

The Practice of Leadership

“Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do what you want done – because he wants to do it.”

– Dwight Eisenhower

Once you understand the answers to the questions, **“When do I want to lead?”** and **“Why do I want to lead safety?”** – Moments of High Influence and The Case For Safety – the game shifts to the question, **“What do I do as the leader to make sure my followers go home, alive and well at the end of every single day?”** The answer to that question is found in practices: those things that leaders say and do to actually get their followers to work as safely as they want them to.

Consider those as safety leadership practices: the things that leaders say and do to lead their followers.

The fundamental elements of safety leadership practices – really, all leadership practices by all leaders – are **words** and **actions**. What every leader does to lead – from general to sergeant, from company president to front line supervisor – can be reduced to “uses words” and “takes action.”

And everybody knows that actions speak louder than words.

Why is that? The answer has to do with how the human brain is wired. Sight plays a huge role in how we learn and relate to our environment: visual stimuli enter directly into our brains without any interpretation or explanation. The power of action is that it is visual: it plays to the principal means by which followers gather information.

Understand that and you can appreciate the power found in the most basic of all leadership practices, that of **Leading By Example**.

What makes the leader's example so powerful is the simple fact that it plays to the eyeballs of their followers. No one should be better at working safely and following the rules than the leader; that's what their followers see.

That may be common sense, but it's hardly common practice. Many leaders act as though the rules are for everyone else's benefit, not theirs. And they seem to think that no one will notice if they don't follow the rules.

The truth is exactly the opposite! Followers pay far closer attention to the examples of their leaders than most leaders believe. And followers expect their leaders to be better role models than themselves.

And the best leaders are exactly that.

Words by Actions: Impact

Yes, actions speak far more powerfully than words, but managing safety performance requires a leader to have the right words to go along with the right actions. Words perform a very important set of functions in the everyday practice of leadership. Among other things, they:

- Explain the actions of leader
- Elicit feedback and ideas
- Excite – motivate or de-motivate – followers
- Engage followers

The best leaders understand that, and take full advantage of the power of their words.

Back in the good old days of politics when a person ran for office, he campaigned by making speeches. Before media consultants, sound bites, television ads, stops at airports and train stations, the candidate would stand in front of the voters on a tree stump at the common in the center of town and explain to the voters why they should vote for him.

Thus was born what is known as the stump speech. In a stump speech the candidate explains in simple terms why he's running for office and worthy of their vote. The speeches follow a predictable pattern: The candidate says: "*The reason why I'm running for office is...*" and "*What I believe is...*" and "*If elected I promise to...*"

Being a leader calls for some of the same skills and techniques, particularly when it involves winning over your team to the practice of working safely. Having a **Safety Stump Speech** is a very important tool to accomplish that goal.

Let's define the term:

A Safety Stump Speech is a concise statement of a leader's beliefs, values, expectations, and best advice about working safely

Here's an example of a good **Safety Stump Speech**:

Nothing we do can ever become more important than our safety performance.

At the end of the day, if we don't make our product, if we miss a shipment, or if we run over budget, it only costs us dollars. And we always have tomorrow to try to make up what we lost today.

Safety's not like that. We can't replace human life, and we never get a second chance to do it right.

What characterizes a good stump speech?

- Conveys an important message. The speech provides useful advice and counsel.
- Uses language that connects with the listener. People understand the message, and see it as having meaning to them.
- Concise: short and sweet, but not just another slogan. It has useful content.
- Comes from someone with credibility. Surveys consistently show that the front line supervisor is the member of management most trusted by those doing the work in an organization. ✱

Having a **Safety Stump Speech** means you've thought about what you think on the important matter of working safely. When the appropriate time arises for you to offer your good advice and counsel, you'll know the message you want to deliver. A **Stump Speech** is a great alternative to trying to come up with something brilliant on the spot. It shouldn't sound like something that you memorized.

Your **Safety Stump Speech** can be used in some form at any occasion when you're naturally looked upon as the team leader:

- Safety meetings
- Orienting new employees to your team
- Interviewing prospective new employees
- Introducing new safety policies and procedures
- Kicking off an accident investigation

All are examples of **Moments of High Influence!**

How to Inspire Your Employees

A Good Opening

You can start with a simple statement of your belief about the importance and value of working safely. Put it in your own words, but pick out some words or phrases you'll feel comfortable using over and over again. That first statement lays the groundwork for other key points you might want to make on a specific issue.

“Nothing we do can ever become more important than our safety performance.”

Key Points

In your own words, explain why safety matters most. What are the most important means to working safely? What are your key safety goals? What will you do as the leader to help your followers work safely? Your answers lead to specific content about the subject: safety policies, incident investigation, safety training, or complying with requirements.

“At the end of the day, if we don't make our product, miss a shipment, or if we run over budget, it only costs us dollars. And we always have tomorrow to make up what we lost today.”

If you're having a tough time thinking about what to say, ask yourself what you'd tell your 18-year old who was heading out in the morning to work on the first day of his summer job – in your operation!

A Finishing Line:

A finishing line that sums things up succinctly is the final touch.

“We can't replace human life, and we never get a second chance to do it right.”

The Importance of the Speaker's Words

Here's a fascinating piece of intelligence about effective speeches: the words and delivery matter far less than the credibility of the speaker.

That's not to say that the words are unimportant. We can recite parts of the greatest speeches ever made, by people like Lincoln and Churchill, long after the speakers have passed away. Studies of effective speaking consistently show that the appearance and manner of the speaker convey to listeners more meaning than the words, and in most cases, are what they remember most when they hear the speech.

Even speaking is more a matter of action than words.

That means anytime you choose to talk about why safety is the most important business objective – and do so with sincerity and confidence – people will believe you. Having the words to a good stump speech just might make that easier to do.

Five Factors of Influence:

1. Content (7%)
2. Delivery (38%)
- ③ Body Language (Appearance) (55%)
4. Credibility
5. Level – closest to audience (front line leader)

Finally, ^{consistency} repetition is the great teacher, a fact not lost on either great coaches or advertising agencies. That's one of the reasons that the same ads are run over and over. They are counting on repeating a memorable theme until it becomes part of the consumer's subconscious. It's just the opposite of "tuning out."

People expect preaching from their leaders. It's why they tune in to presidential addresses, Sunday sermons, and interviews of newsmakers. People want to know what their leaders think, and they listen to what they have to say.

Having the words to a **Safety Stump Speech** will make that easier to do.