

Coached to succeed

By Katherine Crichton

OLYMPIC athletes do it, psychologists do it, teachers do it and now manufacturers are doing it to improve their workplace performance.

Coaching is increasing being used in companies and businesses worldwide with research showing it has a significant impact on both individual and organisation performance, with some amazing results.

A leap of faith into high reliability leadership coaching by plastics manufacturer Basell Australia, part of Lyondell Basell, a multi national petrochemical company, recently propelled the company to Hall of Fame status, an achievement all the more remarkable considering the company's past challenges.

Not long after the Longford Gas explosion in September 1998, which caused the death of two workers and halted gas supplies to Victoria and parts of South Australia and New South Wales, the resulting introduction of stringent new safety regulations meant that the company's Geelong site needed to innovate or face the possibility of closure.

Eight years later the company has been inducted to the Victorian 2008 Manufacturing Hall of Fame and has won the Plastics and Chemicals Industry National Sustainability Award and a National Safety Award.

In the process, it has also completed a four stage \$150M expansion and technical upgrade while maintaining production.



Recognised for their commitment to safety: David Stannard, Site Manager and John Duff, GM of Basell Australia, with Sue Gregory of Healthy Outlook (middle).

The company's site manager, David Stannard, attributes these results to the combined approach of leadership coaching and the team contribution of the Geelong site team.

"We have developed a high reliability cultural mindset that looks at every aspect of what we do and what makes it into a reliable system," Stannard explained.

"We make observations about our performance and use them as opportunities for daily improvement."

The company used leadership coach, Sue Gregory from Healthy Outlook to provide the assistance needed to create a safety culture or what Gregory refers to a High Reliability Organisation (HRO).

Gregory explained to *Safety First* after she was initially asked to assess the business and review the company's strategies for improving safety, her first step was to explain the concept of creating a HRO to management and gain commitment for a long term approach as opposed to a band-aid intervention.

"A long term HRO plan involving representatives from all aspects of the workforce, gave a sense of direction.

"Work groups were then created to fashion action plans that focussed on compliance, worker safety, process safety reliability and environment."

"Once the initial plan was developed, personal coaching with the leader focussed on continuing to move towards

FACT: In 2006/2007 there were 140,203 reported employment injuries in NSW
9071 cases resulted in permanent disability
137 deaths resulted from workplace injury or disease

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2. Attend the Safety Show and / or Conference

Register and attend the Safety Show for free and/or attend the Safety Conference to receive the latest information on safety issues and products. To find out more visit www.thesafetyshow.com.au



For more information call 13 10 50, email events@workcover.nsw.gov.au or visit workcover.nsw.gov.au/SWAWeek

HRO thinking," Gregory said.

"The process was then driven from within the organisation, supported by executive coaching to develop of facilitative leadership skills, strategic thinking skills that helped to combine combined health, safety and environment with business objectives."

And the results speak for themselves. The company now runs for eight or nine weeks without a stoppage and has experienced a 60% reduction in raw materials losses and is holding total fixed costs at 2002 level.

Unit costs have fallen by half and production has doubled to 130,000 tonnes, reaching a turnover of \$250 million but the company says they are still constantly improving and overcoming challenges.

Tips for creating a safer workplace

- Gain commitment from all aspects of your organisation by involving others in creating a HRO strategy.
- Break the strategy down in to bite size, day by day pieces with smaller achievable goals.
- Measure it so people can look back and see where they have come from. People forget; they cannot always see the change and need to be reminded.
- Think of safety as part of core business - not as a stand alone system
- As a leader 'listen' - don't always impose your view. Avoid being the expert and empower people to solve issues.
- Be flexible - use situational leadership to enable in the people in the best position to come up with the solution
- Recognise that creating a high reliability culture means placing people first. They will support you to get the bottom line outcomes.

Healthy Outlook 0419119744.

Developing a training and safety culture

By Peter Jacobson*

WHEN you are employed in a Victoria University TAFE campus that specialises in the delivery of training and assessment for cranes, trucks, forklifts, rigging, warehousing and the new safety induction card, you take safety seriously.

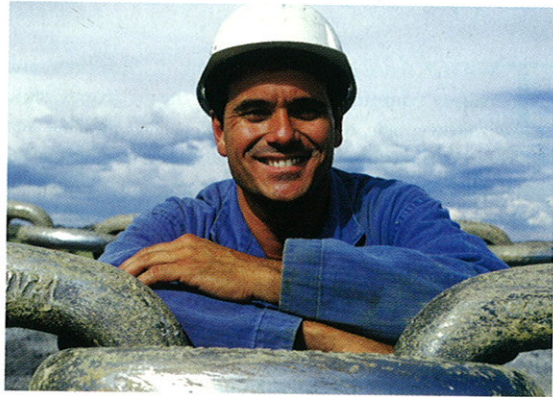
At Industry Skills Training we are constantly under scrutiny from government training audits, Worksafe Victoria, Vicroads, our customers and most importantly, each other. If we don't have a culture of safety and training we would be out of business!

How does your work environment compare? Do you have a safety and training culture? How would you know?

A culture of training and safety is found in all tasks performed, the attitudes of staff and management and the environment you work in.

In the competitive environment we all work in today, businesses need to train and build a culture of continuous improvement and staff development to keep pace with communications, technology, customer expectations and most importantly the standards of safety required to meet your company's moral, legislative and economic commitments. It is good for the staff and the future of the business.

Do some assessments of your business now as you read the following statements and answer them to yourself honestly.



Implementing a safety program in the workplace will help prevent injuries and also improve productivity.

- Have you got any safety issues that you are aware of, but have not acted on?
- When was the last incident that resulted in an injury or lost time?
- Could it have been avoided?
- Have you had a staff member who has benefited from training and developed into a key member of your team?
- How has training saved or made you money?
- Do you have a budget to spend on training?

With the plethora of safety products and solutions available in Australia, there is no excuse not to start improving your company's safety record, because if you think safety is expensive, try having an accident and see how much it costs!

*By Peter Jacobson Head of School - Industry Skills Training. For more information IST courses phone 03 9919 7600, email industry.skills@vu.edu.au or visit the website at www.vu.edu.au/ist.



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