

10 Training Ideas That Engage Workers and Boost Safety



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Improving company-wide safety often begins with training. But how do you know which training methods will be most effective?

While safety training specifics may vary from company to company, the goals are usually the same:

- keep workers safe
- reduce hazards, and
- improve safety culture.

Creating a safety training program that's a good fit for your company is vital when it comes to reaching these goals.

But not every workplace is the same, and neither is every training program. By taking the time to find an effective training solution, you can help make safety the No. 1 priority at your workplace.

What's worked for others

Here are some methods that have helped safety pros we've talked to effectively train their workers:



1. Make your own training materials ... they hit home

A dedicated safety manager couldn't find any specific safety videos that would help train his workers. So he decided to create a video himself that covered all the industry-specific safety information his workers needed.

He also put together booklets that summarized the points in the video, creating a custom safety training program that fit the company's needs.

The project took him weeks to complete, but that time spent has paid off with a crucial safety resource he's put to use over and over since.

2. Train long-term as workers learn the ins and outs

A company was noticing a gap in safety training with its newly hired employees. These workers usually had enough safety awareness to begin working but lacked in-depth knowledge.

Solution: The company developed a long-term training program that would help the newer workers hone their safety skills. They met once a week for 31 weeks to learn about different hazards within the industry.

At the end of the program, the workers were much more comfortable, and the company didn't have any recordable injuries the entire year.

It's a training strategy the company's continued to rely on to keep newer, "green" employees safe while they're learning the ropes.

3. Lectures bored ... 'hands-on' perked things up

A safety manager noticed that her lecture-based training method wasn't as effective as she would have liked. Some workers were obviously nodding off during her safety meetings!

She decided to change her approach to behavior-based training, where she worked with her employees to show them how changing the way they worked could increase safety.

The new hands-on method has prompted the workers to help one another work more safely as well.



4. Can in-house 'talent' make training even better?

Safety training wasn't a problem per se for a manufacturing company. The safety manager had a handle on how to teach staffers.

But the manager noticed there was an employee in another department who really seemed to have a knack for training her employees. This employee showed a special talent that hadn't been tapped to its full potential.

The obvious next step: The safety manager asked the employee for help. They began collaborating on a training regimen and worked to create superior training materials.

5. Survey says? They've all got an opinion

Workers at an industrial facility helped overhaul its safety training program by taking surveys.

Employees rated the current training methods and gave suggestions for improvements. Then the company took the results and tackled the issues one by one.

In the end, the company made lots of safety improvements. Bonus: Workers were happy to get the chance to voice their opinions and see their ideas put into action!

6. Give safety its due to impress new workers

A veteran safety pro noticed that new employees sustained 50% of all injuries at her workplace. She knew something needed to change.

Instead of keeping safety training in the middle of the orientation program, the safety manager turned it into its own orientation session.

The subtle change – putting personal safety squarely under the spotlight – made all the difference. Now new employees understand just how important safety is, and none of them have gotten hurt since the switch.



7. Admit it – you're human

Everyone who's worked in the trades or with machinery for a good amount of time has their share of safety gaffes to share! Some may be their own near-misses.

It's not a bad idea to share these stories during a toolbox talk. It lets employees know we're all fallible and makes training less of a "finger-pointing" exercise.

Just be sure not to make light of a dumb mistake that could've ended with you, or someone you worked with, getting seriously hurt. You don't want trainees laughing about careless behavior but to learn from it instead.

8. Gore can be good, in small doses

Many behavioral scientists believe repeated exposure to violent images or actions can dull a person's sensitivity to it. (Caveat: Not all psychologists agree.)

This could apply to using gory images, like pictures of bloodied appendages, in safety training. Not everyone wants to see it! And most folks won't be "scared straight" into toeing the line from seeing the results of a safety mishap.

Some companies used gore to spice up training a few years back, but it's not as hot of a training suggestion these days.

9. Self-led training works – with 2 conditions

Plenty of companies rely on self-led, computer training to get workers up to speed. Self-led is particularly useful for veteran staffers who need refresher training on an OSHA-required topic, or who need to learn a new topic but aren't novices when it comes to safety basics.

Self-led training meets OSHA's stamp of approval, under two conditions: 1) A trainer must be made available in a timely manner to answer any questions a trainee may have, and 2) For training related to tools, machinery and personal protective equipment, additional "hands-on" training must also be provided so workers get a practical feel for what they'll be working with or wearing.

10. Do they know the repercussions?

A safety consultant sees this scenario play out all the time: Companies hand their new employees a safety handbook and say, "Here read this. Oh and by the way, sign the back page, tear it out and give it to me now."

You wouldn't do that! But workers may not get a strong enough message that safety compliance isn't optional – it's a mandatory condition for their continued employment.

The message that needs to be sent: "This is what we expect of our employees. If you're not going to follow these rules, then this job isn't the best place for you." Then lay out what the repercussions are for not following the rules when you start training.



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