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DEVELOP AND "SELL" YOUR SAFETY SOLUTIONS

The best ideas for improving the work environment often come from the people who are most affected by what happens in that environment-the workers.

But how can employees effectively create solutions to their workplace safety problems, communicate their ideas for improvement to management, and have those ideas be seriously considered?

Two tools are needed:

1. A structured approach to solving problems and;
2. A way to submit formal suggestions.

Five Steps to Solving Problems:

1. Identify the Problem. Perhaps you already have a specific, perplexing safety problem in mind. It may be a piece of equipment or a process within your department that needs improvement. Define the problem as it now exists-the more specific the better. If excess costs are associated with this problem, knowing what these are will make it easier to explain the problem to management. This will also help you develop clear solutions.
2. Make a list of options. What possibilities exist to fix the problem? What are the results you are looking for? Brainstorm a multitude of ideas which could effectively and efficiently eliminate the problematic situation.
3. List the consequences. You can rarely do one thing without having it affect someone or something else. All ideas have pros and cons associated with them. Consider all sides of the issue and the effect each option may have on other departments or workers.
4. Compare the options. How much effort will be required? How much time and money will it take? You may need some help from your supervisor in calculating time and costs.
5. Choose the best option. Step 4 should help identify the proper choices. Again, discussing this with your supervisor or someone else higher up may help you see the bigger picture and aid you in making the best choice.

Submitting the Formal Suggestion:

1. Describe the current safety problem in a brief, clear, and objective statement to decision makers. Explain the disadvantages of the present situation.
2. Outline your idea. Briefly detail your suggestion for improvement, avoiding negativity.
3. Show how much it will cost to execute your plan. Include the anticipated effect your idea will have on other workers or departments in your organization.
4. Estimate the cost savings. There must be some monetary benefit to what you are suggesting. If your plan improves safety, what are the expected cost savings associated with preventing an injury that old methods caused? Are there other benefits? Is it more efficient? Will it take less time? Try to state these benefits in terms of hard dollars which can be saved.
5. Finish with a more in-depth description of your idea. Break your idea down into its component parts. Use drawings and all other pertinent information to emphasize the importance of your idea. Get your plan across to the decision makers persuasively.

If you use this twofold method to address safety concerns in your workplace, you'll be giving your management team all the information and tools they need to make an intelligent decision.

By submitting your ideas in this format, you may also demonstrate to your organization that you are the person to be considered for that next promotion.