



10 REASONS YOUR SAFETY TRAINING ISN'T WORKING



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Are you getting through to your crew? Or are your safety training and compliance efforts falling on deaf ears? Break through to your crew by carefully evaluating these 10 common roadblocks to effectively providing safety training.

1. They Really Can't Hear You

There's nothing more frustrating than to deliver what you think is a clear message only to have it ignored. It's as if the trainee doesn't

hear you. In fact, maybe he doesn't. Do you mumble? Are you dealing with an employee with hearing loss? When explaining procedures, speak slowly, loudly and clearly. And make sure trainees are literally able to hear them.

2. You're Speaking Greek

Don't assume your students understand more than they do. Define any words which may be unfamiliar. Give them all the

information you can. If you're not sure how much background knowledge they have, you can say something like, "This may be familiar to you, but let's go over it again."

3. They Hear the Message but Don't Understand the Reason

Many trainees want to know not just what but why. This is especially true if you're trying to get them to adopt

a change in procedure or technique. Explain the purpose behind the change. Otherwise, trainees may not accept the change and do things the same way they always have.

4. They Don't Appreciate the Stakes Involved

Before explaining a safety procedure, point out the hazard involved. It makes a lot more sense to wear protective gloves when you know about flesh melting chemicals.

5. Your Jokes are Garbling the Message

Humor can be an important tool in training. But you don't want to overdo it. If you kid around too much, it may be harder for trainees to tell when you are serious. Don't hide behind jokes when delivering difficult messages. Your audience might not get the point.

6. You're Not Listening to Their Questions and Concerns

Give your trainees lots of chances to ask questions. You can gauge the level or understanding by what

they ask. Never laugh at questions. Respect your trainees and help bolster their confidence. If there are no questions, don't assume everything is understood. Trainees may have nothing to ask because they don't understand what you were talking about.

7. You're Not Tailoring Your Message to Who They Are

Differences in literacy levels and culture may make it difficult for you to communicate with your trainees. Be sensitive to these differences and look for ways to bridge them.

8. You're Not Testing Their Comprehension

A big mistake trainers make is assuming that the message has been comprehended without verifying it. Ask the group to repeat the message back to you. "Okay now what is the procedure for disposing of oily rags?"

9. You're Relying Too Heavily on the Spoken Word

Different people have different learning styles. Some need to hear.

Some need to see. Others need to experiment hands-on under your supervision. Still others won't learn a thing until they get their hands on a training manual. Most need a combination of these methods.

10. You're Not Anticipating Obstacles

There may be roadblocks to following your instructions. Force of habit and uncertainty about what is expected are common ones. Maybe the trainee doesn't have the tools, equipment or procedures to follow through on what you said. Look at things through the trainee's eyes and try to anticipate these difficulties.

There will never be a one-size fits all solution that guarantees 100% of your training participants will take away every nuance of your safety training efforts. However, following best practices and making an effort to avoid these 10-common pitfalls will help you to develop more consistent and effective safety training efforts.





CREATING THE PERFECT SAFETY MEETING

If you view holding safety meetings as a necessary evil and are not working to engage workers, you are likely driving them away from safety.

So says safety communication consultant Kevin Burns, who adds that safety meetings are often organized in a mad scramble at the last minute, with no thought toward engaging workers' hearts and minds.

Burns says workers' eyes glaze over and they may even feel resentful when they are forced to listen to too much information read verbatim from pieces of paper or PowerPoint slides.

"You need to talk with your people,

not at them. It's a meeting, not a lecture," he says.

A properly planned safety meeting has a theme and a desired outcome. The message cannot be vague, such as "be safe." Having a theme planned out before a meeting allows the presenter to speak to that theme only, without going off on unrelated tangents. It also lets presenters end the meeting with a call to action for workers—what you want them to do differently after the meeting.

Burns says attendees want to know:

- Why they are there.
- What will be covered during the meeting.

- Why the topic is important.
- What you want them to do following the meeting.

"People don't want to know what not to do," says Burns, adding that trying to scare your workers into working safely by showing them gruesome pictures or gory videos often backfires, because negative messages don't engage people.

Burns says 71 percent of North America workers are not actively engaged in their work, which means that seven out of 10 workers are not engaged in their personal safety. A low-quality safety meeting certainly isn't going to change their attitudes.

One easy way to engage workers



is to go around taking pictures of people working safely in your workplace before the meeting and include these pictures in your presentation slides. Burns cautions against copying Internet photographs of unknown workers, because your audience will not engage with these strangers.

He offers these additional tips for making safety meetings interesting:

- Don't hold meetings in the "dirty back shop." Move them to another area of the building, or perhaps off site and encourage workers to get out of their dirty coveralls and ball caps and dress appropriately.
- Put out fewer chairs than you anticipate you will need. If you have more people than chairs, escort workers to the front row chairs—generally the last ones taken—and add more chairs to the back row.
- Speakers should stand in the middle of the stage, not off to the side. Ensure there is enough light so workers can make eye contact with the speaker, because people connect through eye contact.
- Limit presentations to half an hour and don't follow with a question/answer period, as this can bring an otherwise strong safety meeting to a screeching halt. If people wish to ask questions, let them do so after the formal presentation has ended and those who wish to leave have done so.
- Don't go crazy on PowerPoints. Present one thought per slide and don't read the slides verbatim, because people will get bored.
- Require your workers to take notes so they will retain important information afterwards.
- Create a follow-up safety campaign. For example, if your safety meeting is on safe driving during the winter, you might hand out windshield sweepers/scrapers with your company's logo to each worker at the end of shift, or set up a group to check that vehicles are properly equipped with winter emergency supplies.
- End the meeting on a high note by recognizing workers who are working safely. Offer them a reward, such as a lunch or coffee gift card.

A thick red L-shaped graphic that frames the central text. It starts with a horizontal line at the top, turns 90 degrees down on the right side, and then turns 90 degrees left at the bottom, ending with a horizontal line.

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