

Case study: Off-shore venture

Title: Safety coaching project

The Goal:

The goal of this project was to provide safety coaching off-shore following an accident to improve safety outcomes.

The Challenge:

The placement followed a serious accident which aroused initial resistance from both off-shore management and crew.

Objectives:

The objective of the project was to improve safety outcomes on the vessel immediately following an accident. Arriving on the vessel straight after an accident aroused the suspicion of management and to a certain extent the coach was viewed initially as a 'spy in the camp'. The main blocker to any coaching was their belief that *'the workforce had the accident therefore any coaching needs to be direct at the workforce'*.

Our approach:

The coach spent the first couple of days talking to workers on the deck to build relationships, and deepen their understanding of what had really happened, not just the 'official' story and to . over the course of a series of conversations a picture emerged of actual practices which reflected unspoken but implied management pressure for delivery.

Slowly the coach started to look at how they could improve their tool box talks by using open and closed question techniques. The aim of a tool box talk is not to download all the information from the supervisor to the workforce, it is an opportunity to confirm that each individual knows his responsibilities and objectives throughout the task. The only way a supervisor can be confident in knowing his team understands his plan is to ask them during toolbox talks. Giving the workforce the opportunity to describe their involvement in the task was a step change that the crew found beneficial.

The engagement of the workforce had the domino effect of arousing the interest of the management who started to see some early benefits of a coaching approach to behavioral safety. Real change, in my opinion, is most effective when adopting both a top down and bottom approach. Managers play a crucial role in the workforce behavior.

Impact:

In the short time on board, the coach demonstrated techniques which the crew could use with each other, which could be used in the toolbox talks and could be used by managers. More importantly the impact on attitudes to risk and responsibility for it also changed.

While being parachuted in after an accident is not an ideal way of starting to change behavior, but can still deliver positive results.