

The Best *Vs.* The Worst

by Mackenzie Wilson

The World's Best Safety Experts tackle the worst and most persistent safety problems.

Capturing Hearts and Minds

Strategies that worked in the field and in the boardroom

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Getting beyond compliance-based safety to a place where employees understand safety as a top priority is not just necessary but can only happen if their hearts and minds are won over. SafeStart author Larry Wilson invited a SafeConnection Expert Panel to share their experiences in making this vital transition.

"All the panellists today are people who in my opinion have done a good job of capturing the hearts and minds of their employees" says Larry. The question now is what type of campaigns, training, budget, and tools for getting upper management's support they used so that other companies can be helped to do the same:

- "I was more worried about compliance and our responsibilities at first", says Gary Higbee (co-author of Inside-Out: A Different Perspective on Safety Management). "Hearts and minds were the last thing on my mind. But I realised we need more than compliance. I felt if I was going to get to the next level, I needed the group to trust me".

- He explains that as a new safety manager at John Deere who hadn't been there very long, he had to be truthful, listen well, and do what he said he was going to do. "That doesn't get you their hearts and minds" he admits, "but it's necessary".

- Jason Covarrubias (Health Safety & Environment Senior Manager, Procter & Gamble) agrees: "Every operator on the floor needs to believe that leadership will continually reduce risk" he says. "Safety defects need to be [quickly] addressed, provisions put in place until they are addressed, and incident investigations go beyond compliance".

- In short, "leaders need to walk the talk" states Aamer Shamim (Global EHS&S Director, AES Corporation).

"This means talking to people and interacting on the shop floor". AES leaders do four safety walks a month and take an e-learning course on how to effectively conduct a safety walk, how to intervene, give feedback, correct behaviour and follow up. "It's a dedicated activity" he says, "not just a walk in the park".

So authentic, credible communication by leadership being the starting point, the mission becomes to change values through an empowered workforce:

- Hector Salazar (Director H&S, Dragados Canada Inc.) explains that one of his favourite things while working in India for so many years was getting to be part of the hearts-and-minds transition. "Doing safety before regulation you have to convince people to learn and be part of the process" he says. "There is some cultural resistance at the beginning, but once people see that they can help and do something that makes a difference they become the main character".

"When you capture their hearts and minds, they want more," says Larry. And values can evolve once the company is centred on the human dimension:

- Edward Stephens (Global HSE/SA Audit, Assurance & Senior Lead Investigator, ABB Robotics and Discrete Automation) also shares what that transition might look like. "ABB's old value pairs were safety and integrity, customer focus and quality, innovation and speed, and collaboration and trust" he says, "today they are courage, care, curiosity, and collaboration".

- "Much more human focused" suggests Larry... "and more in tune to this hearts and mind concept", adds Ed. "As a global community we went on a journey of what safety really is", he continues. "We started off with regulation, then engineering. Now we're on a new journey:

- With this in mind, Gary found that training sessions provided him the ultimate avenue to capture hearts and minds. "If I could incorporate a story into the training that allowed the listeners to get themselves mentally into that place, it stuck," he says. "Emotional stories became a part of what I did, [allowing them to] learn without experiencing the hurt and pain".

- Too often it takes a serious incident or fatality for people to truly realise the importance of safety, so Gary – who has been involved with three workplace fatalities – uses storytelling to get the message across.

- Gary also found that after he started adding human factors into his risk assessments, the opportunity to incorporate a bit of humour came up, which worked really well too.

human factors. If we were talking about current concepts 20 years ago, it might not have had any impact because we weren't ready yet".

Beyond changing core values and establishing leadership credibility, what tangible changes can be made to capture hearts and minds? One approach is to consider if your company is being fair in safety-related matters:



Experience insight from SafeStart's Larry Wilson: "The timing of the message is important: talking about the Critical Error Reduction Techniques 22 years ago was certainly not the easiest, but now people have accepted that rushing, frustration, fatigue and complacency, or a combination of those states, cause most of the problems. And they know that complacency isn't a character flaw, so it's a lot easier to talk about human error now."



- Aamer notes that too often incident investigations end in the worker being blamed: "We have implemented software to catalogue investigations: nine out of ten times it will come out with 'improvement in human skill or process' not 'blame individual'", he observes. "Accountability is something you need to make sure of, when do you bring it on and at what level."

- Larry agrees, noting that "if your culture is not perceived as fair, there is no way you will be able to capture their hearts and minds".

Remember too that workers like everyone else, enjoy stories told with humour:

Case Study: Jeff Clarke (Regional Environment Health Safety Manager, Americas, Praxair Surface Technologies) spoke about the importance of emotional buy-in during a separate panel on Driving Safety – The Last Frontier, and he explained that getting through to the worker's families was the best way to do that. While he was working at Indianapolis Light and Power, he organised a Safety Day for the worker's families to come to the plant, play games, eat food, and have some of the line-truck drivers give the teenagers a driving demonstration. But it didn't end there. "We also had some vehicle involved in a car crash towed into the car park, and we engaged a local drama club to come in with makeup and fake blood to act out a crash rescue scene", Jeff explains, "we had a loudspeaker where we called [emergency services and] told them about the crash. They came with fire engines, ambulances, sirens, the jaws of life... it just came off as so realistic everyone in the audience was absolutely captivated". They went so far as to get a helicopter to come in and take Jeff's daughter (one of the actors) away in a stretcher. "The really cool part", Jeff says, "there wasn't a dry eye in the audience. It was my daughter being taken away, but all the parents were seeing their own children getting pulled out of the car". Jeff explains that this event allowed them to finally break through to the drivers, going from 80 vehicle incidents a year to less than one minor car accident a quarter. This was all accomplished at a cost of only \$400.



Families too can be instrumental. “If you ask anyone, ‘Do you care more about your family’s safety than your own?’, everyone says, ‘My family’s’”, says Larry. So if you want to capture hearts and minds, that’s probably the best and the easiest way to do it”. The case study below is a vivid example of this principle in action.

Trust is another meaningful lever. As Gary said, “if your employees trust that you are there to help, and you prove to them that you care about their safety, you’re on your way to getting through to their hearts and minds”.

Accountability is also very important. As Aamer explained, “making sure that managers are accountable for proactive efforts” is really important.

When it comes to capturing ‘hearts and minds’ there are no shortcuts. Everything that you do – from deciding the company’s core values to daily safety briefings – sets the tone in the organisation. Making sure accountability (and blame) lands where it should, tapping into the employee’s emotions, and committing to continual improvement of safety processes and management allows employees to feel like they are being cared for and that their safety is what’s most important. “Once you have this”, as Hector said, “then there’s no limit”.



Take Aways

- ✓ Capturing hearts and minds gets your team beyond a compliance-only mindset.
- ✓ Being a trustworthy and caring leader that lives up to their words is the starting point.
 - ✓ Fairness in incident analysis or investigation is a must.
- ✓ Be smart in getting the message across: human beings respond to stories and humour.
 - ✓ Workers' families and loved ones can also have a positive influence: reach out!
 - ✓ Shortcuts are out; trust and accountability are (always) a must-have.

- Based on SafeConnection panels on North America, Europe, The Middle East, India and Asia.
- All opinions expressed in here are purely those of the panelists. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of SafeStart and the panelists' companies.
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