



Charting New Directions in Health & Safety Excellence

COMPASS NEWSLETTER September 2010

It's certainly has been a while since our last Newsletter. Like everyone else, it seems to be increasingly difficult to find the time to put one together. Summer is winding down and we hope everybody had a great one. We certainly did.

JANIE'S CRSP

Guess who just achieved her CRSP designation. After numerous days and nights studying, Janie, my wife and business partner, wrote the CRSP exam on May 1st and passed. Only 58% of those who wrote the exam passed so it truly is quite an achievement. This certification comes just in time as Compass was in the process of making the CRSP designation a condition of employment. I can only speculate on the consequence had she not been successful.

Achievements seem to run in Janie's family. Janie's brother, Don Chapman was named 2010 Safety Person of the Year, at the AMTA Management Conference held in Banff this spring.

ARE WE PUTTING THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE

Most people are aware that I am a big proponent of using all the tools in the health and safety professional's measurement toolkit. One of those tools is the safety perception survey. I believe surveys can and should play a greater role in assessing the status of health and safety management systems. Through the audit process, employers in Alberta and many other provinces, have been feeding on a steady diet of: Is there a policy? Is it posted? Have employees seen the policy? Does it contain such and such? The questions are predictable as they have been part of the audit process for 30 or more years. Many employers are ready and anxious to work with other assessment tools. Properly framed, survey questions can yield different and complimentary improvement information. When administered with full anonymity, employees feel comfortable revealing the truth about, management's commitment, training and orientation effectiveness, whether they really obtain any value out of the task inventory and hazard assessment process, etc. This is all important information that is generally not picked up in the audit process.

There is not too much new to report on the Alberta Certifying Partners (CPs) with respect to and safety perception surveys. Remarkably, Compass made an offer to all

Certifying Partners in Alberta several months ago to try one safety perception survey free – can't beat the price. This offer would have allowed one of their members to experience and assess the value of the process. How many takers do you think we had? You guessed it, there was not one taker. We did have a number of individual companies, served by CPs that expressed interest to us but that was the last we heard of them after we told them to first have the process condoned by their CP. We don't give up easily. We'll give them another try in a few months.

This experience has prompted me to write my latest article entitled "Are we putting the cart before the horse". [Click here](#) if you would like to read it.

Recently COS Magazine approached us to help them access health and safety programs of the safest manufacturing companies in Canada. The initial selection of candidates may be based on WCB claims statistics. Next, employees of selected companies will be asked to respond to a safety perception survey. The best companies will be selected based on their statistical and survey performance. The results will be published in COS Magazine. This project is still in its infancy but once again support may be solicited by COS from safety associations and certifying partners. We will keep you informed as the project unfolds.

VEHICLE SAFETY SURVEY

One of our clients had us create a vehicle safety survey for them. The survey focuses on revealing employee driving habits such as circle checking, cell phone use, etc. If you would like to get a better handle on employee vehicle safety you may want to have your employees complete the survey. Give us a call if you would like more information

DON'T SHOOT THE AUDITOR

Recent bad press has Employment and Immigration on another auditor hunting expedition. It seems that whenever the PIR program comes under criticism, the focus for improvements once again shifts to the auditors. I know a lot of professional auditors and they are the first to admit that they make a few mistakes in the process. The vast majority of them are doing the best they can with the information and tools at hand. The fact is, there are a multitude of reasons why an auditor of normal intelligence (most of us would say they are or maybe even above average) would error in the audit process. Let's take a look at a few:

- First, some of the generic auditing courses offered do not prepare auditors to answer some of questions in the audit protocols. For example, how could you expect a consistent approach to scoring a question dealing with whether or not there is a system or process to manage contractor safety, when in fact the training or protocol instructions do not outline what the process or system should look like? I have had some interesting discussions in my University auditing

classes over this and in every class there are significant differences in perceptions of what is or is not a system-especially relative to contractor safety.

- CORs are being granted to employers based on the audits of auditors coming from a wide range of health and safety experiences and qualifications. Some have only a few days training in health and safety and little to no safety experience and others have occupational health and safety certificates or professional credentials. Given these differences there has to be disparity in the quality of these evaluations. Auditor qualifications need to be standardized.
- Improve the audit protocol instructions. Provide details and examples of what is expected for each question. If auditors are repeatedly interpreting and scoring questions incorrectly, perhaps it's time to look at the question, the instructions to the question or auditor training. There is a great deal of room to improve on some of the audit protocols. One of the CP's currently provides separate interpretation guidelines for each question. These guidelines are very helpful to auditors.

Don't shoot the auditor; at least not until other causal audit quality factors have been addressed. After that if AEI still feels it's necessary to audit the auditors, I'd suggest there are better places to start than with the professional external auditors. Properly trained and experienced auditors using well constructed audit protocols that can be readily and properly interpreted, will conduct quality audits.

ONTARIO

Ontario continues to lead the country in looking for more and better ways to improve health and safety. This spring they formed an advisory panel consisting of safety experts, labour groups, employers and academic groups. Their primary purpose is to examine best-in-class approaches to improving health and safety. They will look nationally and internationally for these practices and then report back to the Minister of Labour. It appears they are not satisfied with the status quo and are prepared to look at how successful companies achieve results.

CREATING AND MAINTAINING A PRACTICAL BASED SAFETY

That's the name of Al Quilley's new book. It's a good read full of many of Al's and other safety professional's thoughts relative to just about everything in safety. If you can't glean some good points out of this book you should probably be writing your own.

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