

SELLING SAFETY TO MANAGEMENT

OTA Safety Management Council Monthly Meeting

February 23, 2010 @ Wilson Heirgood Associates in Eugene

“In the dictionary, the word ‘study’ comes before the word ‘success’.” – Tom Hopkins

Selling is nothing more than the process of helping others understand how what you are offering will benefit them.

We must learn to “sell” safety. We must learn to present critical safety programs in such a way that the key decision makers understand the benefits they will gain by supporting your safety program, and why it’s in their best interests to proceed without delay.

Case Study. While I was the supervisor of several onsite fuel delivery drivers, I was constantly frustrated by the waste of time, money and materials that happened every day when my drivers had to complete their paperwork for the accounting department. I came up with a solution – Put barcodes on the several hundred trucks we fueled each week, and use a handheld scanner to record the unit and the amount of fuel that was delivered.

It took more than two years to see the project completed, even though it paid for itself in less than four months!

FIRST STEP – What will my project do for that will benefit the success of my upper management? What are the stated and unstated goals and priorities of management?

Answer – Reduce overtime, improve accuracy of reporting, eliminate billing nightmare. (Find the ‘hot buttons’)

SECOND STEP – Research the project costs & suppliers

1. Direct costs – Hardware \$20,000; \$2,500 barcode printer and supplies
2. Indirect costs – Training time, work space, attaching labels to several hundred trucks, updating labels for additions/deletions; finding new jobs for jobs that are eliminated; hiring new staff to carry out the project; selling the benefits of the project to others who may feel threatened or insecure; learning new technologies and ways of doing things; explaining your project to those outside your organization who will be affected

3. Continuing costs – Repair/replacement of lost, damaged handhelds; labels
4. Cash flow – Initial cash outlay and timeline for remaining disbursements

THIRD STEP – Quantify the benefits.

Hand held barcode scanners will:

1. Reduce overtime by \$15,600 annually
2. Improve reporting accuracy by eliminating 300 hand-written entries/day
3. Eliminate the requirement for the billing department to manually enter 300 fuel transactions daily, saving \$20,800 in wages and benefits

FOURTH STEP – Understand your department’s project approval process.

Since the project was more than \$20,000, it required capitol expenditure approval – A formal, written process. You may be required to provide a short written or oral explanation of exactly 1)How it will benefit the department, 2)How much it will cost, 3)How long it will take to provide a return on investment, and 4)Why it should be considered now.

FIFTH STEP – Don’t be discouraged by delays!

When a new IM was hired, I had to go repeat several of the early steps again.

SIXTH STEP – Track and report results on a regular basis.

Many, if not most, new projects suffer setbacks, glitches, delays and any number of other unforeseen inconveniences. Be prepared to offset any negative push back by reporting the positive results.