IMPACT

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Performance Perspectives

Revisiting The Safety Chain

Now more than ever, every business, family and community should prepare for responding to emergencies and disasters, whether natural or man-made. Incident command systems have been established on community, state and national levels; families discuss "meeting places" in the event of a home fire; and companies are designating employees to form "evacuation teams".   The key to safety is grounded in prevention, understanding the root causes and what precipitated the "chain of events". The chain is both a tool and a symbol familiar to one and all. We use chains as tools to tow, anchor, and secure things. There is almost universal recognition that a chain is only as good as its weakest link. This is certainly true, but its very simplicity can mislead us in unexpected ways.

In the safety profession we often refer to "chains of events" that lead to incidents. You must look for the "weak link" as an area toward which to focus your preventive attention. This weak link is often identified as a specific person or as something that a person did or did not do. Corrective or preventive action then concentrates on strengthening this weak link as a means to improve safety. This usually takes the form of discipline or "re-instructing" the person who was "at fault".

> **Common Causes of Workplace Injuries**
> - Inappropriate work assignment
> - Unorganized and cluttered work environment
> - Lack of appropriate training
> - Stress
> - Motivation
> - Abuse or misuse of tools or equipment

Look Beyond the Weakest Link

The problem with this approach is one of not seeing the forest for the trees.   For example, let's say a chain breaks while lifting a 10,000-pound load. We naturally look to the broken link and assume that it is the source of the problem. But what if we find that the chain was designed to lift a 5,000-pound load? The weakest link is still the point of failure, but it is certainly not the real source of the undesired situation.

Strengthening one link when the selection and use of the chain is improper will not protect against future failures. Looking at the failed link instead of the overall design, use, or application of the chain will not tell us enough to fix the entire problem. Likewise, blaming or firing one person for "unsafe" behavior will not prevent future incidents.

Strengthen Your Safety Chain

A far better approach is to find out why the error occurred and develop appropriate measures to prevent it from occurring again in the future. This has the effect of strengthening the entire chain, not just one link. In other words, identify the elements of a safety process and assure that systems are in place to support it. This is the systems approach to loss control and improved management of risk. In the past decade, numerous companies have adopted this holistic, proactive approach to achieve such long-term results as double-digit improvement in year-over-year lost time cases and significant reductions in severe injuries and near misses.

Not all emergencies and disasters are preventable, but for those that are within our control there are judicious choices when selecting methods of prevention. Reinforcing only the weakest link in the safety chain will not prevent the reoccurrence of incidents. A systems approach that focuses on "improving the system" vs. "fixing the system" is the only sure way to make improvements that will strengthen the entire chain.

> **Proactive Incident Investigation Tips**
> - Avoid finger pointing
> - Find out what happened
> - Find out why it happened
> - Determine what to do to prevent future incidents

From Strategy to Action

By sharing client projects and BEI solutions, our goal is to offer you insight and information to increase your success at moving from strategy to action on your performance improvement projects. The elements of this section include a brief description of a client challenge, critical success factors or the expectations for the project, solutions for meeting the critical success factors, and the lessons learned.

Challenge
Design and develop Incident Investigation Business Process training for an automotive client to be delivered as stand-up instruction. The training needed to:
- Integrate the business process of incident investigation with a new web based product focused on occupational health and safety incident management
- Focus content for global consumption and translate the final product into the following languages:

> - Spanish
> - Portuguese
> - German
> - Castilian Spanish

Critical Success Factors
The solutions provided needed to be:
- On time – linked to the release of an on-line product which is linked to new OSHA reporting requirements for 2002
- Transferable - to trainers with no background in incident investigation or health and safety
- Outcome based – first-line supervisors must be proficient when the system goes live
- Global – content needed to work in a multi-cultural environment

Solutions
- Working simultaneously with web product developers and system documentation writers to ensure timely transfer of information and integration of intrinsic learning, minimizing what had to be delivered as stand-up (external learning)
- Developed a Reference Guide on incident investigation for trainers, a Leader's Guide for delivery of the training, and two Train-the-trainer sessions for 30 trainers. One session focused on the content and the other focused on delivery.

- Designed Work Assignment Driven Training that simulates on the job incident investigation for three different types of incidents:
    - Injury
    - Near miss
    - Property damage
- Content was reviewed by global team members

Lessons Learned
- Since timing was critical to the success of the project, managing and minimizing change was essential - change is inevitable on system projects
- Communicate early and often
- Documentation of the project progress and events is critical to communication, comprehension, and audit trail

Marketplace

Corporate Community Service Consulting
Linking Volunteer Initiatives to Your Business Goals

Today's economic pressures and highly competitive environment can take their toll on companies and employees. As a result, companies seek business tools that help them to not only survive these challenging times, but also to gain a competitive edge. One such tool is corporate community involvement. As a business initiative, community involvement:

- Heightens employee morale
- Enhances company image and reputation
- Creates access to new markets
- Develops teamwork and leadership skills
- Increases employee recruiting and retention opportunities

To achieve these benefits however, community service programs and initiatives must be linked to your company business goals. BEI can help you make this link. To learn more about this business tool and the range of services we offer, visit:

http://www.beinc-online.com/coreservices/corporatecommunity.asp

To request a **FREE** guide on *Aligning Corporate Volunteerism to Your Business Goals* email pdarin@beinc-online.com.

Worthy Web Sites

http://www.Nua.com *"The world's leading resource for Internet trends and statistics."* An advantageous website to keep you current on Internet trends and demographic developments. This web site also offers a free weekly newsletter, graphs and charts dating back to 1995 and the "How Many Online?" feature offering an educated estimate of the global Internet user population.

http://www.zdnet.com/products/stories/reviews/0,4161,2814354,00.html ZDNet: "Where business meets technology" *Top 100 Products of 2001*. The editors at *Computer Shopper* and ZDNet (Winner of the Computer Press Association's "Best Overall Site" award for two consecutive years) have put their collective heads together to select the best technology and best buys from a years worth of reviews and firsthand experience. Products include hardware, desktops, notebooks, mobile products, software, games, and web services. Just around the virtual corner curiously dismal techies can find *The Bottom Five Products of 2001.*

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