

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES TO WORK SAFELY

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When I visit my clients and new prospects, I always stress the importance of developing the proper attitude towards safety. I cannot over stress this enough. Attitude greatly influences behavior and safe work behavior is the most critical factor to a successful Safety Program. I have found out that changing employee safety behavior is one of the hardest things there is to do. We would think that would be easy, that employees would automatically want to be safe. While I believe that no one wants to be injured, the fact is, that most of us are not naturally safe.

To change behavior you first have to change attitude, and to change attitude you must be able to motivate employees to want to change. Not an easy task, but it can be done. The following guidelines have proven to be successful with many of the clients I work with and should be successful for your company as well.

Lead by Example - Employees watch everything you and your supervisors do, if you want people to be safe set the example. Nothing irritates employees more than having rules applied unevenly. If you fail to do so, employees will not believe that you are sincere and you will lose their trust. Once trust is lost it is almost impossible to regain.

Set High Safety Standards and Goals - Companies that have good Safety Programs always set their standards and expectations high and work hard to achieve them. Hold supervisors and employees accountable for safety performance with the same intensity as you do for production, sales, quality and other important management functions.

Get Employees Involved in the Process - The more you get employees involved the easier it is to get employees to buy into the Safety Program. Employees need to feel like they have a say. Ask employees for suggestions, ideas and their opinions. Be ready to follow up on these and incorporate their ideas. Remember there has to be a genuine effort on management's part and the effort has to be supported on a continuous basis.

Do Not Blame Employees for Accidents - Remember accidents are usually caused by more than one factor. Identify all the factors and then correct their causes, whatever the reasons. If employee behavior is one of the causes, this should be addressed in a Positive Manner.

Provide Proper Tools and Equipment - Employees have to see that you are serious about your Safety Program and it is hard to convince employees you are serious if they are not provided with safe tools and equipment.

Provide a Safe Work Environment - Check the work area frequently and take actions to correct unsafe conditions, tools and equipment. Stress proper housekeeping at all times. Ensure adequate lighting so work can be done safely. Sloppy housekeeping has a negative influence on employee attitude and behavior.

Provide Proper and Adequate Safety Training - Proper safety training is a critical aspect of a successful Safety Program. The goal of safety training should not only be to convey necessary work knowledge but also to develop the proper attitude towards safety and establish safe work practices.

Reward and Recognize - We all like to win, be rewarded and be recognized. Establish safety goals with the input from your employees. Also, establish a method to reward and recognize. There are a number of methods to do this. Choose one that is easy to monitor and provide the most bang for the buck. Be consistent, do not let the program fade away and advertise the rewards. If employees feel being safe is a worthwhile endeavor, they will work harder to be safe.

Do Not Quit - Often companies implement an effective Safety Program, get employees involved, put in a rewards system and do all of the right things but after they have been successful in reducing accidents, they lose their intensity. Keep the program alive, continue to keep the employees involved and excited. Advertise your success and do not take it for granted. Safety is an ongoing never ending process, if you quit doing all the things you did to be successful, it will not be long before the employees recognize this and they will lose their interest and belief in the program.

If you have any questions or need any assistance with your Safety Program, please call American Safety & Health Management Consultants, Inc., at 1-800-356-1274.