

Case Study: Romec and Balfour Beatty Technical Services

Intervention Skills

Programme aims

Intervention Skills was a new training package designed to support safety behaviours at work.

Safety training had traditionally been based around technical qualifications, and this had contributed to a plateauing of lost time incidents and accidents. Now the aim was to ensure a decrease by highlighting the impact of behaviours upon safety.

We were asked to present safety training options that would engage leaders from the outset and build upon learning for employees over a period of time. The training initiative had to be impactful and designed to sustain that impact further down the line. However, reaching all employees could prove challenging in a working environment in which some employees may not see their line manager for some months. The behavioural safety initiative had to successfully overcome such challenges.

Working in partnership with Romec and Balfour Beatty Technical Services, the decision was made to create three things: a forum theatre leadership event to introduce the initiative, a bespoke training DVD to allow internal embedding of a behavioural safety culture, and a facilitator guide to support the use of the DVD internally.

The overall aim of the training was that employees, whether managers or not, should be confident in supporting others towards safer behaviour – and in challenging unsafe or unsupportive behaviours where they see them.

Forum theatre leadership event

We designed and delivered a drama-based training event over two hours for 80 business leaders, held during one of their quarterly sessions. The event focused on scripted and rehearsed behavioural safety scenes that needed addressing within the business.

There were two key aims of this session:

- To raise awareness of the massive impact that behaviour has on safety.
- To showcase the ongoing internal solution to the leaders of the DCD and facilitator guide. The leaders could then ensure this internal capability was supported in the long-term.
- To get the engagement and commitment needed from this event, we used a drama-based approach to learning.

We've all experienced the power of watching actors on television, perhaps in our favourite soap or drama. We associate with them, get absorbed in their lives and problems and wish we could give them our advice!

Acting is therefore 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 a technique called forum theatre. This means that the delegates became directors, instructing the actors to replay the scenarios and advising them on better ways to communicate and behave 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 becomes non-threatening and 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.

DVD

Together with the client, we agreed scenarios that would be the focus for a bespoke DVD for use back in the business. Scripting, rehearsals and filming followed, managed by our lead film maker and senior internal actor facilitator. The final DVD shows a range of scenes in four areas critical to the business: Driving, Dock Leveller, Office and Cleaning. Each scene highlights different behaviours by managers and employees. Some of the behaviours contribute to a safe working environment, while others have a negative impact on safety.

The DVD will be used by the business leaders to train other people internally. A DVD is a very flexible learning tool that holds its relevance for many years, and can be used in team briefings, one-to-one coaching, refresher training, inductions, toolbox talks and for self-study.

Ultimately, the DVD support the organisational objective of highlighting the impact of behaviour upon safety. Its use will help people to become more engaged with safety, and to choose better ways of communicating with and relating to others.

Facilitator guide

The facilitator guide is a specially created document for use alongside the DVD. It is designed in such a way that any employee could pick it up and use it to deliver a short training session based around any one of the DVD clips. Each scene on the DVD has several associated pages in the guide. Facilitator instructions are given for holding a short, interactive and thought-provoking session for that scene. The benefit of using a DVD and facilitator guide is that the scenes can be revisited for a refresher at any time.

Feedback

The client has been delighted with the results of this initiative so far. Feedback from the initial forum theatre leadership event has been so positive that a further four events have been booked in. The feedback from the leaders attending the initial event is that the DVD looks superb – professional, impactful and absolutely relevant to their business. We look forward to continuing to support the organisation's behavioural safety development.