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Contributors

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Phil D'Amico is Director of Business Growth for The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County. D'Amico has an extensive

background in business and industry, holding a number of executive level positions throughout his more than 20 years in business. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management from West Virginia University and a Bachelor's Degree in Communications from Temple University. He has also completed certificate programs at the University of Notre Dame in both Executive Management and Supervisory Development.

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Donald A. Coffin is an economics professor in the School of Business and Economics at Indiana University Northwest.

Coffin earned his Bachelor's Degree in Economics from DePauw University and obtained his Ph.D in Economics from West Virginia University. He returned to Indianapolis in the 1970s, serving as an economic analyst for the City of Indianapolis. In 1980, he started teaching at Illinois State University before moving on to Indiana University Northwest. He is a member of the Kelley School of Business Economic Outlook Panel and performs research on the economics of professional sports and urban economic development. Coffin has published work in Growth and Change, the Eastern Economic

Journal, the Journal of Economic Education, and has edited volumes of essays published by Praeger Publishers. His areas of expertise include labor economics, collective bargaining, and urban economics.

RON HANSON



Ron Hanson, an employee of Safety Management Group since 1994, is Vice President of

Operations. He manages the Special Projects Team, which provides safety and loss control services for short- and long-term construction projects throughout the country. Hanson earned a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Safety Management from Indiana State University in 1993. He received the professional certification of Construction Health and Safety Technician from the Board of Certified Safety Professionals in 2001 and has been a member of the Board of Directors for Metro Indianapolis Construction Coalition for Safety since 2004. Early on, Hanson managed the Owner Controlled Insurance Program for a large pharmaceutical conglomerate in Lafayette and Indianapolis, overseeing more than \$500 million in construction projects. Hanson also coordinated the construction safety for the \$198 million Conesco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis and the \$85 million Riley Outpatient Center Children's Hospital.

STEVEN A. JOHNSON



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Andrew Kyres is Vice President and Branch Manager of First Financial Bank in Crown Point. In addition

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DEWEY PEARMAN



Dewey Pearman serves as the Executive Director for the Construction Advancement Foundation. He holds a Masters

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SARAH SANDERS SMITH



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Real Safety Begins with Real Values

By Ron Hanson, Safety Management Group

How can you make your worksite a safer place? Many employers take an approach that's similar to the one used by OSHA: they set strict rules and then dole out tougher penalties when those rules are violated. That kind of approach can improve a company's safety record. Sadly, it all too often has the unintended effect of damaging morale. And, in my experience, it's often a sign that a company really doesn't see safety as a critically important aspect of doing business.

Other companies view safety as something more than just another set of rules. They recognize the value of maintaining a safer workplace. They know that increased safety usually translates into better morale, less turnover, higher productivity, and better profits. Beyond the business reasons, they also have a genuine concern for the well-being of their employees and want to ensure that everyone goes home healthy every night.

Those companies understand the value of creating and maintaining a safety culture. A safety culture goes beyond regulations and equipment to provide a clear sense that safe practices are an important part of everything the company does.

Having a safety culture is more than simply developing programs, performing audits, conducting weekly 'toolbox' training meetings at jobsites, or offering safety incentive programs. A culture is defined as consistent beliefs, values, and behaviors among all members of a population. It's an attitude that flows through every level of the business and a set of values shared by all employees.

BMW Constructors, Inc. knows full well about the significance of workplace safety.

"A safety culture is clearly the cornerstone of the construction trades. When you educate the workforce on the best safety practices, the culture adapts to it," said Ron

Peters, BMW Constructors assistant corporate safety director. "BMW prides itself on focusing on behavior intervention, effective safety planning, and employee participation in our quest to achieve world-class safety."

The same can be said about the comprehensive safety efforts at Aker Kvaerner Songer.

"The safety-culture mindset will make or break you," regional safety manager Joe Virgil said.

That's why all new employees on a jobsite learn first about the company's safety policy before anything else, and it's reinforced time and again.

"A safety culture is clearly the cornerstone of the construction trades."

- Ron Peters, BMW Constructors assistant corporate safety director

Of course, it's possible to have a negative safety culture. The best example of that is when management pays lip service to safety issues, but clearly doesn't embrace the concept. Comments such as 'safety is just common sense,' 'safety is the safety director's responsibility,' 'accidents just happen,' and 'safety is a necessary evil,' often define the safety culture of a company more accurately than a room full of safety programs and procedures. If employees believe that management really doesn't care about safety, it won't be a priority for them, either.

Maintaining a safety culture can provide bottom-line benefits. Because an organization that is focused on safety will have fewer injuries, it reduces expenses that are related to injuries and illnesses. It also decreases the number of workmen's compensation claims and leads to lower insurance premiums. Companies with strong safety cultures typically experience less absenteeism and other problems that are triggered by morale issues. When workers sense a

strong safety culture, they believe that their employer actually cares about them and their well-being. People work harder when they genuinely feel that they are valued.

What are the most important factors in developing a safety culture? The answer might surprise you. Respect and trust are two of the most essential elements in human interaction. You cannot neglect the human touch. After all, the very goal of a safety program is to change the behaviors of each individual. By addressing their external behaviors, you can begin to change the way they think about the actions they take.

The other critical factor is a genuine commitment on the part of the company's leadership. Leaders of companies with strong safety cultures understand that the goal of zero injuries is possible. They demonstrate this belief in their daily actions and decision-making and they are nothing short of passionate about it. These companies enact effective safety processes to help implement their programs and measure results. Their employees receive education about the programs and are involved in safety initiatives through which they understand their specific roles and are recognized for success. Because the culture becomes tangible to employees, they're going to pay attention to it and start implementing it. Through teamwork, companies find safer, more efficient ways to complete projects, as well as, make their workplaces safer.

Once you have all the basic elements in place, it's critically important to be consistent. Even those who initially doubt the validity of a safety culture will become supporters when they see policies and practices applied consistently.

Companies that manage to establish and maintain strong safety cultures will gain strength, provide safer work environments for employees, and build strong alliances among owners, architects, contractors, and subcontractors. ♦