Learning the Hard Way Meeting Kit

We have all heard the saying “learn the hard way”. There are many lessons in life that are learned the hard way because it may be the only way to really learn that particular lesson at a personal level. One area in life we cannot afford to learn the hard way is avoiding injury at work (or at home).

LEARNING THE HARD WAY EQUALS INJURIES OR PROPERTY LOSS

When it comes to workplace safety, we cannot afford to let others around us learn the hard way. Learning the hard way will result in an injury, property damage, loss in production, or worse. Learning a lesson, the hard way is reactive in nature. Someone has to fail for the lesson to be learned.

We all make mistakes. No one is perfect. But how many mistakes can be avoided? The truth is, some people repeat mistakes with alarming regularity. They make a mistake, get up from the fall, and run right back into the wall…again.

Everyday lessons are learned the hard way by workers who are injured on the job. There are many times we hear the horror stories of injuries and fatalities either through a safety share or lessons learned document. Too often the lessons we can learn from these safety shares are not embraced because it did not happen to us or someone, we are close to.

Employees should embrace the lessons learned from incidents at other companies or facilities that result in injury and be proactive in order to prevent a similar incident occurring in their workplace.

WHEN EMPLOYEES ARE PROACTIVE, SAFETY IS CREATED

For safety to be achieved on the job **workers need to be proactive**.

Many safety rules and policies are created after an incident or injury occurs which is reactive in nature. To prevent a similar incident from happening again the lessons learned are turned into proactive measures that need to be implemented. Every safety meeting, safety training, and time taken to implement safeguards prior to work beginning is an attempt to be proactive when it comes to addressing safety in the workplace.

PROACTIVE SAFETY DEFINED

In short, proactive safety measures entail any tactics employed to minimize the likelihood of an incident taking place. Being proactive means anticipating accidents, being prepared, minimizing response times, decreasing the number of injuries that occur in the workplace.

REACTIVE SAFETY DISTINGUISHED FROM PROACTIVE SAFETY

Reactive safety measures are essentially the opposite. A perceived advantage of operating under this method is saving money. However, both the direct and indirect costs of a workplace injury are notable. With unexpected expenses that could take a toll on your company’s long-term profits, it just isn’t worth the risk.

PROACTIVE IS KEY FOR WORKPLACE SAFETY

Workplace safety is often overlooked or simply taken for granted. No worker wants to be injured, and no employer wants to be responsible for an employee injury. So it’s just “common sense” A worker who says “I’ve never been hurt” isn’t necessarily being proactive to prevent injuries, he’s simply recounting how lucky he’s been. Similar to the stock market where past performance is not an indicator of future returns, a good safety record is not a guarantee of employee safety. **Complacency is the biggest threat to workplace safety.**

SAFETY CULTURE AND THE EMPLOYEE´S

ROLE

Safety culture encompasses the expectations, feelings, and perspectives of employees toward the safety of all workers in an organization – it is how safety is managed in the workplace. Of course, taking a proactive approach to building a positive safety culture will have a large impact on your company. A positive safety culture can lower staff turnover, reduce absenteeism, lower training costs, decrease workplace accidents, reduce possible insurance claims, and have a positive effect on your company's reputation.

EVERY EMPLOYEE MISTAKE IS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

- Mistakes make you human. Making a mistake is acceptable. Just don't let it return for an encore.
- Admit your mistakes and own them. Treat every mistake as a learning opportunity.
- Welcome feedback. Treat feedback as a gift rather than a slap in the face.
- Give yourself a grade. Every time you finish an activity, ask yourself, "If I had an opportunity to do this again, what would I do differently?"
- Challenge your routines. Leave your comfort zone and be receptive to change.
- Modify your habits. Ditch your bad habits. Practice doesn't make perfect if you're doing it wrong.
- Think before you begin an activity. Determine if you've done it in the past.
- Learn from others. If you learn from the mistakes of others, you won't have to make every mistake yourself.

FINAL WORD

When it comes to safety at work it is everyone's responsibility. Allowing someone to "learn the hard way" cannot happen with safety on the job. Injuries and property damage affect everyone on a job not just the person at fault or who is a victim in the scenario.