

Safety; When GOOD is Good Enough

Being good in safety is not enough. After all, the race for top decile or 'world-class' safety performance seems every bit as intense as the chase to break Roger Maris' 1961 home run record. Today, CEO's are setting single year injury goals that reduce last year's numbers by seventy five percent or more. Target zero posters hang on locker room walls all across this country. The spotlight is clearly and intensely focused on the year-end goal. Everyone is chasing zero, and that creates a small problem. It's hard to be perfect for 365 straight days!

In 2000, Dr. Kevin Leman published a book entitled *What a Difference a Daddy Makes*. Leman, an internationally known psychologist, speaker and author, uses this book to examine the significance of the father-daughter relationship. Early on however, he takes the pressure off of us dads by letting us know that we don't have to be perfect. Leman says that we don't have to worry about being 'super-dad.' All we need to be is good. A good dad cares about his child. A good dad is trustworthy and engaged. In the end, a good dad will raise a great child. That is the truth in safety, too. If we can be GOOD (GOOD meaning; G=Get in the Game, O=Offering 3-D Feedback, O=One Day at a Time and D=Determined to Make a Difference), we can have a great safety record.

G=Get in the Game. A quick quiz, who do you work for? For most, the automatic response is the name on the paycheck. Others will say, 'my boss.' After some thought, a few recited 'family.' The truth is we work for ourselves. We trade time and talent to an employer for money. We are each CEOs of our own business. We each have a corporate budget, the money we have to spend, a corporate fleet, the vehicle we own and drive, and a corporate staff, our family and friends. This fact is important because if I'm hurt at work I suffer, not my employer. Sure the employer will pay a financial piece for that injury, but the great secret is that the employer will continue to make money. The injured cannot make another eye, hand or finger. Your daughter cannot make another dad; your dad can't make another son. In April 2006, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released a report that listed the lifetime costs of the workplace injuries that occurred in 2000; the costs topped the \$406 billion mark. Those numbers include the employer paid medical expenses (\$80.2 billion), but the bigger numbers (\$326 billion) came from lifetime productive losses that include, "loss wages, fringe benefits and ability to perform normal household responsibilities." (CDC 2006) Those losses aren't felt by the employer but by each of our people when injured.

Recently, the National Safety Council awarded UPS Chairman and CEO Michael L. Eskew with the coveted Green Cross for Safety Medal. Eskew says this about safety, "But for safety to be a core value, it has to be taken personally." (McMillan 2007) Instilling in each of our people exactly 'who they are working for' is the first step in personal accountability and getting in the safety game.

O=Offering 3-D Feedback. Recently my family and I spent a week vacationing at the Disney theme parks. The most memorable attractions may have been the many 3-D shows. These are no 'typical' shows, there are smells filling the theater, rodents brushing your legs, bugs between you and your seat and a dog sneezing water on the audience. And this is just the introduction!

Today, we employ feedback mechanisms such as safety committees, peer observations, safety meetings, near-miss reporting and job briefings, and these are like television sets. They are like TVs because we wouldn't live without our television sets or these feedback tools, yet often they are little more than background noise. For feedback to be effective, it has to be 3-D. We have to make it jump off of the screen and capture the attention of our people. Some 3-D feedback ideas are giving a safety committee a specific end statement. This is a vision statement but not the recipe to make the vision happen, the committee can decide what ingredients are needed for their success. Encourage peer observers to have a safety awareness item in hand. For example, a simple 'Take-Five' candy bar can be the 'attention getter' that encourages everyone to take five minutes to analyze job hazards before beginning work. Endorse Involved Safety Meeting Activities instead of safety meetings. These shift

safety meetings from sit and listen to get up and do; and triple retention rates over the traditional meetings. Check out my book entitled, *Involved Safety Meeting Activities, 101 Ways to Get Your People Involved* or a book series entitled *Games Trainers Play* for a head-start in this area.

'Practice makes perfect' isn't true; practice only makes permanence. In our business habit is key. 3-D feedback, not traditional feedback tools, is the best way to change habits and be GOOD in safety along the way.

O=One Day at a Time. Francis Petro, President and CEO of Hayes International Inc. said, "The fact is, the only day an employee can get injured is today. You can't get injured tomorrow until it gets here and you can't get injured yesterday because it is gone. So, we have to be very, very clearly focused on what is happening today and that becomes part of our makeup, that becomes part of our nature, and that becomes part of our culture." (McMillan 2007) Before 1997, Phillip Popovec, Site Director for International Specialty Products (ISP), said safety was, "terrible." But, the chemical manufacturer surmised, "We came to the conclusion that we don't have to worry about how many recordable injuries we get this year. We don't have to worry about how many recordable injuries we get this quarter. The only thing we have to worry about is not getting hurt today." (Smith 2005)

And, a GOOD safety program does just that. It takes the 'world-class' and 'top-decile' safety focus and pressure off the operation environment and shifts the focus to the present...to today. Many are engaging in Safety First meetings just like ISP. These are short, three to five minute daily safety meetings that focus on the hazards of the day and plan for making it one shift injury free. Safety stops can be used. These are predetermined times throughout a day when work is stopped for a short time to ensure all safety measures are in place. Introduce a Safety Saves program. A safety save is the stopping of a job by a peer or management person due to a hazard on that job. Once the exposure is controlled, the event is reported and celebrated. The key is finding 'what's going to hurt me today,' and eliminating those exposures.

D=Determined to make a difference. Titus Adams was a normal six-year-old boy in every way except one; Titus suffered from night terrors, a clinically diagnosed fear of the dark. On Thanksgiving Day, 2002, Titus along with his mother and two-year old twin sisters enjoyed the holiday with grandparents. At eight o'clock that evening, his mother dressed him and his sisters in pajamas and loaded them in the truck for the hour-long drive home to Galeton, Colorado. Just minutes from their home the cell-phone rang. The phone was just out of arm's reach so Titus' mom unbuckled to reach it. As she did, she inadvertently veered off the road. The truck flew into the ditch and overturned. Titus quickly surveyed the scene. He and his sisters, buckled in, were okay. Titus could hear a faint sound of a woman's voice. The voice said, "Help." Telling the twins to 'sit tight,' Titus quickly unbuckled his seat. For a long moment he peered out the broken passenger window. It was dark out there...so dark. Finally he took a deep breath and crawled out the window. He stood, planting his bare feet solidly in several inches of Colorado snow. The wind cut through his pajamas. It was seven degrees.

So, what happened to Titus and his family? And, what's happening to safety within your organization. There is an old saying that reads, "The road of a thousand miles begins with just one step. Take that step today." The new era in safety isn't about top-decil but a step in a new direction with intense focus on simply being GOOD. The only real question left, how determined are we to make that difference? Are we willing to do the safety equivalent of firmly planting our feet in the cold Colorado snow and walk over a quarter of a mile in the dark to summon help, as Titus Adams did. His actions saved his family. And, a quest to be GOOD can save people too...and create a great safety record along they way!

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