

# Case Study: Eric Wright Group

## Positive Intervention Skills

### Programme aims

Positive Intervention Skills was a new training package designed to support safety behaviours at work. This was the first step of a three year strategy aimed at guiding Eric Wright's culture, across all business units, towards interdependence.

Safety training had traditionally been based around technical qualifications, and this had contributed to a plateau of lost time incidents and accidents. Now the aim was to ensure a decrease of the AFR by highlighting the impact of behaviours upon safety, in particular they wanted to highlight the power of people-to-people intervention in regards to visual leadership.

We were asked to present safety training options that would engage all level of leaders from the outset and build upon any previous development for employees over a period of time. The training initiative had to be impactful and designed to engage the whole workforce – from executives through to the operatives on site. We were warned that 'reaching' all employees could prove challenging in a working environment in which some employees may not work with others from job to job, site to site. The behavioural safety initiative had to successfully overcome such challenges.

Working in partnership key managers and leaders at Eric Wright, the decision was made to create a high impact half day session that utilised actors and facilitators. It was seen as the best way to launch this culture change piece, in that it would afford us the opportunity to engage with all staff, whilst the specialised techniques used by our team ensured the 'level' of learning could be approximated for individuals and teams according to their needs.

An initial 5 forum theatre safety leadership events managed to engage and develop the core of Eric Wright's workforce, with a further day's workshops required due to demand from Principal contractors and partners.

## Forum Theatre Positive Intervention workshop

We designed a drama-based training event over 3 hours, delivered off-site at venues across the country for upwards of 80 employees and contractors as well as invited guests.

The key aims of the session were:

- To re energise the safety culture after a period of stagnation
- To achieve a base level of communicative confidence and excellence for all employees
- To demonstrate the possible consequences and effects of one to one communication
- To engage the workforce sufficiently to create interest and excitement for the next steps of the Cultural Change Programme.

To get the engagement and commitment needed from this event, we used a drama-based approach to learning.

We know acting, and theatre, can be utilised as a powerful development tool. We used carefully designed and scripted scenarios that were absolutely key to the issues and challenges faced by the leaders and their people every day. It quickly caught their attention, engaged them and got them talking about real issues in a real way.

To build on the scenarios, we used forum theatre. Inviting the delegates to become directors, instructing the characters to replay the scenarios, advising them on better ways to communicate and behave, the groups re-directed the action until a positive outcome was reached. Forum theatre is also known as the stop-start technique, because the delegates can pause, rewind and replay the action, experimenting until they find what works. This means learning is immediate and non-threatening as delegates find they can learn just as if they were playing the actor's role but without the pressure.

Our scenarios allowed the delegates to recognise character traits and behaviours – either positive or less helpful – that they may share with the characters. Being outside the emotional stresses associated with the scenarios allowed the delegates to objectively call a pause with the actors, give advice and re-direct the action to a positive conclusion.

Our facilitators stopped the action at key points and encouraged delegates to ask the actors searching questions that allowed them to understand how the actor was feeling on a deeper level. This in turn enabled delegates to best decide how to influence the situation to a positive outcome. Through testing out different interactions the delegates experienced for themselves what exactly works.

We are currently reviewing the uniformly excellent feedback with the client – the last workshop having been delivered in Mid June 2014. Already though, and as a direct result of their having observed the session via invitation from Eric Wright’s Group H and S Manager, we are now in discussion the following businesses and bodies to partner on their own behavioural change projects:

- United Utilities
- The Health and Safety Executive
- Lanes Group.

## **Feedback**

The client has been delighted with the results of this initiative so far. As the deliveries ran until mid-June 2014, feedback has not been collated yet, but we are already in discussion on how best Keystone can support Stage Two – which will focus on Management skills for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier Managers.

*“It has gone down a storm, everyone’s talking about how good it was, how different, engaging, funny, and still got across the serious point of ‘Looking out For Your Mate.’”*

- **Scott Ellis, Eric Wright Group Health & Safety Manager**