

October 2014 – do you hold great safety meetings?



How many safety meetings or inductions have you attended where you've been inspired, enthused and informed so that you feel motivated to work safely and to choose to do the right thing, even when no-one is watching?

Or has your experience been one where you've been subjected to a rushed, monotone presentation relying upon a presentation with too many words that ultimately leaves you 'cold' towards health and safety?

The safety meeting is usually the first and therefore one of the most important opportunities for the organisation holding the briefing to demonstrate its passion, commitment, enthusiasm and leadership towards the health and safety of everyone who works for them (either as an employee or a contractor). Miss this opportunity and it can set the tone for the future!

So what does a great meeting which discusses health and safety look like? Here are some ideas to help you maximise the experience:

- Think about the environment where the meeting is to be held – is it safe, comfortable and one where people will have the maximum opportunity to learn?
- Prepare the content to maximise the learning
- How are the leaders and senior managers of the organisation demonstrating their personal commitment and visible leadership to health and safety?
- Ensure the meeting will be a communication forum rather than a one-way monologue
- Lead it, don't read it:
 - Maintain eye contact
 - Think about your body language
 - Deliver the content with passion and enthusiasm
- Ask open questions to transfer ownership, don't tell:
 - Engage people
 - Ask 'how' and 'what' people are going to do to work safely?
 - Use the experience of those present to share learning
- Remember the experts in the trade are in the room, engage them to maximise the quality of the discussion
- Where feasible, use a representative of the workforce to present at least part of the session. This has benefits which include:
 - Shared ownership
 - Respect
 - Makes it personal for the rest of the group if a peer is presenting
 - Relevant
 - Shared responsibility
- Use props where appropriate to make it 'real' (eg pictures, examples of equipment, etc)
- Provide feedback and close actions to demonstrate the importance of health and safety

Organisations often talk about health and safety being a priority. A health and safety meeting is an opportunity to demonstrate health and safety is much more than a priority. A meeting which discusses relevant information and is delivered with passion and commitment can demonstrate health and safety is a core value.

The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.

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