

TOOLBOX TALK #42

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Conducting toolbox talks and training sessions is a great first step to hazard recognition and safe behavior, but no safety program can be successful without employees doing their part. Yet, many companies share the same challenge of encouraging employee participation. Companies that create a successful safety culture do so by building a communication strategy focused on employee engagement. They develop a consistent, performance-focused approach and use all the communication tools available to foster participation among their workforce. Here are some suggestions for constructing a successful safety communication strategy that boasts employee engagement:

Communicate compliance standards and critical hazard recognition skills. Make sure your message reaches all employees, regardless of shift, location or role. Visual communication, such as digital signage, is one tool that can reinforce topics covered in toolbox talks and training sessions. Place your signage in high traffic areas and keep your messages brief, clear and easy to understand. Conclude the message with a call to action directed at employees.

Build unified company support around the safety program. Enlist allies from across the management team to promote the program. Include a short message from another manager in your safety newsletter or post the newsletter on your intranet site to demonstrate that employee safety is a companywide priority. Send a personal note of thanks from upper management to an employee who reported a hazard. This will reinforce the organizational commitment to the program and the individual.

Establish a culture of transparency around the safety program by creating a feedback loop. Where possible, allow employees to take photos of near misses and hazards. This will encourage reporting and increase hazard recognition. Use visual communication tools, such as digital signage, to post the reports and measures taken to address the hazard. Add “before” and “after” pictures to drive home the message.

Demonstrate the importance of hazard recognition and safe behavior by celebrating your safety superstars. Employee recognition is a proven tool for achieving higher levels of engagement. Recognize workers who have helped your company avoid a serious incident, whether by reporting a near miss, suggesting a new control or recommending a hazard fix. Print a poster with the employee’s photo and a short message describing the hazard, his or her solution, and the outcome.

However you choose to recognize employees, make sure you use all channels of communication to promote the initiative. By communicating policies, gathering support from management, creating a feedback loop and, finally, by celebrating employee participation, you can create a robust safety culture based around companywide engagement.