

PRESENTATION TO AOSH on 17/12/16 BY DAVID HARRISON, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER

I have worked in the business environment for almost forty years and during that time I have seen many changes – not least in the colour of my hair!

When I first started out, it was working for a manufacturing company in Bristol and some of the Health & Safety practices had to be seen to be believed. The 1974 act changed the way things were done and there is no doubt about it, the work environment is now a much safer place.

However I work with many different organisations and something I hear once or twice a year is the comment " We can't do that anymore, health and safety gone mad". It's almost as if there is a battleground out there and that type of remark is a reflection on how H & S is perceived and the attitude towards it.

It doesn't have to be that way. In fact it is my belief that if H & S is to move forward then there needs to be a shift in how it is viewed, for it to be much more inclusive of all and for every individual to be aware of their personal responsibility towards H & S - I have seen just such a culture in operation.

Some years ago my company was involved in a project to change attitudes, This organisation was a major alcohol producer and they take H & S very seriously. For them there are two main areas of concern,

- a) The manufacturing and handling processes can be very dangerous.
- b) Their product, alcohol if used irresponsibly has serious H & S implications.

We were asked to use our unique techniques to bring about a change in attitude towards responsible drinking as part of a nationwide programme.

ACTIVITY

I would like you now to participate in a fun exercise to give an insight into how it is possible to bring about a change in perception and attitude.

Aim: To learn four circus skills (juggling, plate spinning flower stick and diabolo) and in teams deliver a thirty second performance in front of everyone else.

Scores were taken at the start were typically very low (2/10) but by the end had improved significantly (7 or 8/10). People discovered hidden talents and the perception "I can't do that" and any negative attitudes were quickly dispelled. Everyone had fun, enjoyed the activity – the photos prove it - and everyone exceeded their expectations!

Key to delivering powerful messages, especially when wanting to change attitudes towards H & S are:

Make it enjoyable - When changing attitudes it is necessary to engage - have a conversation, so make it fun. H & S is of course is an incredibly important issue and there can be huge consequences when things go wrong, it doesn't mean information always has to be delivered in a deadly serious manner.

Boring PowerPoint presentations and lots of literature can give H & S a bad image, why not set about changing perceptions by doing things differently?

Make it inclusive and interactive - Combine information with activities that relate to the message you want to deliver concerning H & S issues. If the budget allows, bring in outside professionals, it can work well. Remember you need to ensure they are able to tailor what they do to fit your message.

Be realistic - Changing an attitude, bringing about cultural change takes time. Give a programme time to work. Build trust. At first keep it simple, for example, identify a key H & S issue, and then be clear about the message you want to deliver. You can always develop a message later on in the programme.

Be adaptable - Some years ago whilst working as part of a programme, the same session that had worked so well with smaller groups didn't work as well with a much larger group - the dynamics were different. Fortunately I had the

time to make adjustments for the next large group an hour later. Be prepared to adapt and tweak for differing situations.

A GOOD IDEA?

When initiating a programme to bring about change there are often two main limitations, budget and time. So here is an idea that can work extremely well and I have been involved with on several occasions.

A Learning at Lunchtime Programme

The company offers a free buffet lunch to staff in return for their participation in a "Learning at Lunchtime" programme. An hour session can work well. Better results can be achieved when an hour and a quarter is allocated. The first twenty minutes are taken up with lunch and the rest of the time is for the learning.

If the initial feedback is encouraging allow the programme to grow through word of mouth - I have seen this work very well.

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