



**Martin Newall Aventis Cropscience -  
Building on a successful trial in one department and  
other experiences**

BEHAVIOURAL SAFETY USER CONFERENCE 2002

Hello, my name is Martin Newall from Aventis Cropscience and I have come here to share our experiences with behavioural safety. I want to share something from a strategic planning perspective. We've watched this process through, watch this baby grow into a child and then hopefully into an adult and it can be a painful process. I can't offer you any solutions because every situation is going to be unique.

Aventis Cropscience, globally, prides itself that it wants to be a world-class safety company. We're not there yet and I don't know if we'll ever get there, but we want to be there. Our Chief Executive needs to know within 24 hours if there is a lost time accident anywhere in the world. Last year in the company, with about 16,000 employees, globally we had something like 21 lost time accidents. But why are we doing this? We are doing it to drive the process down so that we are reducing the risk of having accidents. I'm clear that one size does not fit all. We have packing plants in the UK where you take the product, you put the product into the bottle, you put a label on the bottle, you put the bottle in a box, you put the box in the container and off it goes. The process that we have in the UK in Cambridge for example, is nothing like the process that we have in Karachi (?). In the UK we have maybe three or four people on the packing line whereas in Karachi there is maybe 150, so no solution is going to fit all. I say that because the whole company has seen what we are doing in the UK and decided to put it on the global agenda. I don't think that they quite know what they are doing though - we will have to wait and see!

What I am going to share with you is just the experiences in the UK. We now have five sites in the UK plus other workers. We've got four main sites though. Three of them are in manufacturing with 350 people, 300 in another and 110 in another. We have one commercial and R & D. We come from a broad cultural diversity. Many of you in the audience will know that companies never sit still. Our predecessors come from a company called Plant Protection and then it was taken over by Fisons who became FBC who became (name muffled) who became Agrevo, who became Aventis and is about to change again. (To Bayer). Trying to put all these people and organisations together means that you get a lot of culture clashes!

There was varying safety records across the sites in terms of lost time accidents. For example Hawkston had a climate that accepted three to eight lost time accidents a year but at Widnes and at Norwich they thought that was horrific.

When we looked at behavioural safety we looked across the site and asked where could we try an example? What could we do to see it work? Widnes are currently 1000 days without lost time incidents. They have an extremely low rate of first aid cases too - you're talking two or three a month. They have a very good hazard spotting system in place and there's no evidence of behavioural related issues, so why put a behavioural intervention in there? And the answer is we haven't. At our commercial and R & D site again they've not shown risks and they've only had one lost time accident in five years. There is then no real evidence of behavioural issues. I would like to leave you with a thought, that if you are dealing with a fleet of company car drivers, there's an element of behaviour that needs to be addressed. We call it in our occupation 'road risk'. There not ready to address it, in fact I invited Tim to come and speak with them, but we've put that off because they are just not ready and if they don't understand it, they're not ready to accept it, but we are still considering the road risk element.

Hawkston, one of the sites where we started, is much more labour intensive. We had a formulation packing facility. The facilities tends to be less labour intensive and it's now rare to have more than two or three people working on a synthesis plant, a vast reduction from previous times. We had three to eight lost time injuries a year, virtually all behaviour related, people tripping, slipping and falling, whatever and this started a 'claim' mentality where people would realise an opportunity to put a claim in. There was an "us and them" culture as well,

certainly between the packers and the others on site. The skilled personnel saw the packers as the lowest of the low who just put things in bottles. Interestingly when some formulation workers went into the packing area to do some work when their plant was shut down, they never cleaned up for themselves, believing that the packers would do that as that was what they were there for. So the packers quite rightly felt that they were been put upon. Management wasn't sceptical about behavioural intervention. They had started with the 'stop' scheme at Hawkston and it failed miserably because of a lack of management commitment.

So I convinced the company to try it out first in the packing department and so the pilot began in 1999 and it wasn't without problems. We had all kinds of issues with trying to get the team to work together as a team who had never been asked to do this before, so they started facing problems that they'd never had to deal with. But we persisted and what we saw were housekeeping standards dramatically improved. The packers started taking pride in what they did and we provided special presentation skills courses so that they could talk to their own colleagues, as standing up and talking to people can be very daunting to some people. The packers developed a belief and worth in themselves. Accident levels are virtually none. Hawkston is now in the second year of the intervention and the packing department virtually have no accidents at all now.

What that meant was that in the three months since we started the intervention the management were so impressed that they extended it to the rest of the site. So in early 2000 it started. Norwich were also keen on the approach and then started later in 2000. At Hawkston, a separate steering committee formed from the rest of the site with the intention to amalgamate with the first one in the medium term. The first team was called BEST, the behavioural safety team and the second team came along and they were called BEST 2, however the packers always called them "second best"! The packers wanted their own independence and weren't happy at the prospect of integrating with BEST 2. But this had a spin off because there is healthy competition between the teams now. I still think that there is a time where the teams will merge together and we'd like to help facilitate that, but it will be their decision and not management.

At Norwich the culture was to have fewer lost time accidents and the site was very good for lost time accidents and there are a small number of reportable injuries. But I actually think that there is a problem there because, for example, we know that between the first line managers and the ABS team as they are called in Norwich, there is a bit of a 'parent - child' culture. The first line managers tell them to do things in a certain way, not a good example. Also you need to be careful as your steering committee may end up looking like your management committee - mirroring the style of the management committee. Initially we had resistance but I think that was from a lack of understanding of the process and they're certainly on-board now and in fact one of the key members of the steering committee is a trade union safety rep which wouldn't have happened when we started.

So the other problems that we had are a decentralised business unit focussed organisation and each one of them has its own culture and does things differently within the group and therefore it's very difficult to implement an encompassing approach. Stop has though been implemented for several years and has been monitored successfully. Initially Norwich was slow to start with a gestation period of an elephant waiting to see something come out of it and there were many organisational teething problems. There were problems with observations with observers telling us that their line managers wouldn't let them have time off and the line managers were saying all that they had to do was ask and they would sort it out. They lacked some organisational skills which we're trying to address and there were personality clashes, issues that you will have to face whenever you do an intervention in your own workplace. I feel that many of those issues have been addressed, although it has been painful at times. We have in the auditorium one of our observers and one of the steering committee and you can ask them later of their experiences.

There are still issues. There is a low visibility to the programme and we are having to seek help to address that. Other management initiatives are better resourced. Also they recognise that some things that they do are replications of a hazard spotting system, rather than addressing behaviours and sometimes we get feedback saying that they never see anyone working. This can be understood if you imagine two or three people in a plant on a shift, most of them in a control room, how can they then complete their observations? So going into these empty plants frustrates them. So what they are looking for now is symptoms of behaviour, rather than the behaviours themselves.

I think though that with continued management support and commitment from the team, we'll get through it. Would we do it again? I'd say yes I think, as there are too many benefits not to do it. Would we do it differently? Probably, but hindsight is wonderful isn't it and I'm sure that

you all know that. Someone asked would it have been any easier if we had tried it a different way? No. It's about culture change. It's about people. It's about the way you do things in your own organisation and that's why we use Ryder Marsh because as Occupational Psychologists they understand the work process and how it can impact on the lives of people and that's why we feel that the homespun interventions, although very good, never achieved what we wanted to achieve in the process. The final thought that I'd like to leave you with is this. Please, one shoe doesn't fit all; don't try to shoehorn it into your organisation.

Thank you.

## **Questions**

Martin was the last speaker before lunch and the session was overrunning a little...