



Questions for the Speakers

with Mark Taylor of Ryder-Marsh and Roger Bibbings of RoSPA
BEHAVIOURAL SAFETY USER CONFERENCE 2005

Chair

OK I need to make some changes to my notes here after those comments about your wife and such – Mark HAD an international reputation... (laughter).

If I can invite Roger Bibbings to come back on stage please we have 15 minutes for questions to either Roger Singer or Mark.

OK there are roving mikes in the room if anybody would like to raise their hands if they have a question on any of that...

QUESTION

My name is Andrew Gooder From Uniquema - Question for Roger Singer initially, although Mark may want to comment as well. Some of the questions that you were raising Roger Singer about the usefulness of behavioural safety, I think also relate to a previous conference which I went to where there was an HSE speaker so voiced some similar concerns and they seem to relate to a view that companies may seek in some way to replace other aspects of their health and safety policy and management systems through an over reliance on behavioural safety. I mean my personal experience within the chemical industry is I have not actually seen any organisations where that happens, all the ones in my experience the behavioural safety has been a way of focussing more on a particular rather than saying organisations are going to stop doing some of these things which are clearly important as well. Is it your experience that there are some organisations where that actually does happen, is that the cause of your concern?

ROGER BIBBINGS

I think that certainly we have a unique window in RoSPA through the RoSPA awards in looking at the world of health and safety management amongst higher performers and amongst the higher performers heavily represented are high hazard burden industries, chemical, electricity and so on. Those, which have a long appreciation and have developed health and safety systems thinking understand HSG65, have audited and tried to improve their systems, understand behavioural safety in context and there is much less risk that they will see purely behavioural solutions as the only option for improving performance.

But I do think there are another set of companies who are newer converts to the idea of improving safety performance and they employ advisers who are perhaps a little less professional, who see or attempted to see behavioural safety as a stand alone solution as I think was referred to before, so it depends where organisations are coming from but I can assure you there are organisations who think never mind that HSG65 thing, never mind the health and safety management if we get in whizzo associates who have got this latest behavioural safety programme that will be the solution to our problems. In other words they haven't understood the very first premise, which is that health and safety management must be embedded in the management process.

Those organisations, in my opinion, still do exist and there may still be providers out there who pander to their lack of understanding shall we say.

MARK TAYLOR

I think I would have to agree with that point. I think it is very misguided for an organisation to turn round and think right now is there a behavioural problem and what they are trying to do typically is using a cheap solution they think they can just modify behaviour and they don't need to put the systems in place and what they fail to realise is it's important that there is good systems interaction and a goodness of fit between behaviour and their systems and I think in

Roger's paper as well it mentions about do we need a safe organisation to have safe behaviour, or do we need safe behaviours to have a safe organisation, it is really a whole problem you need both because they are all one and the same the systems and behaviour fit together, the question is how we get them to fit. So an organisation, which leans towards one vector if you like, is going to have limited returns and probably not improve their safety performance over all.

ROGER BIBBINGS

I would like to add to that the point I was trying to make about the HSGs and five priorities is if you look at the preferred solutions in all those five priority areas they are not primarily behaviour based, I mean I mentioned the MAC tool for example, there is a lot of research evidence which shows that manual handling training makes a marginal, perhaps unimportant but nevertheless a marginal difference to injury rates whereas changes in systems of work, mechanical handling aids, redesign of tasks are shown to be more effective so you need to consider, is the solution to our manual handling problem primarily behavioural or if we go and observe the behaviours we may more closely understand the causes. With lifting behaviours say – well actually in reality these score badly in the MAC tool and we ought to consider ourselves in the zone or not and maybe redesign those tasks.

So these things do come together but changing behaviour is an element in the hierarchy of risk control.

MARK TAYLOR

I think that is a good example, the manual handling, you know if you see people handling unsafely and the behavioural safety side of things would pick up that the unsafe behaviour is occurring the question is always why and can lead onto those type of solutions really.

QUESTION

Thanks my name is Scott Russell I work for Canadian Natural Resources and they are an oil company in the North Sea. Mark I would like to take you up on one of your slides there when you said – where is behavioural safety going? – and you site now that it should be incorporated into safety management schemes, when we first started with you, you had the opposite view, we have been running our system with the opposite view very successfully and what we think is if it is observed or incorporated into the safety management system we will lose the workforce participation.

MARK TAYLOR

I think you would be right if we looked at it as being a thing that is driven to the safety management team – you know if you give it up to the safety professionals then we would lose a lot there because the main thing that we need to keep is that subject matter expert involvement and that is the people doing the job. You know an engineer can create a piece of equipment an operator runs it for five years, who is the expert? the engineer or the operator? In my minds eye it is the operator, the engineer might just help develop some of the solutions.

So what I am trying to say not in terms of taking it away from the workforce in driving this, never that because we will lose so much but what we often find is how many difficulties certain teams or co-ordinators face when they feel they are still alone because they are not part of the greater system. So if we make sure that there is somewhere they can link into recommendations and corrective action systems, you know that can help the team and support them, it is to give them added support because they exist within a framework. I think also when we are looking at that, is information that you get that nobody else can collect because we know the problems of management observations and how it can affect the accuracy of data that we need that information to be accurate but also if we are looking towards the data you have collected in respect of other safety improvement initiatives for instance if the health and safety department are run as Roger indicated like manual handling training to address a problem, yet your behavioural safety scores are telling you that it is not having an effect, that is information for the health and safety department to know so you can then target a recommendation that they can use and that is one of the key strengths of target recommendations.

You know yourself, Scott, one of the issues that you identified with the rest of your team during a shutdown, no accidents actually occurred and the systems were in place but it was you guys who went out there, collected the information and came up with a recommendation prior to anyone actually being injured. I don't want to go into any more detail on that but you know what I am talking about. I think that is where the strength and the integration comes from, it is not to say take it away from the workforce.

TIM MARSH (Chair)

If I could just interject briefly Scott I think you will find that not all teams are as motivated and capable as yours was.

Hello my name is Percy Smith I am the health and safety co-ordinator with the generation and renewables arm of NPower. Our behavioural safety programme has been running for a very long time now and we are starting to see some results, however we don't use peer observation and check lists and we feel that if we did go down that route that would actually be detrimental to our programme. We have tried to see it more as employee empowerment than anything else and as it actually gets better so it tends to disappear almost because it integrates fully with our standard SMS system.

This is a question to both. I would like to know what your opinion is of the usefulness of the check list and peer observation system.

MARK TAYLOR

I think to be honest I am a great believer in peer observation what typically happens if a manager walks into a work area people change their behaviour by the nature of that person's role, not them as a person just the fact that they are a manager can actually influence people's behaviour. So what you will see is something more like the kind of behaviour that you would want when they are not there, it is what happens when that manager leaves the area.

Also when it comes to discussing issues with people at the front line people will tend to be a little more guarded than they are with their colleagues and so that creates a difficult situation because if we are relying on those measures then what we have is some inflated scores that say everything is a lot better than it really is we are not really getting to those issues.

Let us be careful what we call measurement because what some people call measurement is ticking a box on a card is not actually a measurement at all, not at an accurate level so we need to be very careful in what we call measurement. I think measurement in terms of the feedback is very useful and more importantly it's effective trend analysis and root cause analysis is making sure we are focussing our priorities there.

ROGER BIBBINGS

This links back to a point that you made earlier on that, when you remove the feedback then the behaviour stops and we feel that could be the same with the tick sheets and the observation, if you are not doing it everything falls apart and good behaviours aren't taking place.

MARK TAYLOR

Yes I think that gives the case for the management, the question that you need to ask is 'well OK we are doing one type of interaction which is good but there is another side to that in terms of what the systematic things that are driving that behaviour and how are we dealing with those things?' and that is a real golden opportunity to get people involved and say 'OK let us write some solutions' and I don't just mean the immediate causes, I mean it is difficult for me to say because one of the things we always say there is no one perfect solution for all times and places and different organisations have different issues. It depends whether you can dismiss managers, have it bottom up or top down there are all those types of issues which we haven't got time to discuss just now but what I would say is that the golden opportunity there is if you get people working on solutions that is the opportunity to develop and demonstrate your commitment to safety and develop that partnership further.

ROGER BIBBINGS

The only thing I would say is that the goal that you should be seeking is one in which observations become so owned and controlled by the workforce that it becomes informal and embedded to a point where people don't even know that it is there and they are doing it.

Other signs of effective culture that we would be looking for are things like participation of employees in suggestion schemes and in the reporting of problems and whether or not people are empowered, whether they are thanked, that is very important, whether they are thanked for raising issues and are they kept in the loop by managers in the solution of those problems, so in a sense one of the behaviours that we are trying to inculcate here is a behaviour of thinking about reflecting on communicating about safety issues and I worry about.... you know I strongly support the idea that, yes, we need measurement to know where we are and how

things are changing but it does put me in mind of that famous quote by Robert MacNamara who was a cleverer man than Donald Rumsfeld and who said 'we ascribe full significance to that which we can measure because that which is truly significant still defies meaningful measurement'. See I can say that at 10.00 o'clock in the morning.

MARK TAYLOR

Yes another way of saying that is weighing the pig doesn't make it any fatter does it!!!

ROGER BIBBINGS

I think the serious point is we get quantitative information but actually qualitative information arising from observation and feedback from, particularly safety reps, safety reps are empowered to be involved in the observation process can be as, if not more important than numbers.