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Workers' Comp, Safety and "Us vs. Them" Syndrome

Several years ago while on a business trip to Washington, D.C. I had the opportunity to meet the Vice President of the United States. We shook hands and said hello.

My immediate thought was, "Uh oh, please don't let anything ever happen to the President!" The man said hello, he smiled, but no one was home or even in the neighborhood. He was there playing his role of meeting "concerned business people." He was obviously told to be there, it was his "duty" to be there (at least physically) but he wasn't there to actively problem solve.



How did I know that? How did I know so positively that that man, at that time was not interested in our concerns? After all, he said all the right things to us. I perceived the simple truth, that's all. Please don't get me wrong, who knows what important matters were on this powerful person's mind at the time. However, that doesn't alter what was perceived.

Each and every one of us comes with, as part of our "standard package," an innate ability to perceive the truth. Truth communicates almost like a high-speed hardwire data line. It travels directly from terminal to terminal and fast. It goes like a hot knife through snow, even if you don't want to hear it, it gets right through anyhow.

The love of your life, the salesman you really like, the boss you respect the most, your best friend, and even your mother: their capacity to speak the truth plays a key role in the foundation of your relationship with them. How do you know they are speaking the truth? You just know.

In the same way, you know the person who approaches you on a downtown street trying to sell you an "authentic" Rolex for \$50 isn't telling you the truth. Is it the fact that he can't look you square in the eyes because his shifty eyes are darting around like a molecule of water about to boil? That could be part of it, but you just know when you are being told the truth.

Of course there are exceptions. We have all been fooled by master fabricators. However, if you recollect, at some level, you knew something was askew and perhaps even talked yourself out of "knowing."

But like a politician who makes empty promises for your vote, it is only a matter of time before people perceive the truth. Its recognition is part of our survival DNA perhaps.

What does truth have to do with reducing workers' comp costs and safety?

Have you ever offered donuts or free pizza to employees for attending a safety training? I found this practice rather odd 20 years ago when I first got into workers' comp. This "subtle motivational tool" used to help convince employees to not get injured was quite common back then. It made me wonder about the purpose behind the training and who the training was supposed to benefit ultimately. Why were companies "pleading" with their employees not to get injured?

Curious to find out more about why most injury prevention and safety training didn't net good results, I observed employees filing into Safety Training Classes. Watching them made me flash back to my mother clipping on my bow tie on Christmas day, making me go to my aunt's house for the day. A great deal of the safety training was, in fact, more for company liability consideration than it was for the employees' benefit.

Employees perceive the truth too. They know when the company is doing something for them, or colloquially speaking, the company is covering their own behind.

Why do you have safety training? What is the purpose? If you are really honest you might find that either OSHA mandates it or work-related injuries are costing the company too much money. Have you ever wondered why employees "never listen"? They are actually listening, quite well.

When F.I.T. works with our customers the first thing we establish is the purpose of the injury prevention programs. We change it from "saving workers' comp money" or OSHA compliance to "helping employees to prevent back injuries and other sprain/strain injuries on AND off the job." Our clients all agree that when the employees don't get injured all the other benefits are realized too. The goal can still be to save money but the purpose must be something else altogether.

When the goal is to stop injuries because you care about your employees' health you don't need free donuts! Who is the ultimate winner if employees don't get hurt? Employees! Who feels the pain when they do? Employees do! Who saves a lot of money on workers' comp when employees stay healthy? The employer does!

Backsafe® and Sittingsafe® injury prevention training is for the wellbeing of the employees. The fact that workers' comp spending precipitously drops is merely a by-product of accomplishing the purpose of injury-free employees.

The truth communicates well. There isn't a union or employee population anywhere that won't accept needed help if it is offered sincerely and with the correct reason.

Imagine employees saying, "the training workshops should be longer" and "everyone in the company needs this training"? No, these comments weren't made because beer was served with each pizza. They were recently made by long-term union bus drivers that were in their 40's and 50's and that just learned for the first time in their lives how to sit, lift luggage and stretch their tired muscles properly. What "aging" worker doesn't want to know how to feel better? What young buck wants their lifestyle permanently altered by a cranky back?

If your workers' comp is too high; your safety classes are met with the same enthusiasm seen at a dentist office; or if your employees perhaps don't practice what was taught in training, then perhaps it is time to re-evaluate the reason you are conducting safety and injury prevention training.

It is a joy to work for a company that is making good money and that has happy employees. Your employees spend more waking hours on the job than they do with their families. Showing employees that they are important means a lot to them.

In summary, Backsafe and Sittingsafe injury prevention training accomplishes more than just significantly lowering your workers' comp costs. It shows your employees that their welfare is important to the company. You see, they know the truth.

We have over 1,200 Injury Prevention Specialists in North America to help you tell it! Please call us to discuss how we can help you to stop workers' comp spending and to help you show your employees that you care.

Dennis Downing, President
Future Industrial Technologies

Check out our new blog: www.backsafe.wordpress.com. Any injury prevention/safety type topics you'd like to see covered there? Please let us know. We love suggestions and feedback.

We look forward to helping you to "Prevent Tomorrow's Injuries Today," right now!

We're TWITTERing! Keep current on the latest in injury prevention by following us. Find "backsafe" at [www.twitter.com/backsafe!](http://www.twitter.com/backsafe)

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This article may be reprinted in its entirety provided that the following resource is left intact:

Dennis Downing is the founder and President of Future Industrial Technologies, Inc., a nationwide Industrial Injury Prevention Training Company. It specializes in improving conditions at work and in life by utilizing the proprietary injury prevention programs, BACKSAFE® and SITTINGSAFE®, that have proven to be highly successful at reducing workers comp costs within companies of all sizes and descriptions.

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