Business Plan for Safety - STEP 2

Employee Involvement and Recognition

Safety is a behavioral science not an engineering or technical science. The vast majority of things that cause employees to get hurt are behavioral in nature. Unfortunately, behavior is one of the hardest things to change, especially if employees have been allowed to develop bad habits. These habits usually go unnoticed or unchanged until someone has had an accident. Once this has happened we often try to determine blame, instead of finding the root cause. Most of the time the causes are easy to see if we only open our eyes and start observing why our employees do what they do.

One of the best ways to determine why employees behave the way they do is simply to ask them. When you observe employees working in an unsafe manner and ask them about their behavior they will often times provide you with legitimate reasons. These reasons need to be addressed with them in a positive manner. Listen, act and then follow up:
• Ask your employees for suggestions on improving the safety program.
• Review accidents with them and ask them for their recommendations.
• Set up a Safety Suggestion program to solicit good ideas.
• Set up a Safety Committee or Safety Improvement Team.

A Safety Committee or Safety Improvement training is an excellent way to get employees involved in the safety process. Select employees who want to be a part of the team, but make sure all employees have the opportunity for input.

The Committee or Team should be involved in the following activities:
• Helping write up new safety policies.
• Conducting new employee or ongoing safety training.
• Conducting plant safety inspections.
• Counseling other employees on safe work practices.
• Helping the company conduct accident investigations.
• Listening to employee's complaints and working with management to resolve them in a positive manner.
• Conducting Safety Observations to ensure safe work practices are being followed.
• Assisting in conducting safety inspections.

The more employees are involved, the easier it is to change long standing unsafe behaviors. If employees buy into the safety program, everybody's job in this area will be easier. Remember, however, that there has to be a genuine effort on management's part and their effort has to be supported on a continuous basis.

In addition to getting employees involved in the safety program it is important to recognize and reward employees for their efforts. Everyone likes to win and be associated with a winner. Make being safe a winning goal for your company. Train your supervisors to use positive counseling techniques when dealing with behavioral safety

problems. This reduces unnecessary confrontations and puts safety in a positive light, instead of a negative one.

Other things you can do include:

- Establish a program to identify, and formally recognize employees for excellence in accident prevention.
- Recognize good suggestions.
- Set company safety performance goals and reward employees upon successful attainment.
- Say positive things to employees when you see they are making the extra effort to be safe.
- Put articles in the company newsletter about good safety performance.
- Take your Safety Committee or Safety Improvement Team to the annual *All Ohio Safety Congress* to recognize their efforts and support.

A pat on the back, a kind word, public recognition or rewards, all make us feel better about what we are doing. If safety is important to the company, make it important to the employees. The money you spend will be returned many times in safer, more productive and happier employees.