

BMTFed Newsletter

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BMT for Leaders
Workshop & Conference
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Safety is a By-Product of Everything Else

By Jonny Bennet

At home we take the time and trouble to carefully explain things to our children when it comes to risks. Inevitably our children fall over, bang their heads, try to put too much food in their mouths - and that's when they're 16 years old! Parents listen to their 2-year-old coughing and they worry. When it all goes quiet, they worry even more and leap out of bed to check on them.

As parents, we approach safety as the by-product of everything else involved in the complex world of getting a baby to adulthood. We don't set targets, we don't have processes, we don't consider safety separately from anything else - we care about our children.

Trust Without Context

By Joanne Lees

Business leaders frequently say they want to 'improve trust'. Staff are surveyed to establish how much trust they have in the company. But trust without context isn't useful. For many, they trust payroll to pay then on time and trust their boss just as much to cancel their scheduled one-to-one if it lands on a Friday. What are we achieving by focusing on trust without context?

Influencing the Future

By Dr Richard Kazbour

In 1931 Herbert Heinrich said that in order to help predict the future, we have to understand the past. This idea was the foundation for Heinrich's safety triangle. If you're a safety professional, chances are you're using some version of the safety triangle to guide your strategy today, 86 years later. Knowing the number of minor and major injuries can help predict future recordable injuries and fatalities but there is a bit of a problem here... can you spot it?

Although the past can help us predict the future, it cannot help us *influence* the future.

The organisations with the best safety records have recognised the importance for using a scientific strategy which takes that fact into consideration. Awareness will not consistently drive behaviours, but using a scientific approach to safety lets us purposefully change the future.

Keep It Simple

By Lynn Dunlop

We often ask people to keep it simple. For us, that means focusing on one improvement at a time; it means get rid of complex processes; it means getting rid of reports folks don't want or read; it means getting rid of meetings that don't do anything; it means asking people what they don't want and acting to remove those things.

Behavioural Management Techniques (BMT) is a blend of applied behavioural science tools and project management skills. BMT is used to improve business and safety performance.



Do Sites With Better Quality Toilet Rolls Have A Better Safety Culture?

By Allison Reynolds

Someone once told me that the first thing they did when going on a site visit was to check the toilets and the quality of the toilet paper. He said that it told him everything he needed to know about the safety culture. At the time I remember thinking he must be rather an enlightened leader. Now I'm not so sure.

Humans are quick to detect relationships between events. If there's a pattern then humans will find it, since to do so has obvious survival benefits. However, the presence of a relationship between two events does not mean that the data points or the events caused each other. After all, there is a strong, positive relationship between ice cream sales and shark attacks. When ice cream sales go up, so do shark attacks. Does this mean that buying ice cream causes shark attacks? Of course not. People purchase more ice cream in warmer months. People also go to the beach more in warmer months. This sounds more plausible, but just because something sounds plausible doesn't mean that we should infer causation. To be sure we would have to run some experiments, changing one variable at a time and measuring the impact.

Perhaps safety performance does correlate with quality of toilet paper. Perhaps it's also likely that a site leader who wants to create an engaging work environment would be more inclined to provide quality welfare facilities. However, the problem with using simple things like the quality of toilet paper as a barometer is that people come along and often spot only the simple tangible things in the environment that correlate with increased safety performance. They then mandate that all sites provide quality toilet paper (or whatever the equivalent) without recognising the causing agent for the wider safety performance: Both the physical *and* social environment that is created by the leaders' day to day behaviours.

So in answer to my question, perhaps he had a point at one time and the toilet paper test was a good one, but most organisations have now jumped on that bandwagon. All that the presence of good welfare facilities tells us is that someone has created an environment where good welfare facilities are provided. Politicians, advertisers and others are often quick to suggest that correlation implies causation. Behavioural science seeks to test those theories. Changing one thing at a time and collecting a little bit of data goes a long way to ensuring that you recognise the difference between correlation and causation.

Shades of BMT

- Click and forget: Are you a victim of someone's email expediency?
- Telling people what to do might not be a very effective way of getting what you want.
- Perhaps instead, consider making the time to set up the conditions to guarantee getting what you want.



Relevance and Relationships By Bruce Faulkner

An immovable deadline approaches. The previously distracted leader now swings their attention back onto production. Here they are likely to find a backlog of deferred decisions, unanswered emails, and open action items.

Faced with a sense of urgency the leader will move quickly. They will use their mental representation of how the business and their teams work to expedite their decision making. New instructions will be dispatched that are intended to salvage the situation.

Listening to the leader's language, we will hear complex issues being simplified and the required actions stated as though they are self-evident. Expediting solutions like this offers the leader relief in the moment. But the leader, who had been distracted, had stopped observing the environment of the staff. Their mental representations are now dated. They get their predictions of what works wrong. The leader is operating on supposition, superstition and bias.

To confirm this, watch how the staff react. If the new instructions are detached from the reality, the staff will seek clarification or offer up observations about the complications they will face. The staff aren't reacting the way the leader expected. Feeling like they can't control events, the leader will seek to control people. Instructions will become more prescriptive; seeking clarification will be met with threats of punishment.

When a leader becomes distracted uncertainty and doubt build up, thereby creating an environment where relationships go missing. By monitoring the quality of their relationships a leader tunes into the staff's environment. No longer distracted, the leader spots and hears signals of emerging issues. The leader's mental representations are current and more accurate. Their recommendations will now be more relevant, and will resonate with their staff.

