



Learn a lesson? Set a standard

In the last issue of BIC Magazine, we presented an updated version of an earlier article written by our CEO Mike Jeansonne. The article was titled, “The six irrefutable laws of turnaround management.” We received a huge positive response to that article both times it appeared. Many said that Mike’s Law No. 6 (Most lessons learned will be forgotten and not applied in the future) really struck a note. So, here are some ways to make sure Mike’s Law No. 6 doesn’t happen to you.

Frustration and stress build during turnarounds as problems and setbacks occur — especially when it’s something that could have been avoided with effective planning and foresight. We then agree to improve our principles, procedures and tools next time, but our commitments lose steam once the project is behind us. We end up working in the business instead of on the business and the lessons learned from past turnarounds don’t get implemented.

It is at this point that someone will suggest that training is needed to educate others in the lessons learned, but there is a step that’s often missed in between

the lessons learned and training — most fail to establish a standard to train and adhere to.

The lessons we learn during a turnaround, or any other complex project, tend to be painful because something didn’t perform to an expectation, a standard or a defined metric. Sadly, that missed target snowballs into other missed targets. Those expectations and targets are things that we can often measure and quantify in terms of time or dollars. To meet those expectations, we had to achieve standards in terms of planning, scheduling, estimating, technical work, coordination with others and the list goes on.

How can leadership teams establish standards?

I recall post-turnaround meetings where we outlined areas for performance improvement, but rarely can I remember a point where we set time aside to fully evaluate the root cause of a problem. For example, we may have known that some equipment wasn’t ready for maintenance on time, but we didn’t always establish exactly why it

happened nor which factors we could have controlled. Then we didn’t use that analysis to establish an enhanced approach and revised performance standard. Often the pressure of the next project was upon us and we simply moved on only to make the same mistakes again.

Benjamin Franklin said, “By failing to prepare, you’re preparing to fail.” Don’t let that happen to your organization. Here are some ways your team can evaluate lessons learned and develop standards that can then help you define exactly what you need to train for:

- Gather team members from all parts of the organization and list the performance objectives that were missed. Do not assign blame. Discuss “what” rather than “who” or “why.” Look at items in terms of time/schedule, milestones and cost.

- Work backward with each item and determine what conditions caused the missed objective. At this point you should focus on “why” rather than “whom.”

- Continue going backward until you arrive at a root cause — the point where it’s clear that something should have occurred

but didn’t, such as a vaguely written instruction that was not clearly understood and the recipient didn’t clarify it with others. Both behaviors can be calibrated with a performance standard.

- Once root causes are clear, you can develop a standard of performance that can be developed into a standard operating procedure and training modules. Often it is worker (skills and abilities) and work (conditions, processes, principles and tools) standards that make the greatest impact. These are things that you can quantify and train for.

It can be challenging and frustrating to stay focused on objectively evaluating each lesson. Yet, if it’s important enough that those lessons be converted into new behaviors, then it is worth the effort to evaluate the problem and define a standard that can be improved — versus giving a “corporate nod” that it’s simply a problem to be avoided.

For more information, contact David FrinSCO at (281) 461-9340, e-mail sales@tamangement.com or visit www.tamangement.com. ●

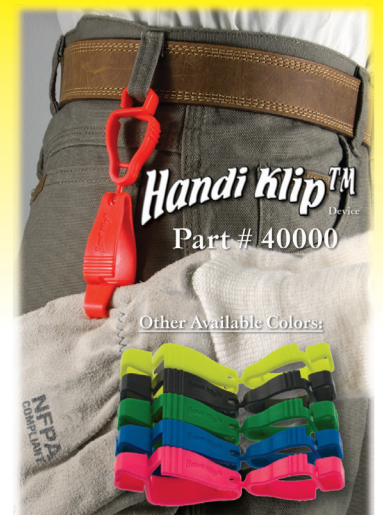


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