

5WH SAFETY CONVERSATION

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WHO, in an organization, is best suited to serve on a Safety Steering Team?

The team builds a strategic plan for improvement and ensures goals are met. Therefore, members should be viewed as positive change makers who others want to follow. All levels of the organization should be represented.

WHAT characteristics make someone a good candidate for a Continuous Improvement (CI) Team?

CI Team members should carry some weight with their peers. They should be open-minded and able to work well with people from across different divisions and ranks. Veteran and newer employees bring unique perspectives that are both valuable on a CIT.

WHERE do Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) professionals fit into the Zero-Incident Performance (ZIP™) Process?

EHS professionals are the organization's subject matter experts on regulatory compliance, and compliance and cultural improvement work synergistically. Safety professionals often attend Safety Steering Team (SST) meetings and serve on CI Teams. I was an EHS department manager when my facility started the ZIP Process. I discovered that my staff and I had more time to focus on regulatory activities and improving training and other programs since the front-line supervisors and middle managers had been empowered with safety ownership on the factory floor.

WHEN should an organization expect to see measurable improvement in lagging indicators?

Safety culture improvement is a marathon, not a sprint, but improving the culture leads to safer actions and decisions that result in fewer incidents and injuries. In order to realize true, lasting cultural change, it may take three to seven years to build the trust that this is not a "flavor of the month" safety program. However, experience has shown significant improvements in employee engagement, communication and teamwork when an organization completes one cycle of the ZIP Process (typically around six months).

WHY are perception gaps between employees and management so significant?

Employees do what they think the boss wants. If they hear about production schedules from their supervisor eight times a day, but only about safety at the beginning of the shift, they will form a perception that production trumps everything else. They may be tempted to take shortcuts or unnecessary risks to meet the demand of the clock. Management may think they are sending clear messages about their expectations for safe work, but their actions speak louder. The Safety Perception Survey uncovers these gaps that may be invisible to upper levels of the organization.

HOW do you respond to people who say "zero isn't possible"?

I say, "I understand," because I once felt the same way. We manufacture big earthmoving machines, built by people, and people make mistakes. But the ZIP Process showed me that when all take ownership for safety, "zero" is absolutely possible.

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS FOR JUSTIN?

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