The Antidote for Behavior-Based Safety: The Virtues and Vices Associated with BBS and The Cure

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The antidote for BBS must be discovered through an understanding of the architecture of safety and the Performance Map™. "The Architecture of Safety Excellence" is the title of a paper published in *Professional Safety* and authored by Larry Hansen. It uses a bridge metaphor to illustrate what is required to achieve a loss resistant environment. It would be well for you to research and read the entire article but in order to understand the cure for BBS you only need to understand the metaphor.

The metaphor is a bridge. The objective is to construct a bridge that will allow secure passage over a river that represents losses and costs. The foundations of the bridge are programs and culture. The bed of the bridge is behaviors. The superstructure over programs is compliance and technology. Over the culture foundation it is systems and leadership. For a successful (loss resistant) trip, all parts of the bridge must be strong. Experience suggests that if you just work on the bed of the bridge, neglecting the other parts, eventually the bridge will collapse. If you don't attend to the culture deliberately it will evolve; that may be good or not so good. Even if it is good, if you start to digress, you will never know how to find your way back. In his book, *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance*, the CEO and Chairman of IBM, Louis Gerstner, Jr. suggests that is just what happened to IBM as they reeled toward bankruptcy in 1993. If you do successfully attend to the culture, it will be easy to strengthen other parts of the structure. If you don't achieve a sound culture, every other aspect important for a safe trip will be difficult; maybe even impossible.

The Performance Map™ explains the relationship between culture and performance. At its apex are correct principles. Below principles are beliefs and values. What we believe and value will determine our character – or in the case of an organization the culture. The culture will determine attitude; the attitude will determine behaviors; then, behaviors will inexorably lead to performance. Correct performance will reinforce the correct beliefs and values and knit the rationale into a tight loop with a feedback element. We can only affect solutions if we have an accurate diagnosis and deal with the root cause. The root cause of any problem involving people has to do with their interaction with each other. So, while the application of the physical and natural sciences is helpful, only through the application of social science will solve people problems. Accident prevention, is *primarily* a people problem.

When we embraced behavior-based safety (BBS) in the 80s, we thought we had finally found the key to creating an accident resistant environment. We sowed a wind and we are reaping a whirlwind.

Why isn't BBS meeting our expectations? What is the future of this process? What is the problem: What is the solution?

As I have met with safety professionals all over the world I have often heard similar stories about BBS: The costs are high: Employees feel manipulated: The results don't meet expectations: Other facets important to loss resistance are being neglected: Instead of being involved, management is distancing itself from the process. Those safety professionals want out but can't find a graceful way to disengage.

This analysis will explain how and why we got stuck where we are and how to extricate ourselves…with some degree of aplomb.

Behavior-based safety -- in its current form -- is a hoax perpetrated by fraud and perpetuated by misinformation and disinformation. These are strong statements that require an explanation and justification: I will explain myself and justify my statements.

But first I need to review the definition of the words I have used and defend them…initially now, and then demonstrate throughout this treatise – beyond any reasonable doubt – that they are properly applied.

A hoax is "to trick into believing or accepting as genuine something false or even preposterous." I believe the safety profession has been tricked into believing BBS will create long-term accident resistance. This discussion will convince the listeners that this assumption is blatantly untrue and even preposterous.

A fraud is "intentional perversion of truth in order to induce another to part with something of value or to surrender a legal right." In this case it is something of value – money. The "perversion of truth" – not an obvious lie – is the suggestion that safety performance improvement -- wherever it may be found in an environment utilizing BBS -- is solely due to that process. To suggest that all improvement in safety performance following introduction of BBS is due to BBS is ridiculous. That could only be demonstrated if everything else could be held constant: That can't be done! So, the claims constitute misinformation.

Misinformation is information intended to misinform someone. To misinform someone is to give them information that is not *totally* correct. This has come to be accepted and even expected in our "Age of Show Business" society. Hence, it could be said, "What else is new?" But there is too much at stake here to allow the entire safety profession to be misdirected by what is truly slick marketing.

Disinformation is "false information deliberately and often covertly spread (as by the planting of rumors) in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth." The truth about BBS has been cleverly obscured and drowned out by false information in very large volumes. The corporate cacophony of concomitant conundrums about BBS has had the effect of drowning out all the dissent.

Having said all that, there is much good about what we have learned through a psychology-based approach to loss prevention. I'll talk about both the good and the bad and then…I'll suggest how we can build on the good and I will provide the antidote for the bad.

It needs to be stated early on – before I castigate the process and by inference indict the proponents and purveyors – that I don't think they know any better and the misdeed is not premeditated nor does it…or did it, intend the result we are witnessing. The sellers of the process are rarely safety professionals; they have little or no hands-on-in-plant experience; they have little knowledge of all

the dimensions of a truly world-class loss prevention effort. They are one-dimensional and are – through astute marketing -- leading the "sheep to the slaughter." The slaughter will come in the form of the safety profession losing what credibility it has left by exposing it as advocating a process rooted in the dogma of management theory of a bygone (and discredited) era.

First, let's examine the good. I should say that -- because of the good points -- I was enamored with BBS when first exposed to the concepts...before I saw it in full flower.

Here's what is good about BBS:

The concept of focusing on the human side of safety is correct because it does – ultimately, when all is said – hold the key to consistent success. OSHA has been largely unsuccessful in achieving a significant reduction in workplace injuries because it has had great difficulty moving beyond physical standards. **Good point number 1**: The focus is on the people/human side.

Defining safe and unsafe acts based on industry and plant specific exposures is fundamental to every loss prevention effort. In the plethora of "safety programs" that have emerged over the years this concept has historically been lost far to frequently. BBS places the focus where it belongs. **Good point number 2**: Safe and unsafe behaviors are defined.

The high risk behaviors are discouraged by providing soon, certain, and positive reinforcement for the correct behaviors. No one can argue with this. **Good point number 3**: There is an organized process to encourage correct behaviors and discourage the wrong or potentially destructive behaviors.

Employees are enlisted in the effort to propagate the correct behaviors and in the analysis of results. We've known for a long time that employee participation in the loss prevention process is essential to success. **Good point number 4**: Involvement of many employees is encouraged and ingrained in the process.

It is an expensive process; and so, in keeping with natural human perceptions, is good since it is costly. Forgive the cynicism but perception is said to be reality and this is the unfortunate reality of the world we live in. **Good point number 5**: Management has "put their money where their mouth is" and that speaks volumes to many people. It says – or seems to say – "We care about safety…because we've spent a lot of money on it."

Due to the marketing and commitment -- that is central to any successful safety effort (or for that matter *any* effort) – the BBS process has attracted a following that is – at times – almost evangelical. So much so that people who see the light don't seem to know how to gracefully extricate themselves from the embarrassing dilemma of backing out of an expensive process that they have sold to management with enthusiastic endorsements. Passion for the concept has been achieved in many quarters. **Good point number 6**: Passion and desire are essential to drive any behavioral or social change process. BBS has shown itself capable of engendering commitment – often with considerable zeal…at least in the early phases.

First line supervisor involvement in the process is built-in and significant. They are probably the "key man/woman" in the application. For years we have known that involvement of the first level of supervision is essential in any successful industrial safety effort. **Good point number 7**: The BBS process inherently involves the first level of supervision to a significant extent.

The Good Points of Behavior-Based Safety
1. The focus is on the human side of safety.
2. Safe and unsafe behaviors are defined.
3. There is an organized process to encourage safe behaviors.
4. Employee involvement is encouraged and ingrained in the process.
5. Managements financial commitment *suggests* the importance they attach to safety.
6. BBS has shown itself capable of engendering commitment…with passion.
7. BBS inherently involves the first level of supervision to a significant extent.

Table 1

Now, with those good points, at times verging on virtues, why should anyone speak out against BBS and what could possibly be wrong with it that isn't overshadowed by its benefits?

Here are the problems:

First, BBS confuses and misdirects management. It is not a new or recent phenomenon for management to find safety language arcane and the dogma inscrutable. So, they have accepted the generally unacceptable or illogical. This serves to deepen the hole safety professionals have dug for themselves. The old saying, "when you are in a hole, stop digging", could be applied appropriately here.

All modern management thinking is based on empowerment and self-directed work. The old discredited model is "command and control" so popular in the early and middle parts of the 20th century. BBS is clearly based on the old-discarded model.

This begs the two questions; (1) "Then why doesn't management reject this thinking?" And; (2) "Why would management spend a lot of money on a process that isn't consistent with their basic thinking." The answer to the first is a troubling two-fold answer. First, they care so little about safety that they haven't really looked at this process carefully and recognized it for the "wolf in sheep clothes" which it is. Further, if they have, they just write it off as one more confusing idea foisted upon them by safety and health proponents and they must move forward in spite of this rather than because of the leadership demonstrated by the profession. When they finally realize what has been done to them, they will either be disillusioned (once again) with safety, or worse yet, fighting mad.

The answer to the second question could be that they are so fed up with inscrutable safety processes that the opportunity to solve the problem with one large check is too tempting for them to dismiss. **Problem #1 Management has been misled. They haven't been told the whole story.** This problem neutralizes good point number 5 that suggests BBS financial support speaks to management's commitment toward safety: It suggests that BBS is a ticking time bomb. The wise proponent will want to defuse this potential lethal consequence of BBS advocacy.

Second, BBS is little more than a very old idea wrapped-up in new nomenclature and clothing. In several well-written articles and presentations, Dan Petersen has pointed out that there is actually very little new in BBS. The concept of focusing on behaviors and conducting observations is almost as old as the hills. Over thirty years ago, at *Merck & Company*, we included behaviors in our Job

Safety Analysis work and did observations, providing positive reinforcement for the application of correct methods.

OxyChem, under the guidance of Bud Snell, had a documented job observation program that bore a strong resemblance to BBS long before it had a name and was popularized. Jack Gausch used a High Incidence Training (HIT) initiative that uncovered critical exposures (mostly wrong behaviors) and encouraged observations and positive reinforcement for the right methods and behaviors back in the 70's. What is new about BBS is the high costs and elaborate committee structures associated with it that de-emphasize the importance of the correct culture and necessary systems. **Problem #2 There is really nothing new here. It is just the same old stuff with a new name and packaging…and, a lot more cost in time and dollars.** If true -- and I believe it is and can be confirmed by a close analysis of safety history – this means that all the good points above are moot, except 5 and 6 that suggest commitment and passion. I've just dealt with the management commitment pitfalls. As to the passion, passion wrongly directed (as it is in this case) can be very dangerous…for everyone. And there are better ways to demonstrate management's commitment and engender passion. Sincere efforts to enrich safety culture and walking the talk by using a world-class risk management information system are the best ways.

Third, BBS distorts priorities. In his excellent article, "The Architecture of Safety Excellence," published in *Professional Safety*, Larry Hansen uses a brilliant bridge metaphor (described at the beginning of this paper) to illustrate the relationship between various aspects of an effective effort to minimize losses. The unusual focus on BBS has caused us to view the architecture of safety as a mutation. It places behaviors in the wrong place. It suggests they are at the core or foundation of loss prevention. They are in fact only one part of an elaborate set of interrelationships where the more critical or foundation concepts are culture and processes or programs. The foundations in Larry's bridge metaphor are appropriately culture and programs. The bed of the bridge is behaviors. Certainly, if we repave the bridge road, add new lines, improve road lighting, add prominent signs, and provide handrails and barriers on the bridge, we will reduce the likelihood of people or cars falling off the bridge into the river and becoming losses.

But, if in the process we neglect the two foundations the bridge eventually collapses; we not only have a hemorrhaging of losses but the resources we dissipated in focusing our efforts on the bridge road bed are all lost. Larry appropriately points out that any behavioral strategy should address "what all people do" not just front line employees. BBS tends to let some of the most critical people "off the hook" rather than energizing them: That is a big problem. **Problem #3 BBS blurs the focus of the loss prevention effort.** Our attention should be on a comprehensive approach to loss prevention…because, it is the only one that will – over time -- work. This is such a big problem that I believe it negates all the good points I have listed for BBS.

Fourth, BBS largely ignores the fact that loss prevention is not *primarily* a technical *or* behavioral problem: It is *primarily* a social or cultural problem. To his credit, Steve Simon, PhD., has been delivering this message for many years. Only recently have I recognized the prescience of his work. Steve has published numerous articles in *Professional Safety* and spoken eloquently of the centrality of culture in safety performance. He has often been drowned out by the cacophony of conundrums barraging our profession from a growing army of BBS advocates who have a vested interest in selling their products. For years, virtually all-practicing safety professionals have recognized that if the attitude is good, everything seems to work; if the attitude is bad, no programs or efforts seem to work. This recognition is largely ignored by the BBS practice. The installation is often preceded by

an attitude survey that mitigates application if the culture is deemed to be inhospitable. This fails to address the reason for the wrong environment (the culture) but only applies the methods where they are all but guaranteed success. Any effort will produce positive results in a hospitable environment. Is this news to anyone? **Problem #4 BBS works on behaviors when the real problem is attitudes.** Dealing with symptoms masks the root causes. The behaviors are the result of wrong attitudes; the wrong attitudes are the product of the wrong culture; the wrong culture comes from the wrong beliefs and values often based on incorrect principles. This is illustrated in what I call a Performance Map™ and which is described at the beginning of this paper. The Performance Map™ could also be labeled a causation diagram because it describes the cause of good or bad performance. The loop configuration and smaller feedback arrows in the diagram suggests the interlocking nature of the process and the backward linkage that solidifies the relationships.

BBS proponents have suggested that you can't change attitudes directly but that changing behaviors will eventually modify attitudes. They are right; changing behaviors will affect attitudes. The problem is that, as often as not it will harden attitudes against just what you are trying to accomplish. Take the example of parents who restrict behaviors of their children without ever explaining why or "winning them over" by changing their beliefs and values. We all know what happens when the parents stop monitoring or no longer can control the behaviors of their children. Often the children will adopt just the behaviors that have been restricted – at times with passion and enthusiasm.

This focus on symptoms instead of root causes overwhelms all the good points of BBS. Other ways to achieve the benefits of its good points must be substituted for the destructive aspects of BBS.

Fifth, BBS addresses the critical attitude element downstream: A values-driven approach addresses attitude upstream where it is more efficacious and will be more enduring. The BBS mantra suggests that the only practical way to address attitudes is by modifying behaviors and that will – in turn – impact attitudes positively. That ignores the power of beliefs and values. The right beliefs and values will produce a culture that results in the desired attitudes; those attitudes will be enduring. When attitudes are affected by manipulating behaviors -- as in the case of BBS -- the result is ephemeral. My book, *Values-Driven Safety*, and the article "It's The Culture Stupid," published in *Occupational Hazards* and reprinted in New Zealand's *SAFEGUARD*, explains my thinking in considerable detail. To suggest that you can't change beliefs and values or that it isn't practical to try is wrong and self-defeating. **Problem #5 BBS denies the importance of beliefs and values.** It is far better to engender passion and desire by education and exposing truths than by hype and misinformation and disinformation. The former is enduring; the latter is ephemeral. A culture enrichment process commits management and will engender passion, even deeper than that elicited by BBS.

Sixth, BBS is often manipulative. Speaking of manipulation, Scott Geller is right; manipulation, like technology, can be used for good or bad. He is wrong that BBS is never manipulative in a bad sense. How would you like to have your boss observe your work, take notes and document results against what he or she had told you to do and then have colleagues and others perform the same exercise at periodic intervals. Would you conclude that all these efforts were altruistic and none of them were designed to improve organization performance or make any of the observers look better? Analysis of this subject can be made very complex by credentialed behavioral scientists but becomes pretty clear when we reduce it to its simplest terms. If you get the desired behaviors from your children by watching them but never "win them over" to your beliefs and values, what is going to happen when you stop watching? **Problem #6 BBS manipulates people and treats them like**

small children. Adults don't like to be treated like children. When they realize what's happening, they often get mad and then get even. Angering your employees negates all the good points of BBS. It poisons the well; it will, eventually, not only adversely effect safety performance but labor relations and production as well.

Seventh, BBS -- in-spite-of protestations to the contrary -- fails to deal with the root cause of accidents or bad outcomes. Anyone who has practiced loss prevention for any length of time knows that behaviors are symptoms of the causes of losses. The root causes are the systems and culture. Failure to recognize this fact will produce short-term results and long-term breakdown. When we take cold medications, the symptoms are abated but the body mechanisms designed to heal us are thwarted and the eventual recovery period is extended. BBS, as it is commonly applied, has the same effect on loss reduction. **Problem #7 BBS masks the root cause and so delays implementation of the cure.** Any time you focus on symptoms you mask the real problem and what you do is – in effect – worse than doing nothing at all. This suggests that all the benefits of a BBS approach are not worth putting off the cure.

Eighth, BBS provides a very poor return on investment. The process is very costly and there is just so much money that will be spent on loss prevention. If it is all -- or a large portion of it -- devoted to a questionable process, there is very little money and energy left to be applied to more efficacious areas such as systems, process, and culture. **Problem #8 BBS is very costly and – in that way – works against production goals and general business success.** For what it costs to install BBS in a single plant, a large corporation can employ a safety culture enrichment process. Hence, the cost for a far better process is a small fraction of the cost of BBS. (See Sidebar on "Costs") And, it is a one-time cost. The costs associated with a BBS program like the "Eveready Bunny" just go on and on. This cost factor and the adverse affect on so many aspects of organization performance should make any good manager seek to achieve the benefits (good points of BBS) in ways that are more efficient and less harmful to overall enterprise well-being.

Ninth, BBS tends to isolate the safety subject. Organizations that achieve world-class safety have a set of common attributes. These include the integration of safety into the management process. BBS suggests that safety and the correct behaviors that predict loss resistance should be handled as a separate subject from the overall management of the enterprise. Cultivation of this thinking will constantly work against the achievement of *real* organizational loss resistance.
Problem #9 BBS isolates instead of integrating safety into the management process. Eventually management will see this and discard the BBS process and everything associated with it…including its advocates.

Tenth, BBS is not designed to be self-sustaining. If the money and committees and paperwork are removed, the results will evaporate very quickly. When culture is enhanced to mimic the cultures of loss resistant environments and supported with well-designed systems, loss resistance will persist long after all support efforts (budget dollars) are withdrawn. **Problem #10 BBS is not self-sustaining.** Take away the committees and observations and reports and things go back to where they were…if you are fortunate; if not, they could get worse. The good points of BBS produce a hangover. So why not look for a way to have the benefits without the hangover. The BBS process is a trap and enslaves: It does not liberate.

Eleventh, BBS is largely based on experiments with rodents. People don't always think and behave like rodents. In a interesting article published in *Professional Safety*, Tom Smith covers this in great detail and with a far greater knowledge of the subject than I possess. But, he convinced me. Read the article and see if he can convince you. **Problem #11 is that the very foundation of BBS is probably based on inapplicable science.** I leave further examination of this assertion to those with greater knowledge of the experiments of Skinner and others than I possess.

The Problems with Behavior-Based Safety BBS has…
1. misled management; they haven't been told the whole story.
2. not introduced anything new; it's the old stuff with new packaging at a higher cost.
3. blurred the focus of the loss prevention effort.
4. worked on behaviors when the real problem is attitudes.
5. denied the importance (and power) of beliefs and values.
6. manipulated people and treats them like small children.
7. masked the root cause and so delays implementation of the cure.
8. been very costly; so, works against production and general business success.
9. isolated instead of integrating safety into the management process.
10. not been self-sustaining.
11. been based on questionable science.

Okay, so what does liberate? What can achieve the benefits of BBS without the disastrous side effects? The answer is a safety culture enrichment process complemented by a comprehensive risk measurement system.

It has been suggested that safety culture can't be measured and managed; that is untrue. There is a process, Values-Driven Safety™, that demonstrates the correlation between the attributes associated with world-class safety performance and a set of beliefs and values that can be taught through the application of targeted and customized exercises.

Here are the fourteen attributes that are invariably resident in organizations that are loss resistant:

1. Each Employee Takes Responsibility For Safety
2. Safety Is Integrated Into The Management Process
3. The Presence Of The Full-Time Safety Professional Is Limited
4. There Is An Off-The-Job Safety Effort
5. Safety And Other Training Are Seamlessly Integrated
6. Compliance Comes Naturally
7. Programs And Technical Processes Have History And Occur Naturally
8. There Is A Bias Against Gimmicks
9. Leadership **Always** Sets the Example; Safety Is Never Taken Lightly
10. There Is A Recognizable Safety Culture
11. The Focus Is **More** On Process Than Statistics
12. Negative Findings Are Treated Expeditiously
13. The Few Safety Professionals Have Stature
14. Safety Is Seen As A Competitive Edge…Not Overhead

The beliefs and values, worded as imperatives that will lead to the acquisition of the fourteen attributes are:

1. Do It For The Right Reasons
2. See It As Part Of The Whole
3. Recognize There Is No End
4. First, It Is A People Business; Things Are A Distant Second
5. Put The Right Person In Charge
6. Use A Yardstick Everyone Can Read
7. Sell Benefits...And They Are Many
8. Never Settle For Second Best
9. Be Guided By Logic, Not Emotion
10. Empower Others Rather Than Seeking After Support

A correlation matrix illustrates how this occurs. The matrix is constructed by listing the fourteen desired attributes across the top and listing the ten suggested beliefs/values worded as imperatives down the left side. Each time the belief/value is likely to engender the desired attribute, put a check in the box. I got 132 checks of a possible 140 suggesting that these generic values are a pretty good start.

A Safety Culture Barometer™ can be applied to produce an organization Safety Culture Profile™. This profile will suggest exercises that can be applied strategically to improve the profile and in turn encourage the acquisition of the attributes historically associated with loss resistance.

Here are some generic exercises that could be prescribed for shortcomings in living each value:

Value #1 Do It for the Right Reasons

1. Every time a safety subject is covered in any meeting, we will first consider the implications for employees individually or collectively. We'll do this for one month and document the impact on the discussion.

2. We will set safety objectives that have more to do with process than "safety statistics." An example would be, "We will analyze the results of our culture assessment and formulate a plan to enhance the three areas that have the greatest need for improvement. Within six months, we will conduct the assessment again and focus our attention on the areas we have worked to improve."

3. In company meetings and publications, we will place increasing emphasis on culture assessment numbers and less emphasis on incidence rates.

Value #2 See It as Part of the Whole

1. We will delete the word safety from any committee or function where it would be better to integrate the function into some other existing committee or function and eliminate the separate safety activity.

2. We will make safety the first subject covered at operations meetings and staff meetings until it becomes second nature to integrate it into the routine management of the organization. Within some prescribed time frame we'll move it from first to fully integrated.

3. We will integrate a safety objective into the objectives of every operating unit down to the smallest size and make that objective process or systems oriented -- not statistical.

Value #3 Recognize There Is No End

1. We will review the entire loss prevention process and list every item that is not enduring. Examples would be certain incentive programs, accident reduction goals, inspection reports that focus on the reports, not exposure reduction and root cause definition.

2. We will define a process that is critical to a loss resistant environment. Then we will take several steps to refine and improve the process or system. Examples would be response to accident investigations and the lock, tag, and try process.

3. We will develop and document a strategy that has no end. We will focus on long-term processes like culture enrichment and eliminate obvious short-term initiatives.

Value #4 First, It Is a People Business; Things Are a Distant Second

1. We will install an off-the-job safety program. If we have one already, we'll take some specific new initiatives.

2. We will install a wellness program. If we already have one, we'll take some creative new initiatives such as providing character counseling and/or counseling for at-risk teen-agers.

3. We will seriously upgrade the way we do accident investigations. We will never blame the people; we will always blame the process. We will not stop the investigation until we have found the root cause and then we'll install universal solutions that are enduring.

Value #5 Put the Right Person in Charge

1. We will examine the extent to which operations management has assumed control of the safety process; then, we'll see how well they have accumulated the necessary know-how to be effective. An example would be application of ergonomics technology and doing it within the context of a broad based soft tissue injury abatement process.

2. We will set a standard for performance by the servicing safety professional (if we haven't done so already). (*OxyChem's* list of competencies can be used for guidance.) Then we'll measure his or her performance against the standard.

3. Finally, we will establish a program and process with milestones and due dates to make sure those in charge of loss prevention are functioning optimally.

Value #6 Use a Yardstick Everyone Can Read

1. We will conduct a survey of a cross section of employees to determine their understanding of the systems we use to measure our safety performance.

2. Once we know what people don't know or understand, we will conduct an educational process to shed more light on the safety measurement process.

3. We will use the information to devise improved safety measurement that comes closer to meeting the criteria set in this chapter for "What We Want a Measurement System to Be."

Value #7 Sell Benefits...and There Are Many

1. We will make sure every employee is well aware of the economic benefits of a vigorous loss prevention process anchored by a rich culture (Much of the information needed to accomplish this is embodied in this chapter.).

2. We will make a list of the benefits associated with a world-class loss prevention effort. The canvassing of employees will help institutionalize an understanding of the virtues of prevention of undesired events.

3. We will brainstorm three potentially catastrophic events that could compromise our organization. We will then review the loss prevention strategies we employ to avoid them. We'll make improvements where necessary. This will serve to solidify in our minds the importance of a solid culture supporting the systems we have in place to insure continues successful operations.

Value #8 Never Settle for Second Best

1. We will list the disciplines needed for the success of our operations. We will then look at budgets, staffing, resources, support systems, and recognition within the corporation and determine if different disciplines have parity relative to their value to the enterprise.

2. We will look at the reporting relationship of the loss prevention function and assure that it has equal voice with other concerns of the enterprise.

3. We will take a simple survey of a cross-section of employees and determine what they think the head of the loss prevention function does. We will determine what that person should be doing and is doing; then we will correlate that with perceptions. Finally, we will establish the correct "marching orders" and see that perception comes into alignment with reality.

Value #9 Be Guided by Logic, Not Emotion

1. We will examine the last ten incidents that resulted in undesirable outcomes. We will analyze how we reacted to them and assess the extent to which we failed to maintain a perspective devoid of distracting emotion such as blame placing and failure to concentrate on the facts.

2. We will look at the last five loss prevention initiatives and assess the extent to which our expectations were unrealistic and motivated by a quick-fix orientation.

3. Once we have conducted these two exercises, we will analyze the results and develop a strategy to overcome an orientation toward loss prevention that is less than logical.

4. We will take the last five statements that management has made with regard to loss prevention and ask ten employees whether they perceive that management is demonstrating the position they have articulated. Are they "walking the talk."

Value #10 Empower Others rather than Seeking after Support

1. We will ask twenty employees, "Who is responsible for safety?" We will analyze the answers and discuss what needs to be done to get all twenty answers to be, "I am."

2. We will analyze how safety training is done and who does it. If the role of the safety advisor is excessive, we'll redistribute responsibilities to the appropriate operations personnel.

3. We will analyze the roles in incident and accident investigations. If the operations role is not dominant, we will make changes.

This safety culture enrichment process will integrate loss prevention with every other aspect of the enterprise and – over time – enhance every other aspect of business. Rather than drawing from other resources, this concept adds to other initiatives. The Safety Operating System™ that results can be enlarged to become a Social Operating System™ for the benefit of the entire enterprise.

Such an approach will utilize the exposure know-how acquired in the BBS initiatives but then will make all the committee meetings and most job observations passé. Less onerous and broader-based risk related data collection would confirm the efficacy of the culture enrichment process while monitoring initiatives. There are numerous systems in use and some very creative work being done on more comprehensive Internet-based systems suggest that our future may hold some excellent risk measurement devices.

The antidote for behavior-based safety is a measured and monitored values-driven approach that makes acquisition of known attributes of excellence natural and intuitive as well as integrated rather than artificial, ephemeral, and disparate. A culture enrichment and measurement process is prospective instead of retrospective. It provides a crystal ball instead of fodder for “Monday Morning Quarterbacks.”

I have used a safety culture enrichment process that I have devised and written of in a book and articles. Others have suggested their approach to safety culture enrichment. The wise consumer will evaluate various approaches and choose the one that best meets their needs. This paper doesn’t suggest that any one safety culture enrichment process or risk management data system is the best for everyone; it does suggest that almost any such approach is better than a resource draining focus on behavior-based safety that ignores the realities of sound loss prevention that has a long and rich history.

Summary

If you are ill and there is a medication that will relieve your discomfort, dosage is always critical. If you take the remedy in excessive concentrations or volumes, the cure can become a poison. Such is the case with BBS as it applies to loss resistance. In the proper amount and dosage, based on demonstrated needs, the application of behavioral science can be efficacious. In excessive quantities, it can poison other essential efforts. That has happened far to often.

BBS advocates have argued that you can't change attitudes but that changing behaviors will, over time, change attitudes. That is one of the half-truths used to sell BBS; it is a hoax because it is false, maybe even preposterous to anyone who has carefully analyzed history. Any time you change what people believe and value you change their culture and in turn their attitudes. Beliefs and values change every day; that changes culture and consequently attitudes -- sometimes over very short time spans in very large populations. The September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center changed forever what Americans believed about their vulnerability and in turn their culture and attitudes about fighting terrorism: That happened instantly; some other culture changes may take a little longer.

On the other hand attempting to change attitudes by changing behaviors is fraught with danger if the behaviors have been changed by coercion. The new attitude may be diametrically opposite to that which you seek to engender.

Safety culture can be changed and then measured and managed to predict the desired attitudes. So, why would anyone want to rely on the risky and expensive process of trying to change attitude by manipulating behaviors?

We have gotten to where we are because the BBS process is seductive and has been exquisitely marketed by eloquent authority figures. The only exit path is paved with honesty, courage, and integrity. The sounder thinking embodied in safety culture enrichment lights the pathway.

Sidebar 1

Costs Associated With
Implementation of a
Behavior-Based Safety Process

A casual but credible survey of about a half-dozen companies reveals that an initial survey/analysis costs at least $10,000. Full implementation at a plant of several hundred employees runs into six figures and then the maintenance costs are substantial but more difficult to calculate as they primarily involve the time of employees. A safety culture enrichment process can be installed at a plant for the cost of the initial survey and could be implemented at a large corporation for less than the cost to install a BBS process at a single plant. And, the result would be a process that required far less maintenance and was far more enduring. Most appealing, it would be consistent with current management thinking, not in contrast to it.

Following is the feedback from one global organization that provided input;

Hi Don,

The following are one-off direct costs (approximate only):
To train and use Internal consultant (cheaper than using BST consultants) =

US$ 45,000. Plus travel, accommodation, etc for training or for BST consultant to site.
Internal consultant material = US$ 4500.
Steering Team member material = US$ 500
License fee per employee at implementation site = US$ 120.
Database software license - 1 per site = US$ 8 / employee or $ 3,500 min.

Indirect costs:
Initial training employees, observers = typically 1 day.
Refresher training = ½ day every couple of years.
Ongoing Steering team member meetings (up to 10 people monthly)
Steering Team activities outside of meetings e.g. data analysis, problem solving, promotions, training, creating reports, updating CBI checklists, etc.
Observers doing observations (say 10 minutes per observation).
Data entry to database (say 1 minute per observation).
Observation and data entry time is directly related to the number of observations being targeted so can vary significantly. As a guide BST suggest 20% employees observed weekly.
Stationary for checklists.
Attendance at annual Users Conference (voluntary of course).

Regards,

Mike

Sidebar 2

Modern Management Thinking on The Importance of Culture

Currently, the most popular business books are *jack*, the story of the Jack Welch era at General Electric, *First, Break All The Rules* by Buckingham and Coffman based on Gallup interviews of over 80,000 managers, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, and *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?*, Lew Gerstner, Jr.'s story of how he saved IBM from Bankruptcy back 1993. All these books emphasize the centrality of culture in achieving business excellence; none of them talk about manipulating behaviors. Perhaps all the thinking is best summed up by Gerstner who said, "I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game—it is the game."

Sidebar 3

Why Focus on Safety Culture?

In the movie *The Emperor's Club* starring Kevin Kline it is said that, "A man's character is his destiny." Since an organization's culture is – in effect – its character, it could reasonably be said that: An organizations culture predicts its profitability. And, in turn: An organizations safety culture predicts its accident rate (and hence its cost of risk). The quote in the movie is not a new idea. The concept is rooted in all religions and most philosophies and would be described by many people as a truism. It is past due time for the safety profession to act on this knowledge.

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