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Behavior Based Safety – The Missing Step that Ensures Success

Behavior Based Safety is an excellent program. However, it won't be nearly as effective until you do this.

Behavior Based Safety is a term for programs based on using behavior modification techniques on employees to instill and encourage safe behavior on the job. Its goal is to prevent workplace accidents by having people at all levels of an organization make safety in the workplace a top priority.

Employees responsible for keeping the job environment safe are trained in safety procedures then observe their fellow workers to monitor, report, and correct unsafe behavior.

Proponents say it works and companies that practice Behavior Based Safety have reduced accidents and injuries on the job. I'd like to suggest some further steps companies can take that would make Behavior Based Safety programs even more effective and successful.

Behavior modification techniques work only to a point. If someone's natural, inborn tendency is to be a risk taker, short tempered, or impatient, it's extremely difficult – maybe even impossible – to "train" that behavior out of the person. And even if a company is successful in modifying unsafe behaviors, in a crisis people will revert to their natural behavior.

A better solution is not to hire this type of person for a job that requires strict adherence to safety policies and practices. Hire people who are naturally cautious and careful – people adamant about following rules and whose main focus is on not making mistakes.

Sounds good, but how do you do that? You do three things:

- Benchmark each job, using job profiling assessments
- Assess current employees and match their attitude and behavior to the job benchmarking assessments
- Assess applicants and hire only those whose attitude and behavior match the job profiles.

Taking these steps will ensure that a company will get people who will naturally practice safe behaviors, even if they had no training at all. Safety training is still important and necessary and these types of people will embrace the training because "safety" is their middle name.

Job benchmarking involves a team of the best people in a job and their manager defining the key accountabilities each person in that job must commit to doing. Then they complete two job benchmarking assessments that show the ideal behavioral style and values/attitudes required in order for someone to do the job as well as it can be done.

By doing job benchmarking and assessing current employees and applicants, a company can accomplish several things:

- Pinpoint why some employees aren't measuring up to job standards
- Help managers coach employees to improve performance
- Aid in doing employee evaluations and meeting job performance objectives
- Enhance compliance management and training
- Increase job satisfaction and team morale
- Reduce employee turnover
- Reduce accidents and job injuries
- Assure the company that recruiters are getting the best person for the job
- Save the company hundreds of thousands – even millions of dollars.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR

All of these benefits can be achieved with this process even if companies haven't implemented Behavior Based Safety programs. And companies that do both are way ahead of their competitors in achieving maximum safety in the workplace.

Critics of Behavior Based Safety don't believe the premise that most accidents are caused by human error. But research shows they are.

In 2006, the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration conducted a study that shows "Driver behavior causes most truck crashes." And a 1993 safety study of railway maintenance workers by Behavioral Values Research Associates concludes people with certain behavioral styles and values cause fewer accidents.

True Behavior Based Safety involves putting people in the jobs they're best suited to do. The way to do that is to assess your jobs first, then your people to make sure they're a good fit.

If your compliance management and training programs include these types of assessments and job benchmarking, your accident prevention incentive programs will be more effective. Annette Estes is a Certified Professional Behavioral and Values Analyst and behavior safety specialist. Subscribe to her safety newsletters at <http://www.hiresafedrivers.com> and contact her at <http://www.coachannette.com>

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