



S A F E T Y

Viewing Construction Safety from a "Value Platform"

Many senior executives in the business world of the 21st Century have firmly decided the most important aspect of creating a successful enterprise is ensuring the corporation "values" the right things.

Identifying Sought After Values

From typical construction company web sites the following 18 "corporate values" were cited. They are alphabetically listed as follows:

Caring, client service, commitment, do the right thing, excellence, fair return, honesty, innovation, integrity, progressive, quality, respect for others, responsible, safety, service, stewardship, teamwork, trust.

Viewing Values

Allegorically we can imagine this list contains the "values present in the image" corporate leaders want their company to consistently reflect; today and tomorrow! Further imagine, if you will, each "value" having a corresponding "window" on a "value platform" through which the top corporate leaders view the company's operational success in establishing the corporate presence in the marketplace. Ensuring the company operates with and reflects to employees, customers and community this "platform of values" provides the leaders an ever present "foundational purpose" from which to operate. From this "value platform" top corporate leaders are reminded of the desired underlying crucial determinants they collectively feel must be satisfactorily met to reach success.

On the Above Value Order

In the realm of safety, nothing is more important than the first value on the list; that value being "appropriately demonstrated caring."

"Caring" is the reason we pay so much attention to safety. "Caring" is the reason we apply so much safety emphasis and have so many legislated safety compliance requirements. Collectively as citizens, as corporate leaders, as employees, as children of parents who go to work each day, and even as uninvolved bystanders, we "care."

So if we care so much and so completely why is it we still find so much injury in our workplaces?

An Answer is Found in a Value Review

In a play on words; I believe it is "safe" to say "everyone cares about safety."

Among the seven web sites viewed "safety" was most often listed, with "integrity" and "honesty" next.

Most readers will likely agree "each value" on the above list when realized will be found to be a product of the properly structured application of the first on the list, "caring."

1. When we care enough about the welfare of our client and we apply "teamwork," it is then we can see "client service" in action.
2. When we care enough about the task at hand, it is then we can see our "commitment" revealed.
3. When we care enough about our "honesty and integrity," it is then we can be "trusted" to "do the right thing."
4. When we care enough about being "innovative and progressive" in ensuring the quality of our effort, it is then we can rise to the performance level known as "excellence."
5. When we care enough about our "stewardship," it is then we can realize corporate financial health with a "fair return."
6. When we "care" enough about being "respectful and responsible" in our "service" to our fellow employee, to our client and to the public, it is then we can truly realize "safe" outcomes in our lives.

Yes, for success, safety has to be more than just a "value" in how we view things at work; safety has to be built into our life style; valued in all our activities, in our communities, at home, on the way to and from work, and on the job.

There is no greater value than "safety" and there is no better value than "caring" to ensure our "safety" success."

How Should we Show our Caring?

However, the "manner in which we show our caring" is likely more important than "caring" in first place.

Successful safety culture leaders avoid resorting to a totally ruthless demanding stance on safety; rather displaying the "caring" factors of a safety leadership. Mandating safety does not work, it only drives incidents underground and alienates the workforce. True caring creates a bond between safety leadership and the workforce. The caring must be highly visible and sincere. No one wants to get hurt. Those that achieve zero recordable injury "let people be safe" with supportive safety processes. One is "stop work" authority for anyone on the project that senses something might be at risk. The value of life and limb is shared by all to the highest degree of importance.

From those employers who achieve a zero recordable workplace we learn they use a "no fault" approach to investigating safety incidences. They demonstrate "caring" in ways that cause the employee to feel more allegiance, more loyalty and more appreciation and with these feelings come a more dedicated employee. And what would you say the employee "caring" factors of allegiance, of loyalty, of appreciation, of dedication yield? They collectively yield the all important competitive edge you are

seeking; they yield improved "production" some are now referring to as "Safe Production!"

Safe Production: The Product of Caring

Thus "safety" is clearly the "platform value" that will drive success when "caring" is the primary value; yes even "first in the value order rank of values."

A fact from the experience of those successful in virtually eliminating injury among their employees is you must "effectively show" more than anything else you "care" about the wellbeing of each employee. This proven "caring" yields the underlying power that energizes the hearts and minds of all, leader and worker alike, to live and work injury free.

*In brief,
one can say,
"appropriately applied caring
is the root cause
of an incident free work place."*

It is then we will see the highest possibility of having "zero incidences/accidents/injury today and for a long string of tomorrows!"

Emmitt J. Nelson, ME, PE, NAC, ZIC
Chair NAC, Safety Committee

Information is available from: www.construction-institute.com or www.naocon.org or simply do an internet search for the two words "zero+injury" to find other sources of information and or assistance.

NAC Safety White Papers

Through the Position White Papers on Safety, the National Academy of Construction is recommending that American businesses investigate the research of the Construction Industry Institute (CII) into how increasing numbers of employers are able to achieve a million work hours and more without an OSHA Recordable injury. The nine research-based CII Zero Injury safety leadership categories are: 1. Demonstrated management safety commitment; 2. Staffing for Safety; 3. Safe Work Planning, pre-project and pre-task; 4. Safety Education; orientation and specialized training; 5. Employee Involvement, behavior safety and safety perception surveys; 6. Evaluation and Recognition of Safety Performance; 7. Contractor Selection and Management; 8. Accident/Incident Investigation Including Near Misses; 9. Drug and Alcohol Testing.

See the NAC web site www.naocon.org for previous Safety White Papers.

The ROI of Zero Injury Safety Performance

The Construction Industry Institute research has proved that the cost of successfully implementing the nine CII zero injury categories is returned at a rate of 400 to 500% per annum when compared to the costs of OSHA/BLS injury rate average performance (4.7 TRIR in 2008) for the entire construction industry in the United States of America.

Information and details on the increasingly popular “Zero Injury Safety Leadership Concept” is available from the following:

Construction Industry Institute, 3925 W. Braker Lane (R4500), Austin, TX 78759-5316

Ph (512) 232-3004

www.construction-institute.org

See the NAC website at www.naocon.org for copies of the NAC Safety Whitepaper series.

The National Academy of Construction (NAC) is an organization of leaders from industry, construction, the military and academia formed as a knowledge base of American competence in the construction of capital facilities.

NAC position papers are created from the experience base of NAC membership and are offered to American business and government leaders as answers to challenges facing American enterprise. NAC position papers are issued after review and consent by a majority of the current members.