

# The Formula for Creating a Culture of Safety

With deadlines to meet, customers to please, and budgets that can often be tight at best, safety can easily take a back seat to cheaper, faster shortcuts. Anyone who has ever dealt with the aftermath of an on-the-job accident or fatality will be the first to attest that safety should not only be in the front seat—it should be the driver.

The advantages of not just making safety a priority but creating a full-fledged culture of safety in a company are many. Creating such a work environment takes investments of time, money, training, and practice—but in a big picture scenario, creating a safety culture will not only add money to the bottom-line; it will help ensure that all employees go home to their families every night.

## Do the Research

There's a saying among some that safety isn't a priority; rather, safety is a value. The reason for this is that priorities change, while values are steadfast, ethical beliefs. Anyone can list their priorities, but values are demonstrated through consistent actions and behaviors.

With that in mind, a company interested in building a strong and sustainable safety culture needs to first do their research. By studying companies that have impeccable safety records, that comply religiously with OSHA standards, invest in safety technologies and training programs, and set rules and guidelines with safety at the forefront, they will be able to lay the groundwork of what their own programs need to be successful. A quick internet search can provide lists of the safest companies in America, and why they are rated as such, which is a great place to get started.

## Safety Makes Cents

Shortcuts save time and money. If everything

works out, that is. On those occasions when things go wrong, however, shortcuts not only cost a lot of money but are also taxing on the emotional and physical well-being of the entire company as well. Ask any company manager or CEO that had to make a call to a family member of their employee that was injured or killed on the job—chances are, they would much rather invest all of their money in a safety program than make that phone call. The cost is immeasurable.

For that reason, it's important that there is complete buy-in from all employees that safety is the expectation. From the CEO and accountant to the administrative assistant and especially the drivers, there needs to be a



clear demonstration that the only way to do the job is the safe way.

A practice in place by the top rated safety companies is an open two-way communication link. This allows the company safety expectations to be delivered to all employees from the top down, and all perceived safety problems, violations, or even questions to extend from the bottom up. Allowing employees on the job to voice concerns without fear of being reprimanded is imperative to the success of a culture of safety.

Liberty Mutual estimates that each dollar invested in injury prevention reduces costs for employers by \$2 or more. With this in mind, it's easy to see that safety is not a cost but an investment. Installing additional safety solutions such as active blind spot monitoring systems provides operators with the added benefit of an extra set of eyes around the vehicle.

## Training: A Safe Bet

Another secret and necessary ingredient to creating a culture of safety is an obvious but often neglected one: training. The thing about training is, it takes time, effort, and money to be done properly. The return on investment for providing a well-curated and delivered training initiative, however, is potentially invaluable—it can save countless lives.

Not all training is considered equal. Invest in a training consultant or company that is accredited or reputable with the Department of Labor. Ensure that they have subject matter experts on staff, are not only knowledgeable but have real-world experience in a relevant trade, and have training specialists or instructors that will have a rapport with employees.

Additionally, creating an on-going training program is imperative. OSHA is expanding and changing workplace rules all the time, and refresher training is necessary to stay on top of new regulations. Best practices are adjusting to new tools and innovations at a rapid rate as well. Keeping employees well informed and in tune with the safest practices possible will allow for not only fewer accidents on the job, but could mean more productive work environments as well.

## Practice Makes Perfect

Investing time and money into research and training will see a return on investment if and only if safety standards are put into practice every day. Before a crew goes to work in the morning, a safety meeting should be conducted. Before a crew goes home in the evening, a safety debriefing should take place. This not only helps to create awareness of safe practices, but it also helps to create a habit of safety on the job.

Safety conversations should also be happening in conferences and the board room as well. Executive and leadership staff should have visibility and expressed interest in safety practices, reward crews and individuals for creating and nurturing safe work environments, and provide the means of communication from the ground up for employees to report safety concerns and violations. If the company leadership isn't walking the walk and talking the talk, it's guaranteed that mid- and lower-level leadership won't be either. **MSW**

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