Advanced Safety Training & Coaching Strategies – An Approach for the Wind Sector?

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Abstract
Workplace health & safety training plays a significant part in the effort organizations invest in safety. But to what extent does this training really contribute towards the ultimate goal of avoiding accidents and incidents?

This paper presents the approach to and conclusions from the implementation of two tailored safety training programs, one focused on lockout/tagout (LOTO), the other on hazard awareness and field engagements (“Safety Walks and Talks”). For both programs, the target audience included management and supervisor levels as well as staff functions.

The trainings combined classroom elements based on accelerated learning techniques, in-the-field coaching and the practical application of the learnings in the field. Specific emphasis was put on sustaining the training by a structured follow-up approach of coaching and feedback.

Objectives
The objective of any training is to achieve change – be it in knowledge, competency or mindset. However, many health & safety training programs have become compliance-based, formal exercises that not necessarily result in real learning and advancement. The two programs were designed with the objective to breathe life into existing programs and recognize that learning should be the active creation of knowledge, not the passive storage of information.

Methods and Techniques
Classical health & safety training programs tend to focus on the transfer of factual knowledge. While this is an essential part of every training curriculum, the development of both programmes was based on the principle that a lasting transformation of safety thinking requires more than the often repetitive and one-directional – established classroom training elements.

Both programs, despite their different topics – lockout/tagout as a specific technical subject matter on one side, and hazard recognition and field communication as a broader socio-technical topic on the other hand - were designed based on the same underlying principle that effective learning requires:

- An active learner involvement and activity-centered learning events
- Engaging and challenging both the right and left brain
- Encouraging participation and team-working among learners for a peer-to-peer learning experience
- The creation of a positive learning environment.

Minimizing time spent in the classroom and an immediate transfer of the learnings to the field was a core element of both programs.

Training Contents
The LOTO Training Program was designed in a modular approach, focusing on the different contextual requirements for managers and operational staff, but also ensuring an interaction of the different levels. In an initial module, the scene was set through case studies and practical examples, followed by a concise theoretical element. Two follow-up modules saw the learners moving into the field, performing a joint review of the effectiveness of existing procedures, role-play scenarios of critical in-the-field situations and in-the-field application of the learnings. The program, which was implemented at a total of 20+ locations worldwide, concluded with the development of a location-specific action plan to drive ownership as well as continual improvement.

The Hazard Awareness and Field Engagement Program focused on equipping 500+ managers and front-line supervisors with the skills to drive effective field engagements and coach operating field staff into applying proactive safety behaviours in their day-to-day operations. It included an initial concise classroom session on hazard recognition techniques and key communication techniques to address unsafe (and pro-active) behaviours in the field. This was immediately followed by applying the learnings in coached conversations in the field with structured feedback from the trainers/coaches.

Sustaining Change
Sustaining change without being repetitive is an ongoing challenge for all training programs. For the LOTO Training Program, a “classical” approach of developing and tracking a site-level action plan including timeframes for implementing improvements and personal responsibilities was developed at each location at the end of the training. This ensured the ongoing engagement of the learners with the training contents.

The Hazard Awareness and Field Engagement Program included a structured follow-up coaching and feedback program for the learners. It comprised post-training peer coaching (participants performing field conversations in pairs and providing feedback to each other) as well as coached feedback rounds in which the learners could discuss progress and challenges in a “safe” environment.

Any challenges identified in the feedback rounds were subsequently addressed in regular management reviews to ensure the sustainable implementation of the change in the quality of field engagements triggered by the program.

Conclusions
Both training programs were initially implemented in operating plants. The concept of accelerative learning, and specifically the immediate transfer of the learnings to the field, received positive feedback from the learners and also proved effective for the active creation of knowledge and change.

The main challenge for transferring the training concept and approach to the wind sector is at the same time one of the benefits. The – often remote – operations in small teams require approaches in which learners support and coach each other, rather than relying on centralized trainings. The inclusion of interactive e-learning elements can maximize the time spent with actual field coaching and application, as it allows the learner to digest theoretical learning elements in advance of the field engagement in their own pace. Learners can then use the time in the field to directly apply the learnings and receive immediate feedback from coaches or peers for a sustainable shift in behaviors.

References
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