

Engage Them, Educate Them & Entertain Them

There are many benefits to hands-on and engaging instruction-led training as opposed to only classroom-based lectures. As a safety and health professional with many years of experience in both training and field projects, the benefit from hands-on training has become very apparent to me. Hands-on, engaging experiences make it easier for the students to relate to the subject matter.

The classroom setting has been the standard in safety training for many years. Students file in, sit down and mindlessly stare at a PowerPoint or worse yet, a DVD movie, or if one is lucky, at the instructor with glazed eyes and bored expressions. Many of these individuals have been through similar

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training classes year after year. After the first few years of training, many of these individuals are likely jaded and bored. Once this occurs, the trainer is flirting with a fine line of either equipping students with enhanced professional learning skills, or just simply having them scribble their signature on an attendance sheet. Most are more interested in the next break, or what they will have for lunch. How does the trainer avoid this situation?

Hands-on training using props and various media resources change the dynamics by engaging students and keeping their attention. It has been shown that students retain more information from hands-on learning experiences vs. straight lecture. When students use props, such as lockout/tagout boxes or personal monitoring devices, they can learn how to properly use a piece of equipment under the supervision of a safety professional. By practicing a task with real props, students can see what might be a challenge for them in the field setting, and with the help of the trainer, they can come up with real-time solutions that they will use in their daily experiences.

Hands-on learning also stimulates students and helps them want to learn about the techniques they will use on the job. Various learning aids, including air sample



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pumps, direct-read instruments and calibration equipment, help increase students' interest in the subject at hand and make them want to learn more.

A lockout/tagout training class is a good example. Have the students observe and conduct a lockout/tagout procedure on equipment or machinery during the training class. The instructor would then observe and critique (with positive comments and enhancements), the procedure for the participant and the rest of the students observing. Ask the students for ways to enhance the participant's actions.

You can multiportion many training classes to desktop exercises, discussions and hands-on equipment and supplies usage. For example, respirator protection can be used to multiportion a class. Prepare and present a PowerPoint on the OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134-required training provisions and customize it to the facility site, respirator type and existing job hazard analyses, standard operating procedures and plans. Then present a bingo game using this respiratory protection PowerPoint, but with words or phrases missing for 25 boxes. Take those words and phrases and enter them onto 8.5" x 11" bingo cards. The trainer can offer a prize, such as candy, to the top three students who obtain bingo either vertically, or horizontally across. Continue the bingo game for more winners if time permits in the training sessions.

One other training tool used is to have the students conduct an exercise on how to don a respirator. Have

them write the instructions from accessing environmental conditions to donning and final seal check. This achieves one of the objectives as stated in the OSHA informational booklet, “[Training Requirements in OSHA Standards and Training Guidelines](#).”

Another major benefit of hands-on learning is that it helps students learn to develop critical-thinking skills. Students develop the problem-solving skills needed to properly use equipment in the field. For example, if a personal air monitor malfunctions in the field, the person might know the steps to fix it, but acting them out in real time is a different story. In a hands-on environment, the trainer can create controlled situations and can help the students along as they physically act out these steps to rectify the issue at hand. This way the student builds confidence in using their skills in the field, and it also

reduces the chance of an avoidable accident. The bottom line is to educate, but to have students retain what was presented through engaging and fun exercises.

Engage them, educate them and entertain them. Keep these in mind, and you will become convinced of the value of hands-on training as you are asked to conduct repeat training courses on the same topics. Not only is the training session more enjoyable for the students and the trainers, it also leaves a lasting impression on the students. Students absorb more information, become better problem-solvers, and work more efficiently and safely in their daily work routines. ☺

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Actions Speak Louder Than Words

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safely on the job? In other words, what are the motivations that drive employee actions to be safe at work? At the core, only two motivating factors cause employees to work safely:

1) To avoid experiencing an injury and everything that goes along with an injury. This includes the concerns revolving around a loss of income, pain and suffering, the lack of ability to take care of one’s family and fiscal costs to the company.

2) To avoid getting in trouble or experiencing any type of accountability. There are no other reasons for employees to work safely because safe work procedures require effort, can be time-consuming, and are generally not intrinsically reinforcing.

When an individual works safely, it is to avoid an accident, or to avoid getting in trouble for violating safety rules. When a company focuses its effort on workplace safety, it does so to avoid losses and expenditures. In all of these cases, the important word for motivation is “avoid.” Motivation by avoidance is always a poor condition and makes for a greater challenge to obtain acceptable performance. Further, avoidance is typically not the outcome that the organization wishes to achieve as avoiding participation in workplace safety can create significant gaps in the management systems of most organizations.

As stated, working safely requires extra effort, is often more time-consuming and almost always has no inherent rewards. The vast majority of times, when an individual works unsafely, s/he does not experience an injury, or any type of accountability. In fact, if employees take a shortcut or engage in some other unsafe action, they will likely experience the positive reinforcement of completing the job easier and with less effort, but almost never will they experience an accident, or be held accountable. This lack of regular negative consequences often facilitates employees developing habitual unsafe work practices.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

To combat the development of unsafe work habits, many organizations will attempt to enact safety management systems (SMSs) with greater degrees of complexity. New safety initiatives rarely work on any level other than being more effective at creating employee avoidance.

Some complex SMSs activities, such as incentive programs that promote injury hiding and establishment of punitive accountability systems, or conduct training when no knowledge gap actually exists, are all too common. These types of programs usually accomplish nothing in terms of actual safety improvements and often further the alienation to safety by employees. This occurs when employees begin to interpret safety initiatives as “the flavor of the month.” They have learned over time that if they avoid participating in the safety program, eventually it will go away.

Each of the activities listed here is analogous to riding a merry-go-round. After you sit on your pony and the music starts, you feel yourself moving round and round, but you are actually going nowhere. To change workplace safety and improve it dramatically, organizations need to alter this fundamental motivational framework from one of avoidance to one of accomplishment. Fostering safe work practices requires a fundamental change in organizational thinking and a deliberate effort to reinforce safe behaviors

Often, if employees take time to work safely, especially if they take extra time to engage in a safe task that detracts from production, they can receive criticism or negative feedback. This sends the clear message that production takes precedence over safety each and every

When creating a positive and sustainable approach to workplace safety, an organization must look for validated methodologies that result in true continuous improvement.