

BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, SAFETY AGAIN!

By Sherry Knight, Dimension 11 Ltd.



That's right – it's time to talk safety again. The tailgate sessions are so valuable to remind personnel every day of the value of keeping oneself and one's co-workers safe every moment of the work day. We know how important this is – just recently we lost a young man to a tragic work accident. Saskatchewan Workers Compensation is targeting zero accidents and that is as it should be. In Saskatchewan, we never again want to lose another life or have someone maimed.

Let's take the conversation of safety in a different direction. Consider

safety from an emotional perspective. Do the people in your organization feel safe working with each other, peers, management and even customers? This is a critical question that needs to be asked on a regular basis. Some of the areas we hear people discuss about their concerns in the work place during training sessions and when people lose their jobs are:

RACISM

Often people of other cultures (First Nations, Métis, Pakistan, India, Russia, Jamaica and others) feel like outsiders in the business place. They

indicate that they are often not included with other groups when going for coffee or lunch. They are not invited out after hours for drinks or social gatherings.

When people feel outside the circle of influence, they may hesitate to ask questions for fear of looking/acting different. If one doesn't ask questions, then one may be missing an important part of how to do the job well. Imagine missing the moisture barrier in building a home because a staff member is not comfortable asking where the plastic goes.

SEXUAL INNUENDO

Years ago, it was quite common to go into certain markets and see "girlie" calendars, photos of scantily clad people (generally women). This is offensive to some, especially to women and people from more strict-values driven cultures.

If your staff is concerned about what they will see when they go to work every day, imagine the amount of time they are not working! Not only that; these same individuals probably shy away from any social events, as they are not sure what they will encounter there. It hurts your bottom line when people won't communicate!



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LANGUAGE

People from other cultures are sometimes less familiar with the English language, or they may have excellent language yet their pronunciation is somewhat difficult to your ear and that of your customers. People who do not understand English well are often reluctant to show their lack of understanding and thus do not communicate well. They tend to be quiet and not ask questions, or they do the task the way they thought they heard they were to do it – often leading to tasks not done correctly. This can cause individuals to lose confidence in their ability to do the job leading to a loss in performance. Ouch! You lose results!

HOW TO CHANGE

You want to look at how to keep people emotionally safe to ensure work is completed on time and within budget. This is what keeps your company in business – if it's not on time or within budget, you lose.

To keep your people emotionally safe, thus working toward on time/on budget, consider:

- During your onboarding process, have individuals sign a form indicating their desire and commitment to the inclusion of all members of the organization;
- In your tailgate meetings, remind those present of keeping people emotionally safe as well as physically safe;
- Remove sexist photos, posters, jokes, etc. from your work place;
- Create a buddy system so new employees have someone to show them the ropes; include the new comer in coffee breaks, lunches and even social functions outside the company;

- Support those whose English language or pronunciation is not optimum by providing support with English language training or linguistic training

Employees who are not engaged cost business billions of dollars per year in loss of activity, accidents and turnover. Save money with fewer issues caused by a lack of emotional security! 🏠

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Sherry Knight is President and CEO of Dimension 11 Ltd., a leader in people and performance development. Dimension 11 helps companies realize stronger profits so they can create more jobs and better communities. Dimension 11 is a partner of Career Partners International.

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