

Beyond The Cab

The only safety management newsletter dedicated exclusively to addressing injury prevention and workers' compensation cost control for trucking companies.



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A Frank Discussion on Safety Training

Training vs. Education

Essential to this discussion is establishing a sound understanding that this topic is indeed about training and not education. There is a distinct difference! However, far too many managers and safety directors aren't aware of it.

Training deals with the process of imparting a particular skill for someone to use in an application. While this process may involve discussion of theory and may inform employees of facts, its mission is to impart a skill and ensure that it can be competently applied. Education, on the other hand, deals with conveying information and allowing the receiver to conceptually draw conclusions about the information. To further illustrate this difference, some training gurus state that teenagers receive sex education in school; not sex training.



Training is typically more appropriate to adult audiences, while education spans a wider range to include children. When adults receive education under the guise of training they many times tune out the message because they feel they are being forced "back to school" and do not see personal value of the training. The "What's In It For Me Law" (WIIFM) is always at force in safety training. Adult learners appreciate receiving instruction that has direct application in their day-to-day tasks. They have a subconscious need to understand how the training benefits them **at the present time**.



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Training to Compliance: Minimal ROI

Satisfying regulatory obligations or pacifying an insurance carrier should not be an organization's **primary** objective or motivation for performing safety training. In most instances, the standards for training set by regulatory agencies and insurance carriers represent a **MINIMAL** degree of loss control. Your company probably invests lots of money and resources to simply conduct safety training. Why not expend a little more effort to customize the training and design it for excellence? Doing so reaps a much greater return on investment and saves supervisor headaches caused by employees exhibiting unsafe behaviors despite being "properly trained". Simply training to compliance reaps only compliance; not changed behavior.

Videos and Canned Training Programs: Their Proper Place

Generic safety videos and other types of commercially available presentations (what this author means by the term "canned") can prove to be a valuable supplement to safety training. **The operative word here is "supplement"**. Avoid relying solely upon "canned" videos and presentations for the content of safety training. Employees quickly recognized the "canned" approach and tune out such instruction as being disingenuous. Too frequently, images and references in "canned" programs are not applicable to your particular workplace or are too vague for an employee to see the direct application in their day-to-day work. Again, videos and other canned training programs **DO** have a use in safety training; as supplements to customized training processes. Solely relying upon canned

videos and programs does more educating than training and is the typical approach of simply training to compliance.

More Training: Frequently Not the Fix

Many times, too often after an accident occurs, supervisors and management conclude that an employee having more training is the solution to correcting at-risk behaviors or preventing an accident from recurring. In most of the instances that prompt this conclusion, the employee already had training before the accident or at-risk behavior was exhibited. What is the logic behind the thought process of "hearing the same message again will cause unsafe behavior to cease"? Whatever the logic may be, it's flawed! Actually, "Keep doing what you're doing and you'll keep getting what you're getting", is a wise saying that is applicable to this scenario.

In many cases, training is not the solution to correcting at-risk behaviors. Frequently, a safety system / program (or lack thereof), a process issue, or the safety training itself is at the root of at-risk behaviors. Attempting to engineer out the temptations for shortcuts, improving a safety procedure, or improving the quality of safety training is a more fruitful endeavor than simply repeating the same old safety training.

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