



Why A Safety Program?

By Barbara Semeniuk

Safety Managers often tell me that they cannot talk to management to sell them on the importance of Safety in an organization. This is not surprising, since Safety is a passion to most Safety Professionals, and reason and passion often do not go together. If you want to sell Management on Safety talk about the following reasons:

- Financial
- Legislative
- Due Diligence
- Moral

Financial reasons are the big carrot held on the stick for managers to justify to owners, and owners to justify to the shareholders. You can show that a good Safety program saves money, and that is the nuts and bolts of any reasoned discussion with Management. However, not everyone is convinced. Recently an individual in the Claims Management field told me that Safety does not save money, rather, good claims management does. But, how do you put a price on accidents that do not happen? It can be done by estimating the possible severity and frequency of an occurrence, putting numbers to it, and telling management that they would have to sell 1.6 million dollars of widgets at a 3% profit margin just to recoup the costs of a \$50,000 accident. Yes, Virginia, you cannot control market share but you can control losses. How do you put a price on morale? Safe places are better places to work and this is reflected in productivity. Since safety and quality go hand in hand--less rework, more profit. Moreover, the government in Alberta has entered into a partnership with industry and if a company gets an audit, passes it, and obtains their Certificate of Recognition, they get a 5% rebate from Workers Compensation Board on their WCB insurance premium. As well, in some sectors, especially Construction, you require a Certificate of Recognition before you can bid on large jobs--a definite financial advantage!

Legislative reasons are another big reason Management has a Safety program. A good Safety program meets the minimum requirements that are often legislated. When building a Safety program, a good Safety Manager always consults the Legislation and compares his/her program to the minimum legal standards, then exceeds them. Legislative compliance prevents fines that range from \$150,000 for a first offence and up to 6 months in jail or both, or \$300,000 for a second, subsequent offence and up to 12 months in jail or both. Anyone can be fined: workers are often under the happy assumption that they are

immune from fines...just the Supervisor or Management gets fined. Wrong! If found guilty, anyone can be fined. Workers have, in Alberta and most provinces, the legal responsibility to protect their own and their co-workers safety and co-operate with their employer. It's the law.

Due Diligence ties in nicely with legislation: usually someone is thought to be guilty in Administrative law, which Occupational Health and Safety is, before proven innocent, the opposite of Criminal law. Due diligence is paperwork happy...you must have a written trail to prove you did everything "reasonable and practicable" to prevent the occurrence, and paperwork often proves this. If it is not written, for most purposes, it does not exist. Directors, owners, and senior management can be found not to be duly diligent based on the fact that they were aware of an unsafe condition and did nothing to correct it. They are, in fact, negligent under the law. In the Bata Shoe Case in Ontario, the Canadian President of Operations and his Vice-President were fined \$10,000 each, which they had to pay personally. This was reversed on appeal but has set a precedent.

Moral reasons are the "raison d'être" of any good Safety Professional. Everyone has a moral obligation to protect the health and safety of his/her workers and/or citizens. It is engrained in any Safety Professional that protecting people from losses is as important to them as breathing, eating and sleeping. But how to get this across to Management? Do not pump up the volume, do not get into a yelling match; rather, crunch numbers, look at the legislation, talk about due diligence and then ace it with your passion: your beliefs, your values.

You will go a long way to convincing Management. Reason often wins over passion, so be passionately reasonable! Good luck and have fun!

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