The Ripple Effect of Safety Meeting Kit



The ripple effect is the notion that a single action has an effect over several different entities. When you drop a pebble in a pond, it creates a series of ripples that span out over the water to move surface plants around and disrupt the animals that may be on the water. In business, you need to understand how the ripple effect can affect your business and how the actions you take affect the businesses and people connected to your company.

RIPPLE EFFECTS OF A SAFETY INCIDENT

Ripple effect is defined as “a spreading, pervasive, and usually unintentional effect or influence” (Miriam-Webster Dictionary). When it comes to the ripple effect of workplace safety, we really need to remove the “unintentional” portion of that definition. Workplace safety needs to be intentional, the ultimate effect and influence should be planned and deliberate.

All too frequently we dissect the negative side of safety ripples; the accidents and injuries that ripple out to cause unwanted (or “unintentional”) costs, lost time, and various other negative impacts on an organization. But there is a positive side as well! A ripple effect that is caused by a proactive health and safety approach will help an organization to see a large return on investment through improved productivity, improved morale, decreased time away, lower EMRs, and lower workers compensation insurance costs.

EMPLOYEES CAN PREVENT NEGATIVE RIPPLES OF SAFETY

1. Needless destruction of life and health is morally unjustified. The most obvious reason for proper safety training is that preventing the destruction of life and health is our primary concern as safety specialists. This is a moral obligation for the health and well-being of employees.
2. Failure to take necessary precautions against predictable accidents and occupational illnesses makes management and workers morally responsible for those accidents and occupational illnesses. If a potential problem or threat exists, and no action steps are taken to prevent an accident, the outcome will fall on you.
3. Accidents and occupational illnesses severely limit efficiency and productivity. The third reason for preventing accidents is because

accidents and occupational illnesses limit efficiency and productivity because of downtime. This is an indirect cost from an accident, but a very costly one. Replacement labor can cost your company time and resources, along with possible sick pay, repairing damaged equipment, or even fines.

4. Accidents and occupational illnesses produce far-reaching social harm. The fourth reason for preventing accidents is because accidents and occupational illnesses can produce lasting damage to your reputation. Word gets around when accidents happen and it always paints a negative picture of a company in the public eye. We've always said that your clients will only think as much of you as they think of your safety personnel. Sending unprepared employees to a job will hurt your reputation because you will be sending them the wrong message about your company. With the right safety staff, you can send a message that says "We take safety and the lives of our employees seriously! We do our best in everything."
5. The safety movement has demonstrated that its techniques are effective in reducing accident rates and promoting efficiency.
6. Prevent violations. The sixth reason for preventing accidents is because state and federal legislation mandates management responsibility to provide a safe workplace, so this is a legal requirement. Violations could cost you thousands of dollars a day. Even the most unintentional violation can cause serious harm to your company.

FOCUS ON THE LARGE RIPPLE

This idea of a larger ripple is something to pass on to the other employees. Even if they do not enjoy working for the company, they should have some type of feeling of obligation to complete their best work for the other employees in the company. If someone is planning on quitting and decides they do not care anymore or are willing to take risks, they need to understand that there are hundreds of other employees and their families depending on the paycheck that comes from the company. One simple action or decision that leads to a negative event can have far reaching long-term consequences.

Employees have an obligation to the other employees to do the best work. While one can argue that one does indeed have an obligation to the company, it can be more easily brushed off than an obligation to the other employees in the company. It is easy to think the owner or high level of management who represents "the company" does not give a care about the individual worker thus making it easier to rationalize taking short-cuts or putting in little effort at work. It is more difficult to brush off the idea that an individual's lack of effort or unsafe work behavior is hurting their fellow employees in the company.

EMPLOYEE TAKEAWAY

Stop focusing saying that employees must "engage" in healthy behavior, and instead, focus on motivating employees to want to engage in one simple, healthy behavior. If employees set an attainable goal, one that makes them feel better about themselves when they take action, they will strive to achieve even more. Once accomplished then employees engage in an overall healthier lifestyle.

FINAL WORD

What kind of ripple effect will you make? Is it pervasive in a good way? Let your work have a larger positive effect for your company. Challenge those around you to have a positive effect that reaches far past the immediate jobsite, office, or branch they work in.