



Improving Safety by (Sort of) Eliminating Safety Rewards

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What We Want

- To reinforce specific behaviours that we believe contribute to health and safety.
- People to be self-directed and consistently engage in the behaviours we want.

What We Do

- Reward actions, outcomes, and/or hitting targets – not behaviours over time.
- Rely on using external motivators, assuming these will encourage personal motivation.

Safety Rewards Today

What We Reward

2 Near Misses a week
50% reduction in LTI
0 Recordables
No Lost Time at project
Most HazIDs in month

How We Reward

Pizza parties, gift cards
Backpacks / Jackets
Lunch with CEO
Shout-outs, prize lotteries
Points for safety store

What We Often Get

Quantity over quality
Incidents underreported
Competition among staff
Freeloaders for group rewards
Rewards become entitlements

Psychology Says

- External rewards can have perverse negative effects on motivation.
 - Rewards for performing an action or behaviour can change our thinking.
 - Compensation can “crowd out” and reduce personal motivation.
 - Actions or behaviours become transactional – no reward, no action/behaviour.
- We have it backwards. We should start with internal motivation, external reward later.
 - Start with genuine praise, recognition, encouragement.
 - Build positive expectations, self-image, and self-direction.
 - Then reinforce the behaviour (not the action) with a “reward.”
- The question is not **“how can I motivate others?”** but rather **“how can people create the conditions within which others can motivate themselves?”**¹

If you can, quietly scale back (or wrap up?) any external rewards programs that you have.

Then adapt the generic “No Program” approach to your incentive or reward efforts – see the next page.

¹ Deci, E. L., & Flaste, R. (1996). *Why we do what we do: Understanding self-motivation*. Penguin Books.

The “No Program” Approach

1. Form a “not-a-committee” committee (maybe)
 - a. May not be necessary, but sometimes unavoidable
 - b. Safety, management, HR (?), unions (where applicable)
 - c. Don't publicize unless necessary – and then only minimally
2. Identify the key behaviours
 - a. Behaviours not actions – don't fall into a numbers / targets game
 - b. Only 2 or 3 behaviours – no more
 - c. Compliance over targets, quality over quantity, difficult things over easy things
3. Identify individuals to reward
 - a. Find out who is doing what – both right and wrong
 - b. Who are the “champions”? The “works in progress”? The “intervention” candidates?
 - c. Try to identify improvements by “poor” performers
 - d. Don't ignore those who exhibit other extraordinary efforts
 - e. Include supervisors and managers in the mix
4. Reward without reward
 - a. All rewards come from the individual's / group's immediate supervisor
 - b. First reward without reward – praise, recognition, positive expectation
5. Reward with personalized reward (if possible)
 - a. If the behaviour continues, get something that the individual / group would like (Flames jersey, extra day off, bubble bath, ACSA conference)
 - b. Reward should be significant to the person, unexpected and personalized – no swag, do unto others
 - c. Have supervisor deliver it – preferably in public

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