Safety Training as the Synchronization between Heart & Brain: Training the Trainer



Why do we say that someone is "warm-hearted" or that our "heart has been broken"? The heart is just a pump that keeps our blood circulating. We do our thinking—and our feeling—through our brains. Yet, we don't say that someone has a "warm brain" or that our "brain has been broken." Somehow, that old blood pump has become the metaphorical center of our thoughts and emotions.

And maybe we've got it right. New branches of science such as energy cardiology and energy medicine are discovering the power of the "thinking heart." I've learned from extensive experience and a dash of research that to get people to change their behaviour, you must strum their heartstrings.

A Campaign that Touches the Heart

I first began to realize this when I was developing a nationwide campaign called "It Can Happen to Me. It Can Happen Today" for a retail division of BP. The team's mission was to touch the hearts of employees and get them to see how important it is to live safely while divesting them of the common "tragedy-won't-happen-to-me" mindset.

The results were fabulous. The big if not biggest reason for the program's success was it being in tune with what touches the heart and brings joy. This synchronization of safety message and heartfelt feeling is, I believe, a goal to strive for when creating your own training campaigns. Here are four tips to implement emotion into your training.

1. **Ask Employees What Life with an Injury Would Be Like**

Get employees to talk about what their life would be like if they suffered a serious work injury. Make them be specific and personal. For example, challenge them to consider how they'd feel if they couldn't play with their kids or grandkids because of a crippling back injury.

2. **Tell the Stories of Real-Life Victims**

Stories of actual people work better than facts and figures. Include sad stories

about injuries sustained by others in your newsletters, e-zines, bulletin boards, and safety meetings. Such true stories are, unfortunately, all too easy to find.

3. **Tell the Injury Stories with a Happy Ending**

Telling true tales doesn't have to be an exercise in depression. Let employees know about all those people who were able to avoid or battle back from work injury.

4. **MakeSafety Fun**

There are few things better for your heart than having fun. That doesn't mean you should do nothing but play. Play and fun aren't the same. You can have fun while doing "work." If you enjoy your occupation, no doubt you often have fun while finishing tasks. As part of the BP campaign, employees received a booklet to take home that's not only easy to read but includes fun and unusual trivia and even a cool section for children.

Takeaway

As a trainer, you work hard to know your material and deliver meaningful presentations. But if you really want to change people's safety and health behaviour, make your safety and health program about people and not just about statistics or the company. However, you can make a big fuss about major milestones your company reaches. But emphasize that these milestones are much less of a statistical benchmark than the representation of individual pain and anguish avoided.

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