideas if we can encourage people to do so.

"This is a site from the folks, got three of the gentlemen right up here, I had the honor to work with. I really like what they did here. They took their checklist - it's kind of a light green colored card, which helps announce the observation. People can see the color. They blew it up into a big banner-size poster. It's larger I believe - I stood underneath it - than the width of my arms here. And they hung it from their facility, from the roof of their facility. But they've also gone out, and one of the things that they're measuring is the knowledge level of the precautions.

"And I think yesterday, Mr. Howard told me it was about 25 percent when they started doing this. So, they've got posters all over this facility. And their four particular precautions spell out F-A-T-E. So it was a good acronym to be able to communicate to the folks. But these four precautions in this environment, they've got posters all over the facility. The communication tool was good. There's always opportunities to improve that communication tool. But, personally, I like this. Because it helps build the trust issue if people can physically see the checklist that we're talking about.

"Sometimes, the first role that we do in communication when we're first starting off a process and we encourage is do nothing but communicate between the observers. Don't collect data, don't collect insight. Just the first round, go out and coach people and talk to them about the issues. Start building the trust, and then demonstrate the trust that you've built there. But it's a good idea to really, actually communicate with folks by maybe hanging up a banner at the facility. Maybe that might work.

"The other thing that they do, and I was gonna try to put it in here, and the safety manager sent it to me. Unfortunately, I had already turned in this presentation, but they do an excellent job of taking pictures of what safe precautions look like, the actual behavioral picture. And they also take pictures - they stage them - of what an unsafe behavior might look like, what type of at-risk. And they post those all over the facility. They've got them on bulletin boards; they've got them all over the place. And they also integrate that into their observer training of actually showing this is what the safe precaution and action looks like.

"Make the examples specific to your site. And it helps with communication because we need

communication to be sticky. And there's a principal here. We gotta speak to people in a way that they understand. We have to give people different methods of communication to allow it to make sense. So what really works well – and plus they'd also done some successful 5S initiatives, and a typical 5S initiative takes a picture of before and afterwards. And that afterwards picture tends to encourage people to continuously sort and shine, and then, of course, sustain that last one.

"The joke that we always have is, 'I see a lot of 4S initiatives all over the world.' Because that last S of 'Sustain' is very difficult to do. But, we look at it and we say, 'Well, how are usually 5S initiatives successful?' Because they continue to remind people by communicating to them what safe looks like. Not just through messages, not just through departmental meetings. But, actually, physically take pictures of those things, and incorporate that into how you're communicating with people.

"This is something that they do, that we see a few sites do, but not too many. If you look at the average observation card, we encourage people to stay on focus to the most critical things, the precautions that they're focusing on. Now, they recognize there's other things that are gonna be important. You need a place to write that down on your checklist. Generally, if it's a small enough card, you flip it over and you write it on the back. That's the additional comments.

"But no names, no blame. You don't write anybody's name down on what they said, but you write down what their concern is, and you write that down.

"What are some other critical things that concern the individuals? What this site does, and several other of your sites do this, but they create a hit list that every month they categorize the additional concerns and comments from the folks. And they categorize it by department. Every month they give a hit list to that department head or that department supervisor based on categorizing the additional things that would impact people's safety and ability to do the job safely. And they give it to them every month.

"And the site manager started putting in some accountability for that to make sure that people are following up. So, every month then, they look at it and say, 'What's the actions plans of the additional things that we identified during our observations as they relate to what we're trying to accomplish here?' And I think that's a really good idea. You guys collect so much information in these processes. That's the third thing that we see when we audit a lot of these other processes, is that we're not responding to the information that we see.

"We get a lot of data, but we don't do anything with it. Jim, yes. The question was, 'Does the software that we provide allow you to categorize, sort, and communicate that data?' Yes, if you're using the ProAct software. We still recommend that product, because it's the most user-friendly and flexible. But there's so many other products out there. I can't speak on all of them, but the ProAct software, absolutely. You can collect – there's a little button that you click on when you're entering in the data that says, 'additional comments'. You click on that, and it pops up two fields, and it says, 'observer comments' and 'worker comments'.

"And you can capture all that information in. And then you can also sort that stuff by doing the breakdown reports. There's a feature that you can break down your reports by variable. Now, what a variable is is something on your checklist that helps you – warning: techy term - slice and dice your data. That's

something that helps you look at time of the day, day of the week, department, area, whatever you categorize your observations on; it'll help you do all that.

"And this is something that I think's important. Now, keep in mind, that whenever you do something like this, you gotta make sure that there's accountability for turning that stuff in. All disappointment is based on a level of expectation. If you give people expectations you're gonna follow up on that stuff, make sure you follow up on it. So make sure that you don't just create another black hole work order system by identifying these things and turning it into stuff. Make sure that when you're putting a system like this in place, you identify, 'Is there a good communication channel from which to utilize? Or do we need to create something and kinda work backwards? What would success in this communication look like?' And then start working upstream."

Well, this concludes part three of this series. Tune in next week for part four where the topic will be, "Important Key Performance Indicators and Real Communication". 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.