“Zero Injuries is Not Your Goal”

By Bill Sims, Jr.
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It was 1981, and I was in Danville, Virginia. I followed Tom, the safety director thru the dark old textile mill, walking on heart of pine floors that had probably seen over a hundred years of workers come and go. The smell of machine oil mixed with the warm smell of cotton. The textile machines hummed away, spinning out yard after yard of fabric.

I watched the workers busily monitoring the machines to keep them running at peak efficiency, and I noted that many of them had T-Shirts emblazoned with a slogan...

“Zero Injuries-Our Goal”

On the walls in every breakroom, the same “Zero Injuries” slogan was repeated on posters, coffee mugs, you name it.

I was impressed with the passion in this culture to reach zero injuries, so I asked Tom about his plant’s safety record.

“Well, Bill, I’ll be honest—we’ve made huge gains in safety over the last 5 years, but now, it seems that reaching zero is impossible. The closer we get to zero, the harder it becomes to show improvement.
We’ve started to plateau or “flat line” and my concern is that we’ll do a “hockey stick” and trend back up”, Tom admitted.

With over 1500 employees, Tom’s plant routinely celebrated million hour milestones, fed people steak dinners, and the like. But they still had a steady stream of injuries that wouldn’t go away.

Tom’s problem is like that of many other cultures. They have chased the goal of Zero Injuries year after year, only to find it to be more elusive than the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

At that moment, I looked Tom dead in the eye and told him that part of his problem was that he was chasing the wrong goal. I told Tom what I’ve told thousands of safety leaders around the world for over thirty years:

Zero Injuries is NOT your Goal

“Huh?? What did you say Bill?”

If you’re thinking this, it’s completely normal. Usually I get a degree of “shock and awe” when I say this to audiences. They’re not quite sure I’m in my right mind.

But I am completely serious. Zero injuries should NOT be your goal.

Until leaders understand that there is a level of safety beyond zero, they will be stuck on the dreaded “hockey stick plateau” in their safety performance.

Why is it that chasing Zero Injuries eventually produces this plateau?

To get at this answer, we need to look into the world of quality improvement, and in particular I want to consider the work of Dr. W.

For those of you who don’t know who Deming is, I’ll give you the short version.

After World War II, Dr. Deming approached the US Automakers and told them if they would listen to his somewhat radical theories on quality improvement they could revolutionize quality and make vehicles that would last longer and build more loyal customers.

There was just one problem with Deming’s idea: The big 3 US automakers were actually delighted when something went wrong on a car (so long as it was out of warranty.) If enough things failed on a car, then the customer would bring it to the dealership and they would trade it for a new one. This strategy even had a name….”planned obsolescence”.

Planned obsolescence is why, as a little boy, just six years old, I remember admiring the beautiful chrome “Cadillac” emblem inside my dad’s 1969 Cadillac Sedan DeVille. About two years after Dad bought his new Caddy, right on schedule, those emblems would fall off. This “defect” provided a pretty big NIC for my Dad (a negative, immediate, & certain consequence).

I’m not sure what else went wrong on Dad’s car, but soon enough, he headed for the dealership to swap for a new car (a very big PIC for both him and me!)

“Planned Obsolescence” had sold another car again. Strange as it may seem, this strategy of building poor quality into a product was a
PFC (positive, future, certain) consequence for the major US Automakers in the fifties and sixties.

As you might imagine, Deming’s words of wisdom fell on deaf ears at the Big 3.

So that’s why he went to Japan.

Here, as is often the case, one man’s NIC is another man’s PIC.

The Japanese (who were looking for ways to grab US market share) listened to Deming and they designed quality into their products, making them better, cheaper, and more fuel efficient than their US competition.

Needless to say, the Japanese taught US manufacturers a vital lesson in quality versus planned obsolescence. About PICS versus NICS in product design and market share.

In a nutshell, here’s how Deming gave the Japanese the winning hand in quality....

When a factory produces a part that is defective and fails to meet specifications, then the part must be either scrapped or re-worked, or worse yet, it ships to the customer creating an unhappy customer, who eventually stops buying the product. Any of these options is expensive and wasteful.

Deming taught that quality should be measured at every step in the process. Rather than get the car fully assembled, and counting defects at the tail end, every step in the assembly process needed to have statistical analysis to see if the process was in control, or out of control. Hence the name “Statistical Process Control”.

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Deming and other quality leaders have revolutionized manufacturing methods today. Measuring quality now involves hundreds and sometimes thousands of interim checks to be sure quality standards are met at each and every part of the product’s birth cycle.

So how does all this relate to safety?

I remember being at Boeing, with a talented group of leaders, and I told them I had a crazy idea for them….

Instead of spending so much money on quality assurance personnel and quality testing for their aircraft, I suggested they might fire their whole quality department and save a lot of money.

In its place, put up posters and hand out T-Shirts that say “Zero Defects Our Goal”. Tell the employees to “Build a good quality plane!”.

And lastly, measure quality by the number of customer complaints they get on each aircraft.

Can Boeing run their company this way?

What do you think?

Can you run your company this way?

Not a chance.

Everyone agrees that it would be impossible to run a company this way--Quality is something that must be integrated with production every step of the way.
But that is exactly how we run safety today in most companies.

We put up posters that say “Zero Injuries Is Our Goal” and we tell the employees to “Be Safe Now! You hear?”

Next, we count the “safety defects” after they have occurred...e.g. how many recordable injuries were there last month? What is our incidence rate? Did we have any fatalities? Did we get our safety award bonus?

Accidents are simply another kind of defect—a deviation from the standard of perfection. And, like quality, these defects must be detected and eliminated at the moment they first appear.

My good friend Kenny Sawyer says that companies with injuries “rehearse those injuries thousands of time until they get them right.” What Kenny is that there are often many “early warning” behavioral indicators that tell us an injury is going to happen. All too often, these at-risk behaviors are ignored due to the perceived importance of production and profits.

In light of all this, I would like to suggest a better slogan for your next company T-Shirt and poster campaign:

“Our New Goal: Zero Unsafe Behaviors & Conditions”

Will you ever fully achieve this goal? Maybe. Maybe not.

But if you chase zero unsafe behaviors you will finally get to zero injuries, or darn near close. You will instill in your culture the idea that it’s not “ok” to “rehearse for a fatality”.
So later today, why don’t you go tear down all those old “Zero Injury” signs and posters you have displayed. Put up new ones with my slogan above. You don’t owe me any money for using it. If it saves just one life, that will be more than payment enough for me.

The End

What would you like Bill to write about in his next column? Cast your vote at www.safetyincentives.com/vote

-Don’t drink the Pink Kool-Aid. (An examination of behavioral science and the book by Mr. Pink)

-Rehearsing for a Fatality-Tragedy Strikes Sea World

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The Narrow Minded CEO

“The Narrow Minded CEO and the Smoking Gun of Injury Hiding”

By Bill Sims, Jr.
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I was thrilled! I had just heard OSHA’s Dr. David Michaels speak about the concerns around under-reporting of injuries caused by “old school” lagging indicator incentive programs.

Finally! For the longest time I’d been waiting for OSHA to shine a light on an age old problem. Back in 1981, I began talking with safety professionals about how rewarding people for working a month or a million hours without reporting an injury (the way everyone did it back then) would produce only one real behavior change: the hiding of injuries.

Here we are, thirty years later. Has anything changed? Have leaders begun to get the message and switch to a proactive, leading indicator approach? What do you think?

After hearing Dr. Michael’s excellent webinar presentation warning against the use of incentives that cause injury hiding, one safety director lamented, “I hear Dr. Michaels telling us what not to do. But I haven’t heard him tell us what to do.

Before I give you my thirty year perspective on where we are heading with the use of incentives to change behavior in this country, I would like to call your attention to a hidden, unseen cause of injury hiding, one that is even more powerful at producing under-reporting than the lagging indicator incentive programs still in use today. I call it...
the “Smoking Gun”, and it has been largely ignored by the behavioral consultant community.

Incentive programs, you see, have become a convenient scapegoat -- a consultants “trashcan diagnosis” for why injury hiding occurs. Incentives have also provided many behavioral consultants with something to bash in their presentations at various conferences.

To prove my point, this past summer during my presentation at the Chicago ASSE PDC, one safety manager came up to thank me for my session “Green Beans & Ice Cream: The Recipe for Behavior Change”.

She then took out her copy of the guide to sessions and she pointed out that there were 5 presentations (mostly delivered by behavioral consultants) about how wrong and bad safety incentives are.

There were hardly any sessions to be found on how to use them correctly and how to integrate rewards and recognition into an overall safety behavior change strategy. I felt glad to be one of the exceptions to the rule.

In fact, event the ASSE keynote speaker Mr. Pink (who is a great speaker) spoke at length about the use of incentives to motivate workers. While I agree with many of the things Pink says, there are some areas that concern me.

For example, Mr. Pink’s new book teaches that rewarding people for doing something well (with a pay raise or bonus for instance) will rob them of their internal desire to repeat the same task in the future. I will address this idea in a future column, and we will explore the research from behavioral science to see if the research supports this view.
In the meantime, until I write that column, I suggest you find your boss’s copy of this book and hide it. Otherwise he might decide that all that hard work you did this year shouldn’t be rewarded with a raise. 😊

Where was I? Oh yeah, I remember now. The narrow minded CEO and the Smoking Gun....

Here’s the way the story came to me, from the plant Safety Manager.

It seems that the plant had just finished the year with an injury reduction of 32%. They’d had only five recordable injuries for almost 500 workers. That’s pretty good in my book. (I’ve seen a lot worse.)

Apparently their CEO didn’t feel that the plant was safe enough. Plus, it was the start of the second Great Depression and everyone was nervous about their jobs. This CEO flew in on his jet to address all the workers. Production was stopped. It must have been important. You could have heard a pin drop on the floor as the CEO began his speech.

In his 1 minute speech the CEO made these points crystal clear to his 500 workers....

“1. The economy has tanked, and we will be closing some plants and eliminating some jobs.
2. Your plant has had 5 recordable injuries and over 463 near miss reports.
3. That’s 468 too many unsafe events.
4. I’m worried about the future of this plant.”
Then, he climbed back aboard his corporate jet and rode off into the CEO sunset.

The impact on the plant safety record was immediate and striking. 

*Not a single recordable injury was reported for the next year.*

And they didn’t have a single near miss reported either. *(Loss of discretionary effort)*

I can imagine the CEO reading the safety reports from this plant some months later, smiling to himself and thinking... “There....I fixed that plant’s safety problem.” Or so he thought.

But what did this CEO really fix? Did he manage in one sixty second speech to change the behavior of so many people? 

Actually...he did.

He changed the behavior of what his people reported.

*But he failed to change the unsafe behavior of his people. People now hid injuries out of fear of punishment...even though there were no incentives for working safely at this company!* 

To be honest, this company did have an invisible safety incentive program...the “smoking gun” if you will:

*“If you hide injuries you get to keep your job.”*

Does the same fear exist in your culture?

Behavioral science has proven countless times that both positive and punishing consequences affect our behavior.
The aforementioned Neanderthal CEO delivered a punishing blow to his people’s morale, engagement, and team spirit.

The safety director who told me this story lamented that over many years, he had built up the safety culture with painstaking effort…“like filling up a bucket of water one drop of water at a time.”

And then his CEO kicked the bucket over, erasing years of hard work and trust building.

So it goes....

If a reward for working a period of time without an injury can cause injury hiding, then being punished for having injuries can also lead to injury hiding.

Another encounter I had with the “Smoking Gun” of injury hiding was in a plant where punishment was the primary tool used to drive safe behavior.

I learned about this when I interviewed a group of employees at a chemical plant. The plant had no formal or informal incentive systems in place, and they reported only 3 recordable injuries per year, along with millions of hours without a single lost time injury.

During the focus group interviews, the employees told me that they hid injuries on a routine basis.

“Why?” I said.

“Because about 2 years ago one of our co-workers hurt himself and it was discovered that he wasn’t wearing his PPE.... So they made him conduct safety meetings with all employees where he had to tell
them that he had been hurt by being “stupid” and not wearing his PPE. We all felt sorry for the poor guy. The intended message from management was that not wearing PPE was “dumb”. But that’s not what we all heard.”

“So what was the real ‘takeaway’ message for everybody on the shop floor?” I asked.

“That if you get hurt, they’ll punish you and make a fool out of you by requiring you to tell everybody in the plant how stupid you are—now, none of us report our injuries, cause we don’t want to be humiliated like that guy was.” And so the interview concluded.

As this example clearly proves, the introduction of punishment into the system produced exactly what it always does: a reduction of the behavior it follows. Even worse, you get compliance behavior. They follow safety rules only when the safety cop is there, but not when he is gone. In this case, the worker reported his injury and got punished for it. Now, nobody else will report injuries either.

W. Edwards Deming said it better than I ever could: “Every system is perfectly designed to produce the results that it gets.”

**If you have injury hiding, then you have it because of the consequences built into your management systems.**

Another root cause of injury hiding is the way we measure safety performance. Every company today is judged “safe” or “unsafe” based on lagging indicators like TRIR and Lost time injury rates.

Insurance costs go up or down largely based on these numbers, and so does regulatory oversight, fines and penalties.
Until the management systems are changed to focus on leading indicators and not lagging ones, the inevitable result will be more punishment from senior leaders and more injuries that are hidden, covered up, and lingering risk that cannot be detected and corrected—while safety incentive programs continue to be the “convenient scapegoat” for why injury hiding occurs.”

Clearly there is injury hiding at the chemical plant I mentioned earlier, but you can’t blame incentive programs for it, because they don’t have one.

They have substituted a far more damaging consequence in its place—that of punishing people who report injuries by embarrassing them in front of all their peers.

Is there a better way to measure and improve safety performance other than the current lagging indicator system of TRIR and other injury metrics?

You bet there is.

I have gone around the world speaking to leaders everywhere. In Greece, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Australia and the USA, I always see the same (yawn) safety signs and posters:

“Zero Injuries is Our Goal”

I’ll tell you the same thing I have told all those leaders. It’s what I’ve been saying for 30 years now.

Zero Injuries is NOT your Goal.

Until leaders understand that there is a level of safety beyond zero, they will be stuck and plateaued in safety performance. And if you think punishment will get you there I’ve got news for you.
You can’t punish a team into winning the Superbowl.

Getting your culture to move “beyond zero” is winning the Superbowl folks. If you have used punishment to get your culture where it is, remember that “what got you here won’t get you there.”

I guess it’s time for me to wrap this column up. For the last thirty years, I’ve been one of those lone voices crying in the wilderness about the need for more R+ and less punishment in the workplace. I’ve argued against lagging indicator rewards systems and for proactive, behavior based recognition. My passion has always been reinforcing behavior positively, on the spot, and reaching the worker’s heart.

Has anything really changed in my thirty years on the watch?

I’ll let you be the judge.

I know many great safety professionals who are as passionate as I am about people, safety and the Power of Positive Reinforcement. I hope that you are one of them.

I’ve also met my share of “punishers” who wear the Safety Cop badge believing they are effective change agents. They achieve short term behavior change in their people (e.g. when they are there, behavior changes) but they fail to achieve the ultimate goal: Personal, interdependent commitment to safety, in the moment of choice, when nobody is watching.

I also know that many of you struggle with outdated lagging indicator incentive programs that do cause people to hide injuries. Often these systems are imposed from somewhere high above, and are written
ARTICLES AND INSIGHTS FROM THE BILL SIMS COMPANY

into the compensation system, where they become almost unchangeable.

My advice to you: Never quit. Don’t give up. Keep fighting and pushing until your senior leadership team get the message. It’s your only way to move beyond zero.

Want to know more? Please call us in the USA at 803 600 8325 or SKYPE: billsimsjr

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Deer in the Headlights

My long journey started at 6am, driving past the deer in my neighborhood munching the grass with its early morning dew on it. I was headed for a long trip to the Middle East.

As usual, there was no food on the planes, and by nightfall I’d had almost nothing to eat. I was getting hungry...

“Chicken or Beef?” asked the stewardess, as the plane slid thru the midnight air towards Dubai.

With a guilty smile I asked, “Can I have both?”

She smiled back and said, “Perfect.”

You see, normally I go coach to prove I’m still tough when I make those 26 hour global flights, but this time I splurged and cashed in some of my frequent flyer miles (shhh! don’t tell margie!) and made my way into the Delta Business Class Elite, on my way to Kuwait, and other parts of the Middle East.

I had heard I’d be treated well, and Delta even promised I would have a lie-flat bed in exchange for all those miles I gave back to them. I had saved them for probably 20 years or more.
My back jumped for joy at the thought of actually sleeping on a plane. I thought what a great use of my Delta Skymiles it would be! 😊

Hey, if I was paying for it, why not have chicken AND beef? I mean, it sure beat the beer and peanuts I was used to.

Getting two dinners at once was a pretty big PIC for me (thanks again Aubrey!)

And as I sipped my cold beer (and still nibbled on peanuts) I started to tune into the guys around me.

Here we were, kind of like space travelers in some sci-fi movie, in our little cocoons, talking, traveling, about to go into suspended animation until we reached Andromeda or Dubai or somewhere.

The guy in Cocoon 1 in front of me was in high speed data systems. Working for a government contractor. The guy in Cocoon 4 to the left of me was in communications...working for a government contractor.

“So where are you guys going and what are you doing there”, I asked.

“Iraq. Data system work. That’s about all I can say” said the Dude in Cocoon 1.


“Hey man I’m cool with that...”
I was wondering when I could get more peanuts.

I was really impressed to be with some heavy hitting guys who were my age and traveling to some do some pretty neat techie stuff in a pretty exciting place. They were chatting about how they’d get reimbursed for their $10,000 tickets by the company and then they stopped....

“How about you Bill, what do you do?” they asked.

“Err, Umm, well, you see, I’ve been asked to speak in Bahrain and Kuwait about my upcoming book .... “Green Beans & Ice Cream: The Recipe for Behavior Change.” I responded somewhat nervously, a bit unsure as to their reaction.

They got quiet for a minute....

I figured it was time to break out the Power of the Pen and handed them all a green bean pen.

Then I told them the story of Green Beans & Ice Cream and they broke into big smiles......and asked if I could spare a few extra Green bean pens for their kids, which I gladly did......I hope those pens make it home with their daddies to their loved ones....
man am I tired...I'm in Dubai....and it's everything they say. Vegas on steroids. Wow.

I spent 4 hours with Verizon tech support before leaving the USA and “yes Mr. sims your Verizon phone will work just fine out of the country.”

And so now it’s time to call my family and tell them I’m safe and sound on the other side of the pond.

One problem. The phone says SOS. Out of Service. Dead.

Bummer.

Maybe I'll fix it at my next flight’s gate. Off I go....

So I get off my flight at gate 118, and learn that I’m late for my connecting flight to Kuwait, which leaves in 30 minutes from gate 323.

I haul my 2 rolling bags behind me and start looking for gate 323. Yep, they have 500 gates or more in Dubai’s Airport. It’s huge.

Hartsfield airport should be jealous....

After about 21 gates I ask someone “Where’s the train?”. 
“That will be in phase 3 sir...until then, no train. You have to walk, sir..”

(Now I know why they are skinny here..) 😊

The 2nd Great Depression nailed Dubai too I guess. Off I go.

By gate 318 I’m really tired. Walking 2 miles on hard leather dress shoes is tough. But my aching feet had no clue what was coming next. As I huffed and puffed to the gate the agent said, “Sorry sir, the gate has changed to gate 119.”

This was clearly not my day. 2 miles back. Sorry feet. After 23 hours of flight. Well, I hear walking breaks up the blood clots your legs get on the plan so maybe this is a good thing? Look on the bright side, feet, ok?

I go back thru the maze of duty free shops and feel like I’ve been in Groundhog Day. More of the same.

Now I’m at my gate.

30 minutes to departure. Checked in. Everything is cool.

So I whip out my blue tooth headset and pair it to my notebook and find free wi-fi in the airport, and use SKYPE to call home. ET phone home!
I call the secret, special Verizon number that a buddy gave me which goes deep into their Command Center and I find a really great tech support person and beg them to help me get my phone working.

They do. It works. Cool. Why didn’t I call you guys the first time, I wonder?

........Now I’m in Kuwait and my good friend Brian meets me. He is a neat guy who saw lots of action in Kuwait when he was there with the air force. We head out to his Toyota and the six inches of snow I left is replaced by hot, sultry desert air. Off we head to the Kuwait Hilton on the Arab Gulf (nice place). I really appreciate him getting me to my hotel and oh YES THEY HAVE STARBUCKS HERE!!!

I have four hours to sleep and then I’m up and ready for meetings with companies and many people. But first, there is breakfast. So I’m eating my oatmeal and the waiter asks if I want juice.

“Yes please, apple” I say.

“Red or Green, sir?”

Huh? I never had to pick the color of apple juice in my entire life. Usually it was just Mott’s that clear, translucent stuff that we get in the plastic bottle.

“Sir?”
The silence was unbearable. I felt really stupid. In Kuwait, and can’t even order apple juice.

And in a moment of sheer genius I remember my chicken/beef solution….

“How about both?” said I, with a slight smile to the waiter.

“Certainly sir.” And he vanished.

A few seconds I heard later the grrrr and hum of a juicer machine. And then my smiling waiter dropped down freshly juiced apple juice. One glass of red apple juice. One of green.

That was neat. 😊 I gave my waiter a Green Bean pen and moved on.

Lots of meetings and lots of people and lots of presentations on Behavior Change. I had fun. I think they did too.

The next day, my three new friends Srikanth, Ashok and Mohammed take me to tour Kuwait City. They are from India, and they take me for Indian food. I let them order for me, since I was clueless. Man was that good. Sure beats the food on the plane....

Then we pull up to one of their observation towers...really, really big towers, with the restaurant/elevator/souvenir package. Neat place. Big black hummer with Kuwaiti SWAT teams doing a training exercise which had them rappelling down
the tower and climbing up it. Pretty cool. Inside, pictures show me where Saddam Hussein tried to destroy the tower to break the will of the people, but I guess the tower won, as did the people.....

"That will be $472 sir." Said the airport check in guy.

"Huh? What's that for?" I asked.

"Your bags sir, they are over the weight limit, so we need $472, cash." He replied.

Since they didn’t take credit cards I had to scrape together the money from my wallet to pay for the bags I was taking onto Bahrain. Not a good thing. Now I was down to $20 cash. And I had a week to go in the middle east....credit cards are good at most places, but you never know...

Now I’m at the Gulf Hotel in Bahrain (http://www.gulfhotelbahrain.com/), a neat hotel that dates back to 1929. Nice place.

That’s where the meeting is. I meet my dear friend and coach Jitu and give him a hug. Then I collapse on the bed. I’ve been averaging 4 hours of sleep a nite and tomorrow I begin teaching a course on green beans & ice cream: the recipe for behavior change.

I’m up early the next morning...body still seriously jetlagged, and so I read my 178 emails from america & the rest of the world. By 6am I’m showered and shaved and ready for breakfast. As Jitu and I meet briefly he tells me that he had to work thru the night without any sleep to help the conference go off smoothly. Man Jitu, I wish I had your energy! Jitu is the real Energizer Bunny. He just keeps going and going and going....
As my class begins to fill up I am busy hooking up my computer, projector, speakers etc, and cramming to get everything done by the 8am start time. Then someone taps me on my shoulder and I look up, and there is Faiz, my dear friend who is like a brother to me!

You see, I was pretty nervous the first time I went to the Middle East, some years back. I had committed to speak, but read all the US State department warnings about going to the middle east and I was pretty spooked. I was going to scrub the trip but my word is my bond, so I went ahead with it.

Faiz was the first person I met. He took care of me like a little cocker spaniel puppy. Bought my dinner. Bought gifts for my family (just like my other friend Abdullah). I was amazed at their kindness, and generosity. Plus, Faiz took me to the coolest restaurant ever, Bubbles by the Red Sea (yep, the one that Moses parted). Now, food is the fastest way to my heart, and Faiz must have figured this out cause once I had a good meal in my, I was in love with the Middle East....and still want to go back to Bubbles.

Where was I? Oh yes, so here is my good friend Faiz in my class and instantly I feel right at home...I crank up and start doing “Green Beans & Ice Cream” and the class is engaged, and involved. I have people from Britain, US, India, Saudi, Kuwait and more. It’s a tiny little melting pot...

Now, some places in the middle east are a “dry county” but Bahrain is not one of those. So I head to Sherlock’s Pub in the bottom of the hotel, and who do I meet by my good friend Dr. Bill Pomfret. I’ve known Bill for over 20 years and he is a fantastic guy who learned from the likes of Dan Peterson and many of the great safety gurus. I buy Bill a cold beer and we reminisce of old times. He tells me a story of how he used positive reinforcement with an employee from India and how it made national headlines.
Hey Bill, how bout write that story up and share it with us ok? My fingers are tired of typing and you'll tell the story better than I could!

By the second day of my course I’m learning something. I have WAY TOO MUCH STUFF to cover in 2 days. The folks in my class are asking questions, posing riddles, and arguing with me. Yep, that’s right, in this culture, they like to argue with the teacher.

Well, it’s a good thing that my mother’s was one of 14 kids. Her family were masters of argument. In fact, the Rains family is somewhat legendary for being on the wrong side of the law during Prohibition in the South and the Depression. My mom’s dad used to say he could win one side of the argument with you and then take your side and win that one! Believe me, pappy could do just that...

My Rains genes must have kicked in with three of my students, Ahmed, Abdullah and Mo. These three guys were really clever and firmly believed that people ought to be safe because “it was good for them, because it was the right thing to do.” I also admire them because they were so engaged and passionate in the class.

They argued passionately that managers should not have to reinforce good behavior---the worker should do it because it is the best thing for them.

These guys were smoking serious cognitive wacky weed theory. Kind of like that stuff that Alfie Kohn and Daniel Pink put out. I needed some Skinner shock therapy…and I needed it fast.

I could hear Pappy’s voice in my head saying “Use the Force Son...” 😊

I decided to come out swinging.
“Ok, guys, I’ll agree with you that in a perfect world every worker should be entirely self motivated. That would be perfect because then people would be self-managed, and they would operate much like computers. Managers would just sit back and do nothing. That’s pretty much the way you’ve operated your company for a number of years. *How is that working out for you?”*

“Not very well, Bill” they replied honestly.

I continued on with the course, feeling better about getting buy in from the group that people really did need external positive reinforcement—and that a simple “Thanks!” goes a long way.

On the last day I decided it was time to evaluate myself.

“Ok guys, you’ve honored me with 2 days of your time, and a fair amount of your company’s training budget. I want to thank you for that and I want to ask you to grade me. During these past days, I have argued passionately that people need and deserve positive reinforcement and praise to help them perform better.

…..And some of you have argued just as passionately that people should do it because it’s good for them….because safety is it’s own reward.

Now I would like to know how many of you feel that positive reinforcement has value and plan to use it with your team? 27 out of 30 hands go up.

“That’s great! Now how many of you still believe that people should do things because it’s for their own good?” I asked.
The other 3 hands went up timidly. My 3 favorite students who had argued against external reinforcement.

“Ok, so to sum up my progress here folks, 27 of you are believers in R+, and 3 of you aren’t. Now, I know you’ve paid your money and invested your 2 days with me in this course and I want to thank you for that. And no doubt you are all eager to get your CEU’s and receive your certificates of course completion. And I am delighted to provide 27 of you with that external praise and reinforcement. Cause clearly, there are 3 of you who won’t need a certificate, or any CEU’s. ….after all, you attended this course because it was for your own good….right?”

My three favorite students broke into laughter and grinned sheepishly. I decided to give them their CEU’s and Course certificates. My point had been made. It was time to move on….

……Now, it’s the next morning, and I’m to be introduced by a member of the Saudi royal family….and guess what? He needs 30 minutes of my 60 minute slot. I don’t know about you, but I’m not in the habit of telling Saudi royalty “No”. Sure thing boss, you go for it.

Which left me with the unenviable task of re-working my entire presentation feverishly while the Prince spoke. Sure enough, its show time and I begin with Green Beans & Ice Cream, and we are rocking and rolling.

Until it was time for questions.

At the end, we had time only for one question, a young man who stood up, and said,
“Mr. Sims, what would you say about a company that hires private police officers to monitor its employees driving habits in their personal vehicles in their own time? It even goes so far as to fine them for speeding and penalize them and reduce their pay bonuses?”

I swallowed hard. 700 pairs of eyes focused on me to see my response.

“What company do you work for?” I asked him.

“I’d rather not say.” He replied, and the whole room laughed at once.

So, now you see how all the way in Bahrain, on the tip of Saudi Arabia, I came to find myself between the rock and the hard place. If I sided with the company, the audience would not like my message. And if I sided with the audience, the company would be sure never to do business with me.....

All at once I had become, the Deer in the Headlights.

Watch for my next blog to learn what went down next....

Bill Sims Jr. meets the Saudi Prince in Bahrain

Want to know more? Please call us in the USA at 803 600 8325 or SKYPE: billsimsjr

email:bill.sims@billsims.net  Web site: www.billsims.com
Polar Bears & Scapegoats

It was Right Under Your Nose all the time guys.............

The smell of Jet A was thick in the air as the Delta jet hurtled me into the evening sky. The last embers of the evening sunset graced every Georgia pine tree with a warm orange glow sparkling on their green needles.....it reminded me of a campfire flickering with its final light.

This time I was sitting near the massive Rolls Royce engines, fascinated by how the exhaust distorted the pine trees and the ground slightly. If you looked thru it, things were soft and
fuzzy, much like a Monet painting, and yet, just outside the jet blast all was normal, and sharp an clear.

This flight wasn't in business class....and there were no secret dudes going to the middle east here....this one was hard core....I was slammed in the middle aisle seat of economy class between two guys who by their massive size had both missed a great career in the NFL....

Send oxygen please....

It would be a 12 hour flight to Alaska, where I was invited to speak to the Alaska ASSE Chapter. I'd never been to Alaska but one of my father's dearest friends had entertained me with his stories of the great wilderness as a boy....

Marvin would always get a light in his eyes when he spoke of his time in Ketchican, Alaska, back in the 50's. Plus Ann had called me and told me something about Alaska....

"Guys who come up here never want to leave..." she said.

"Why I asked?"

"Well, it's like a third of the size of the continental USA with about 600,000 people....and it's basically wild....hunting, fishing, you name it..."

Ann's pitch was magic. Of course, it was a Monday when we talked...that didn't hurt her case at all....

Hook, line, sinker. I was sold. I scrubbed my other appointments and locked and loaded.....I figured it had to be fun........and somehow, I talked my wife Margie into going too....

Fast forward.......

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Long, boring, endless flight in the big silver tube in the sky........
.............
............................
........
thanks steve jobs for my ipod......

................
................
battery died....
...........
are we there yet?
................
........

and suddenly we're there! in Alaska! Hey, Sara Palin are you here?

I bear gifts from Joe Wilson.... :) 

I round the corner in the Ted Stevens Airport and there it is....
a really really big....
really scary....
a twelve foot polar bear. Legend has it ate a few folks....and thereby faced the double barrel P- of Alaskan Justice.

Looking at the creature on it's hind legs even in its taxidermic state is amazing....

I figure a picture is in order and hand my phone to margie so she shoots me by the bear.
I was awed to be in the presence of such raw power and felt that perhaps I was making a mistake to act as if I had the skill to defeat such an awesome foe.....but then, hey, it was only a picture, right? shake it off bill... you're just spooked and tired...

If only I'd known then what I would learn later....

In a short while I was in my hotel in Anchorage, the Captain Cook. Nice spot. If you're going, stay there for the first night, but my fave is the Hotel Alyeska, cause there you feel like you're really in Alaska. For a city slicker.

My friend told me about the triple black diamond slopes and extreme sports, and how they had 2 to 3 fatalities at the last extreme sports show....and some paraplegics. How do you engineer the risk out of that he asked me? Ponder that one for me ok?

Now it's early morning and we've had about 6 hours sleep and the body clocks aren't jiving with the local ones, but I'm heading towards a fishing trip with my new friends Pat, Lynn, and Patty. And a dog named Duke, and a boat named Sea-Duction.

As we drive up the narrow two lane road to Seward, Alaska, I finally get why people love this place....

Mountains like the Rockies, snow capped, jagged, but touching the ocean. Wrapping around those mountains are irridescent blue glacier rivers yielding their centuries old ice and rock to the ocean.

This of course, I planned for. But the part I missed was the whole Kenai Peninsula is an Arctic Rain Forest.
So, guess what?

Below the snow caps you get lush, verdant greenery. Bears like that stuff. Big old bears Bigger than the guys I rode up on the plane with....

Margie and I are doing fine following Pat & Lynn in their GM Tahoe. We pass a sign telling us that we are about to reach "Turnagain Pass".

We're in our rented Suburban with a full tank of gas and I'm feeling fine until all of a sudden we go IFR.

For those of you who aren't into pilot jargon, in a short stretch of about 20 seconds we ascended into the mountains and the temperature dropped about 30 degrees.

Instantly.

We were IFR (instrument flight rules) and I couldn't see a thing. I rolled down the window and stuck my head out the window to see what was ahead of me while Margie found the right buttons to press to defog us inside.

For a split second, I was back in my jeep and 15 driving thru the North Carolina Smoky mountains with all the 2 windows zipped down.......

Slowly, we went from IFR to VFR (visual flight rules) and I was reminded how swiftly things go from being "safe" to being "unsafe".

.............

.....now we've left the dock at Seward and we are gazing at gorgeous mountains and the ocean and glaciers and the mountain goats....
Our charter boat captain tells me the ocean water is about 34 degrees, "so if you go over we have less than three minutes to get you Bill."

Got it boss.

No sweat. I'm hanging tight on the Sea-Duction Boat.

The day is golden, only problem is Margie catches 5 fish to my 1.

Oh well...

As I cast my bait in the water hoping for a big King Salmon, I gaze up on the rocky crags above me to look at the mountain goats standing on them....

Scapegoats....

I'm trying to remember what a scape-goat really is. Bottom line, it's something that is innocent, blameless, and it gets blamed for something it didn't do.

It was: in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The more I've studied it for the last 25 years, incentive systems have become the proverbial "scape goat".

Whenever there is a report of injury hiding or under-reporting, consultants have rushed in with a battle cry of "damn the incentives" and whether wrong or right, they have eviscerated the use thereof.

I have often wondered whether incentives might be a convenient scapegoat...
And as I bob my hook up and down in the frigid Alaskan waters, I connect with proof that my gut is on target.

A safety manager calls me and says "Bill we are one of ten plants in our division. We are the worst of the ten....with worst being relative. We've been five years with no lost time injuries and only five recordable injuries this year. But we are always "low man on the totem pole in our monthly conference calls with corporate. My plant manager and I are feeling the heat....."

So their CEO shows up and gets everyone together for an in-plant "all hands" meeting.

His speech?

Less than 60 seconds....and here are the salient points.....

-The economy is bad and we may have to close plants and layoff people (that's negative, future, uncertain)

-Your plant is the worst and most unsafe of our ten plants (Negative, Immediate, Certain)

-"I'm worried about this plant" (NIC)

And then, the CEO gets back on his corporate jet.

"How's that working for you?" I ask the safety guy.

He tells me they haven't had a recordable since the CEO got back on his jet to go home.

Nor have they had a Near Miss Report. Or a safety suggestion.

Maybe I should have named this blog "Hunker Down".

Do you think the 60 second CEO pep talk changed the
behaviors of the 500 plus workers?

Nope. Nada.

He simply introduced a new consequence into the game.

FEAR.

And while this site has absolutely ZERO in the way of incentive systems there are all kinds of injury hiding going on.

Because the CEO created one big fat NIC to stop injury reporting.

Now, if OSHA comes to investigate this plant, will they find an incentive system causing the injury hiding? No, there is not one, however many consultants will rally around the flag of "injury hiding" and condemn incentives as the easy target, the scapegoat.

Where is the smoking gun?

The CEO and his NICS....Negative Immediate Certain consequences (to use Aubrey Daniel's term)

Do these punshing consequences go beyond the company mentioned above?

Oh yeah....

Sub-contractors work for major ompanies and they teach supervisors to stitch up workers in the field so it won't be a recordable and thus won't taint their record, and thus won't stop them from getting a new contract.

"Take one for the team..."
So, can downward pressure for results from senior leadership create injury hiding? Yes.

Can downward pressure from OSHA cause the same. Yes. Osha, without knowing it, can create a system that causes injury hiding.

Another safety director told me that his new plant manager had a different approach to safety.....punishment and mandatory termination for any safety violations.

This of course, led to an immediate drop in all injury reports, along with the "early warning" indicators of near miss/near hit reports.

Of course, this Plant Manager will probably retire in the next three years and he won't be there when the next fatality comes knocking. It will be off "his watch" and then he will be convinced that the new plant manager wasn't "tough enough" to keep people safe.

Sorry to break it to you guys, but you can't punish a team into winning the Superbowl.............
The baby silver salmon flash thru the water and steal my bait before I can hook them. They are so fast!

I drop another line in the water and think about another manager who told me another "scape goat" story....

"We had 1200 employees doing poultry processing and worked one year with zero lost time injuries and only 5 recordables....about 2 years ago." he said.

I was amazed that an industry rife with CTD could post such stellar results....questioning him, he opened up.

"Till a year ago we got a visit from the Immigration Department. They sent 700 people back to Mexico. Now everyone here is
from around here. Our numbers went to 18 Lost Time Injuries and 58 recordables the next year."

Wow!

I had found another NIC that stopped people from reporting injuries....being a new citizen in the USA.

Is it possible that people who have just immigrated in "suck it up" and deal with personal injury and thus under-report? For fear of being sent back home?

Oh yeah.....buddy.

It's of interest that on the day of the ill-fated Horizon Deepwater Platform exploding, senior leadership celebrated 1 million hours without a lost time injury.

If Dan Peters were here today I can hear him asking the CEO ...

"Sir, do you have an absence of accidents or the presence of safety?"

So, are there other consequences besides incentive systems that can and do cause injury hiding?

YES.

And to all of you consultants who rail against incentive systems (often rightly so) I submit that these root causes have been right there under your nose all along.

To put the final nail in this coffin please consider that the UK have never embraced incentive systems. And yet they too document injury hiding as per the link below.... what more proof can I offer?
Have incentives become an easy and convenient "scapegoat"?

In my book, they have. Before we go for the easy answer, perhaps we should do an Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence study to be sure we are standing on solid ground.

.............

Now the day is done...and the Captain is heading us back thru the icy water to the dock. I watch him filet the fish with mechanical speed, tossing their remains into the ocean....

we bid Lynn, Pat & Judy goodbye, and Margie and I head back to the hotel. As we descend thru Turnagain Pass I am again amazed at how quickly it fogs up the windows. And I wonder what kind of Grizzly Bears may be out in that black night....in just a few hours I would have to face my fears up close and personal....
Battery Cables

It was about 2:30 p.m. and I had just finished a speaking assignment for the Tarheel Safety Chapter in Charlotte, North Carolina.

They are a lively group of safety professionals who asked me to come and speak about behavior change, which I did. While there I learned a lot about some changes coming down the pipeline from OSHA, from my new BFF, Bob, with OSHA (more on that later).

After the meeting, I packed up my computer and projector and put them in the trunk of my car, sliding into the front seat. As I've done a million times before, I put the key in the switch and turned it to the right, convinced in my mind that I was about to hear that good old V8 rumble to life, one of my top ten favorite PICs in life.

(Thanks again, Aubrey, for that helpful acronym! :)  

However, while I had the A and B parts down perfectly for this task (antecedent and behavior) good old Mr. C (consequence) showed up in a totally unexpected form: NOTHING HAPPENED.

"Dang!" I said. "Dead battery."

Even a shade tree mechanic like me can figure that one out. Next, I did a root cause analysis in my brain to determine why and how this had happened.

Oh yeah, I remember now, I spent an hour in my car before giving my speech and plugged my notebook into my cigarette lighter to juice it up so I could finish a live Webinar that I had promised to do with another company from the parking lot outside the Tarheel meeting. Technology is so cool. I had my own little WiFi bubble right there in the parking lot. I was feeling like the incredible techno-guy.

Who'd have thought my notebook could suck that much juice out of a car battery that fast?

Guess what.

It can.

It did.

I morphed quickly from incredible techno-guy to a pathetic "girly man."
My first call was to the roadside assistance number to see how fast they could get someone to jump-start my car. Then a little voice in my head said "Bill, remember you put some battery cables in the trunk for emergencies like this one."

BAM! Hey there they are, in that orange case. Now, all I need is a kind, helpful person with a good battery to help me boost my engine!

I looked two spaces over and saw a guy pulling out of his parking space and two ladies chatting by their car as well. By the looks of things, he was a repairman just finishing his lunch break. I summoned up my courage and walked over to him. I had to act now, or never.

"Scuse me sir," I said, "but I've got a dead battery . . . would you mind giving me a boost? I have my cables ready . . ." (I showed him the orange cables.)

The look on his face went from apprehension to a half smile and he rolled down his window and we shook hands.

Then this kind knight pulled his truck up to my car and we connected up the cables, using the appropriate safety technique I had learned at the ripe old age of 17 from Mr. Jones, a teacher who had also described to me what it was like to have a car battery explode on you. That mental image stuck with me—a very good antecedent.

In short order, my V8 sprang back to life, its deep throaty growl as good as ever! Not bad for a ride that has been running against the wind for over 94,368 miles. (Hey, come to think of it, I've been doing the same thing!) As Han Solo told Luke, "It ain't the years kid, it's the miles."

I felt very grateful to the Repair Guy. I wanted to DO SOMETHING, to give something back to him.

*And that's where I went wrong.*

I shook the man's hand and gave him $5 cash. It was my last $5, and it was all I could think of at the time, and I was so grateful to him, that I figured it was better than nothing.

The smile that had appeared on his face after helping me became ever so slightly muted, an imperceptible change that no one saw but me.

"No, no, I don't need any money," he said.
I realized immediately that I'd make a mistake in offering him the money. I hadn't thought through the impact of this “reinforcer” on this particular individual. But, this whole sequence (just like so many fleeting interactions we have with others) went down in under 38 seconds, so maybe it was easy to make a mistake. I had made one nonetheless.

I was in trouble, but I didn't want to totally blow this moment. And then I remembered my dad and “The Power of the Pen.” As a little guy, my dad would sometimes surprise me and take me out of elementary school to go with him to see clients. These were fun trips where I learned many things about sales methods and techniques. I watched my dad in awe as he spoke with CEOs and business leaders, helping them develop recognition solutions.

For a second, I flashed back to being on the old Delta plane with my dad on one of those trips. I recalled with fondness the stewardesses and pilots who “back in the day” dressed up and looked so professional. I could see the stewardess smiling at me and handing me my own plastic captain’s wings lapel badge which I proudly pinned to my suit jacket. (Weren't the 70s cool?)

I remembered my dad smiling back at her and thanking her for showing kindness to his son. Then my dad reached into his bag and pulled out a Parker Pen in a nice gift box, inscribed with the words, "Thanks for making a difference."

He told the stewardess how much he appreciated her kindness to me and that this gift was for her, because she had made a difference to him.

She beamed and took the pen to show all the other flight attendants. She even moved me and dad up to first class! Wow! I decided right then and there that I had to figure out what was behind Dad and the Power of the Pen.

Okay. The memory came and went in a split second, and there was this guy, with that smile slowly fading away after my goof with the five dollar bill.

I smiled back again at him and said, "Hey, wait a second." And then I began hurriedly digging through my bag to see if I had any Green Bean pens left from my presentation. (Many of you know that I love green beans and give away pens shaped like that very vegetable at my sessions.)

There it was. One last green bean pen was left in the bottom of my bag. I handed it to the man and again thanked him for his kindness, seeing his
smile brighten back up, and he even asked me what kind of work I do (so I explained that we are behavior change consultants). We parted as friends and I had a good feeling in my heart.

I called the Roadside Assistance guy to tell him there was no need to come. As I drove down I-77 south of Charlotte I began to analyze what had just happened, and as near as I can figure it, here it is:

- I asked the repair guy to help me, which he did.
- I felt obligated from my heart to thank him and to accompany it with a gift of some sort.
- In the two seconds I took to choose a gift, I chose the only one I had at the time, which was money.
- He rejected it and was a bit offended that I offered it.
- He warmly accepted the small green bean pen, which was novel, different, and a souvenir of that moment.
- When I presented both the cash award and the pen, I expressed heartfelt appreciation. But he didn't want the cash, while he was cool with the pen.

Hmmm . . . what do we learn here?

A lot, I think.

Here are a few takeaways.

1) On the surface, it would appear that the man simply preferred a little plastic pen to $5. The easy conclusion would be that logo gifts are a better award than cash.

Many consultants, managers, and committee members make this mistake day-in and day-out. They purchase more and more logo stuff as handout items for employees: these may include caps, key chains, and mugs with a logo doled out to employees in honor of all sorts of achievements. Many companies have a whole warehouse full of these items.

While logo gifts can occasionally have real impact on our behavior (remember dad and the Power of the Pen?), research by the Incentive Federation shows that logo’d items are the LEAST EFFECTIVE reward/behavior change tool we know of (see my last blog "I'm Confused" for more on that).
The most effective reinforcers from our research and that of others are social reinforcers (my smile, handshake, and thanking the man) and according to the a survey we conducted of attendees of \textit{behavioralsafetynow.com}, AND giving a person a gift such as an Ipod or other type award that they truly want and need are also effective. Cash and gift cards are also judged more effective than logo gifts as reinforcers.

Several speakers at BSN passionately argue for the use of logo'd or symbolic gifts. One prominent behavioral consultant told me "If a person doesn't want a baseball cap, it's because he doesn't want that logo. You need to put a different logo on it and he will want it."

Huh?

What if he already has 18 ball caps in his closet and just doesn't need another one?

While logo gifts have their place, sadly, it is impossible to choose a logo gift that everyone will find reinforcing and/or useful.

2. Why did the repair guy refuse my $5 but accept the pen?

Our behavior is continually being reinforced by consequences that are either external (extrinsic) and/or internal (intrinsic or self-reinforcing).

There is a lot of controversy in the world of psychology between the cognitive psychologists and the behaviorists. Some have even tried to fuse the two schools of thought together which is a noble task, but for many people, this effort can make the water even muddier, as you try to mesh two very complex models. (See my blog "THE GREAT DEBATE" for more on this.)

In a nutshell, the cognitive guys believe intrinsic or "self-motivation" is the more powerful human motivator, while behaviorists focus on delivering extrinsic or external reinforcers (social and tangible) to increase behavior and drive performance.

Curiously enough, BF Skinner, the behaviorist legend, once said “Human thoughts are simply behaviors we haven’t learned to measure yet.” I kind of like that idea.

In my BSN keynote speech in Jacksonville, I offered the audience a challenge. Which type of reinforcer is most effective: internal or external?
And I believe that the answer is (drum roll please) . . .

Both.

I believe that the repair guy at the moment he helped me was being reinforced from his "heart" or self-reinforced for his good deed. He cared about my plight and was feeling the power of the statement, "It is better to give than to receive." In this mode of behavior, we humans are at our best. We are the firefighter rushing into the Twin Towers on 9/11. Or the soldier who covers the grenade with his body to save his comrades. A wise man once said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

So when my repair guy was operating in this mode of high self-reinforcement, my giving him $5 made him feel cheap, as if he was a hired servant. Thus, it was a punisher, not a positive reinforcer. It offended him and reduced our relationship to a mere transaction, something external.

The pen however, was a gift, a it became a symbol of our brief friendship, and it probably continues to reinforce my Repair Guy positively every time he uses it. It has "trophy value" unlike cash & gift cards, so that when people ask him where he got such a unique pen, he can relate his story about the "Incredible Shrinking Techno Guy With a Dead Battery In The Parking Lot".

The pen was readily accepted, and didn't conflict with his own internal reinforcement, but likely will be used a long time and as a reminder of my appreciation for his help.

But the game changes somewhat when people come to work for us and we pay them a salary for what they do.

Had the roadside assistance guy showed up before my repair guy, if he had jumped-off my car, and I tipped him $5, he would have been cool with it. Why? Because it was a little extra compensation for services rendered. The pen might have offended him, but I doubt the cash would have. Had I given nothing to the roadside assistance guy (no pen, no money) he would have probably muttered "Cheap jerk" under his breath. Verbal praise here would have fallen on the roadside assistance man’s deaf ears, because it would have seemed insincere and cheap.

Social reinforcers work well if and only if they are sincere, specific, and not seen as manipulative. That’s why training in giving feedback and verbal reinforcement is very important.
But in the relationship between employer/employee, sadly, many companies are making the same $5 mistake that I made with my repair guy.

Busy managers don't have time to find out what gift would be truly reinforcing for each one of their people. In the 80s, a supervisor had 10 people reporting to him; in today's downsized world, he might easily have to oversee 100.

How is that poor supervisor or steering committee going to know what reinforcers work for their people?

Answer: They don't and they can't. Even though that would be great, realistically there isn't enough time to know.

So what do most companies do? They succumb to the power of the Dark Side, the easy way out. They give people money or cash substitutes like gift cards.

Granted, rewarding your people with gift cards and money has advantages:

-It's easy.

-People can choose more things to get with their gift card/money.

-The CAVE (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) people stop whining—at least until they get their pay stub and see how much income tax was deducted. “You Call this a Gift????”

But rewarding with gift cards and money has these important disadvantages:

-Sometimes, it conflicts with the internal motivation or self-reinforcement that we want people to develop (as it with did my repair guy).

-People become "entitled" to the cash; they expect it and their behavior is driven totally by the money and not self-reinforcement.

-You lose well over 50 percent of your cash/gift card budget to income taxes and other hidden costs of gift cards.

-Dozens of studies show that non-cash reinforcer gifts have 3 to 6 times the impact of cash on behavior.

I have seen many companies fall into the trap of confusing compensation with recognition. They ultimately fail to get people to a higher level of behavior since they rely solely on carrot-and-stick approaches.
So what is the right rock to use to hit the mark with employees and ensure that we're delivering positive reinforcement?

1. Reinforcement and recognition must be linked to the behavior within seconds, not days or weeks.

2. Recognition should be specific and include both tangible and social reinforcement techniques. Don’t succumb to the Dark Side and reduce everything to a transaction due to lack of time or tools.

3. When it comes to the gift, make it a gift and make it fun, not an obligatory transaction. Make the act of giving the gift memorable. Provide each person a wide array of options to choose from so they can find something personally reinforcing to them. Use cash and cash substitutes as a last resort, or filter the choices so people won't just pay off their bills or buy a tank of gas with their award.

4. Make the award unexpected and a surprise! Again, make it fun.

5. Track everything down to each behavior reinforced when, why, and by whom.

6. Analyze, analyze, analyze your data to move the process to the next level.

Our new Genesis platform has been developed with these fundamentals in mind, and it provides busy managers with comprehensive tools to pinpoint and reinforce critical behaviors and results that drive bottom-line business improvements.

The proof in the pudding is a recent report from Horizon, our newest client, who have reported injury reductions of over 60 percent in a few months of operation of using both Smartcard and Genesis. (Please read their case history below.)

Well, that about wraps up this blog.

Oh wait, I forgot to tell you about Bob my BFF with OSHA. Bob says that OSHA has an SEP (code name for Special Emphasis Program) which means they are looking hard at incentive systems that reward lagging indicators and which drive injury hiding.

So, if you are using a system that rewards people for working days, weeks, months without reporting injuries, now would be a good time to rethink your strategy.
In this article Doug Hamilton, Bill Sims’ Strategic Partner in the UK, discusses differences in approaches towards Behaviour Based Safety (BBS).

It is generally accepted that around 80 - 85% of workplace ‘accidents’ are traceable to some specific human behaviour, either at the time of the accident or preceding it. Therefore, to achieve improvement, it is necessary to understand the root cause(s) of the unsafe behaviour taking place; and how that behaviour can be replaced by new, safe behaviour. Many organizations recognize behaviour as the strategic route to improvement. They have spent time and effort on improving systems and processes – rightly so – then see their safety performance ‘plateauing’. Addressing behavioural issues at this point forms the next crucial step towards continuous improvement.

There are several models available on the market place. However, any valid behavioural approach has to be based on the proven ABC (Antecedent – Behavior – Consequence) model. Other models which have the ‘behavioural’ label should be tested against this standard. The ABC model indicates that to change behaviour, one has to change the Consequences experienced after the behaviour takes place. It is often the case that existing unsafe behaviour either goes unnoticed, or in many cases, a personal ‘reward’ exists for the person when it does takes place.
So how do we change behaviour? – in order to implement a sustainable programme, there are several principles which have to be present. Typically, these involve the following elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Management and workforce come to terms with their existing safety culture, and what they need to do to improve it</th>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Training delivered to all levels of the workforce to raise awareness of the correct approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Baselining of existing safety performance in the organisation, and identifying the Key Safe Behaviours which go into improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>Cycle of observation, feedback, goal setting and continued improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>All levels of the organization recognise that the success of the programme rests with them, and change their own behaviour to deliver ongoing improvement</td>
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All of that sounds great, so why is it that feedback from the front line of some behavioural programmes reads like this (posted recently on our web site from a person who contacted us to seek our help in rejuvenating safety performance at his workplace):

“I am a believer in behaviour based safety. I have, however, never been a believer in the way it has ever been put forth by the so called professionals. Why? Well the few reasons below come from much thought and 30+ years of experience.

- The so-called “observations” by rank and file employees are basically viewed as a means of “ratting-out” each other, and this undermines employee harmony
- It tends to encourage employees to look for things to write up.
- It encourages “pencil whipping” as you eluded to.
- Often safety programmes are little more than a bunch of rules
- The sad thing is that this behaviour-based safety involvement is “coerced” employee involvement which I am thoroughly opposed to. But, at least in the short term it works. And since most companies think in the short-term and really don’t care about their employees beyond what they can get out of them in the short-term, it’s what they push”.

Ouch!... The saddest part about this feedback is that the person says he believes in the principle of BBS – but obviously not the practice. Where did it go wrong?

The Oxygen of any BBS programme lies in ‘Positive Reinforcement’ of the right behaviour. (The term ‘Positive Reinforcement’ is normally shortened to ‘R+’) Any programme which does not have this element is relying on ‘Negative Reinforcement’, where the people being expected to behave safely are doing so, because they feel they are under threat of punishment if they don’t. And any behavioural scientist will tell you that Negative Reinforcement will never deliver a high performance on the behaviour you want. So, if you
want more safe behaviour, start delivering some R+ when it takes place. And the sooner the R+ is delivered after the behavior, the better; this has the greatest impact. Sadly, some so called ‘behavioural’ programmes fail to address this need for R+ at all.

Some suppliers of behavioural programmes will smile benignly at this point, and say that their programme delivers R+. How, exactly? They will list things like:

- Employees will feel safer
- They get verbal feedback on their safe behaviour
- They get some constructive feedback on how to behave more safely
- They feel that someone is looking out for them
- They feel they can start looking out for others

These are worthy, and noble, forms of R+. And in the long run, they may well form part of the organisational norms. But did our person providing feedback in the example above, experience these forms of R+, or indicate that any of his colleagues did? Believing that this will work from day one, is akin to believing that drivers will welcome a new speed limit enforced by multiple police patrols. The drivers will be safer, won’t they? And if they do transgress, they have that policeman to give them some feedback on how to drive slower – as well as threaten them, with a loss of their licence. The trouble is that if you want the safe behaviour, it’s a lot easier to negatively reinforce it, by sending out the policemen, than think about delivering R+ for the safe behaviour of driving within the speed limit.

Now have a think about your workplace. What positive reinforcement can you deliver for safe behaviour? Even the so-called ‘positive reinforcement’ of verbal feedback on safe behaviours, is often received as patronising, condescending and demeaning – especially where it exists outside of a meaningful business relationship between worker and manager / supervisor.

If you were to ask your staff what they want, they would probably respond ‘cash’. Apart from the moral argument against this, we would argue that your money is better spent delivering tangible reinforcement (rewards in the form of gifts selected by your staff). There are studies which demonstrate that a tangible reward has up to six times more impact than cash in affecting performance. Of course, you will still need to use negative reinforcement from time to time. In fact, studies have shown that the best performing environments are where the ratio of positive / negative reinforcement is about 4 / 1. But don’t expect high performance on a particular behaviour, if all you use is negative reinforcement in an attempt to get it.

It was for this purpose that Bill Sims developed Smartcard™, a recognition and reward system which equips all levels of staff in the organisation with the ability to spot and reinforce the correct behaviours for safety. The use of Smartcard™ is wedded to an experienced and flexible behavioural consulting approach, to give you a complete behavioural change solution with the following features:
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Workplace assessment to understand existing issues, and develop a bespoke programme for you

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Training on how to deliver positive and negative reinforcement, including use of Smartcard, to all levels of staff

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Enabling Smartcard to be used for reinforcement of management and supervisory behaviours as well as at workforce level

Smartcard™ has been used in many situations to improve specific behaviours on a sustainable basis. For more details, please visit [www.8006901860.com](http://www.8006901860.com) or contact Doug Hamilton on [dhamilton@concentris.co.uk](mailto:dhamilton@concentris.co.uk)

**Doug Hamilton** trained as a Mechanical Engineer, spending over 20 years in Engineering and Project / Business Management roles, before specialising in Behavioural change programmes. He has pioneered new methods of implementing behavioural safety on construction projects, delivering improvement in safety performance as a result. He has consulted with Bechtel, Mace, Galliford, Carillion and Scottish Water amongst others.

**Bill Sims, Jr.,** is President of The Bill Sims Company, Inc. For more than 40 years, the Bill Sims Company has created behavior based recognition programmes that have helped large and small firms to inspire better performance from employees and increase bottom line profits. Bill's experience includes having built more than 1,000 recognition programmes. The firms which have benefitted from consulting with Bill, include Dupont, Siemens VDO, Coca-Cola, and Ford, to name a few.
Dupont are well known in the safety world for their STOP behavioural safety process.

At the core of the process is a series of observations, where the observer looks for safe behaviour in the working patterns of the people he is observing. The observer then offers feedback to the person being observed on safe and unsafe behaviour. The theory is that new attitudes towards safety will be developed in the long term, as a result of the observation and feedback process.

Whilst this undoubtedly will generate a change in behaviour – and therefore can be viewed as a success in its aims – STOP’s main flaw is that it relies principally on negative reinforcement to change behaviour. Behavioral scientists will attest to the fact that negative reinforcement will not create and sustain a high performing environment.

The Dupont facility in Kinston, North Carolina, was a facility where the existing observation process was in need of re-vitalizing. The use of a specific incentive program designed by Bill Sims was introduced, to offer a more positive style of reinforcement for safe behavior. The program ran for a period of three years, until the facility was sold to another company. During that time, there was a peak workforce of around 3500 staff on site. Lost time injuries were reduced to zero for almost three years.

This was only one of the many Dupont sites where Bill Sims Company has worked over the past 25 years. The reinforcement solutions have not all been based around Smartcard, but have all worked on the premise of positive reinforcement for safe behavior, using tangible rewards.

Louis Barrow, who was the Responsible Care Manager for Safety / Health / Environment at the site, comments:

“This is to confirm that I was the Responsible Care Manager (Safety / Health / Environmental) at the Kinston, North Carolina site for Dupont. This was part of the Textile Fibres Department, employing c.3500 people, at one time. We were able to set records for DuPont, and the Kinston site, by using the incentive programs from Bill Sims; in fact we were able to reduce all lost time injuries to zero for almost three years. We found individual and group recognitions / incentives as the best program our people were willing to support, and the operations personnel to buy into.
I will be honored to talk with your prospective clients about what we did.”

Louis is now retired from Dupont, but can be contacted on llbarrow@embarqmail.com
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Stupid Workers

When can we fire our stupid workers?
By Bill Sims Jr.

"We are trying to reduce the stupid accidents that occur because employees are in a hurry, or they don't follow the safety standards."

"Every time we have an accident, I get an email from my president asking if we can fire the injured employee. In their book, it's always the employee's fault..."

"I have the dumbest employees in the world! One of my guys reached into a conveyor belt without shutting it down . . . a deliberate violation of our safety rules! He almost got his arm ripped off. Boy was he dumb!"

These are just a handful of the candid comments that a few safety people have made when I chat with them. The last one came from an ASSE meeting where the safety manager lamented people who are so "stupid" that they break obvious safety rules.

I told that safety director that his people aren't dumb. And while the worker with the missing arm won't make the mistake again of reaching into the conveyor belt, others will make that mistake before long.

"Why do you say that?" he asked me.

Because your system has created very powerful reasons for people to break safety rules.

Any time we do something, we are getting positively reinforced for it someway, somehow.

I eat a donut—it tastes great, so I eat another one.

I press the gas pedal, my car goes faster, and I get to where I need to be sooner.

"When your employee violated your safety rules and unjammed the conveyor without locking it out, he was getting something positive back. He was being positively reinforced for that behavior . . . can you tell me how?" I asked the safety director.

"Hmmm . . . well, he was saving time."

And with this Aha! Moment, together, we began to unravel the behavior of the "stupid" worker.

You see, by saving time, the worker got more work done. And when he got more work done, he made more money. And his supervisor got a production bonus too. So guess who bought the beer that night? Now that's positive reinforcement.
Sad to say, without knowing it, the managers had created positive reinforcement for breaking safety rules. They were to blame for the injured worker.

These unknown positive consequences continue to make people do things that are “crazy,” for example:

Some people diagnosed with lung cancer keep smoking . . . the positive and immediate consequences of the nicotine reinforce their “stupid” behavior.

Some people drive cars while reading email on their computers.

Most people who are injured are in fact not stupid or crazy. They are simply reacting to the world they live in and performing their work in a way that will lead to a maximum amount of positive reinforcement with a belief that they have almost no chance of experiencing a negative reinforcer or accident. This is human nature.

The challenge for safety people, and in fact for all managers who need to achieve behavior change is to create more positive consequences for the desired safety behaviors and remove the positive consequences for the wrong behaviors.

But how do we do this? Is it another picnic? A Company party? A gift card for everyone because the team met its goals?

If only it were that simple.

NOT ANOTHER PICNIC: ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL...

“We do great job at employee recognition” said the Human Resource Manager of a large hospital.

“That’s good to know” I said. “How do you go about recognizing great performers?”

“Well, we do a quarterly picnic and select the Employee of the Quarter for each department. Then there’s our Christmas party where we choose an Employee of the Year,” she replied.

“How is that working for you? Have you positively impacted your employee and patient satisfaction numbers? Can you measure and quantify your employee engagement? Did your system really change anybody’s behavior?”

She stared back at me in silence. I figured this meeting was over.

Oops, I think I did it again. (You’re not the only one Britney.) I felt kind of bad for being too direct. It looked like my honesty had gotten me in trouble.

In my next column we’ll explore one-size-fits-all recognition and why it does more harm than good.

Stay tuned!
Not Another Picnic!

When it comes to Recognition, one size does NOT fit all . . .

By Bill Sims Jr.

From over the Persian Gulf en route to a client in the Middle East . . .

“We do a great job at employee recognition” said the Human Resource Manager of a large hospital.

“That’s good to know,” I said. “How do you go about recognizing great performers?”

“Well, we do a quarterly picnic and select the Employee of the Quarter for each department. Then there’s our Christmas party where we choose an Employee of the Year,” she replied.

“How is that working for you? Have you positively impacted your employee and patient satisfaction numbers? Can you measure and quantify your employee engagement? Did your system really change anybody’s behavior?”

She stared back at me in silence. Apparently I had hit a nerve. I had a pretty good idea that this meeting was over.

Oops, I think I did it again. (You’re not the only one Britney.) I felt kind of bad for being too direct. It looked like my honesty had gotten me in trouble.

In my last column I promised to talk about one-size-fits-all recognition and why it does more harm than good.

I think we’re all familiar with Rose’s story which I tell in the Green Beans & Ice Cream workshop in Athens, Greece. In case you haven’t heard the story, check it out at www.greenbeansandicecream.com.

In short, it goes like this: Rose, who works for the top luxury hotel firm in the world, was helping me with a survey of their employees. I asked her how many times she’d been positively reinforced for something done well during her three years of employment at the hotel. Her eyes narrowed as she tried to remember.

“Only once . . . I was voted . . . Best Customer Service of the Spa.”

“Why?” I asked.

“I don’t know!” she lamented. “They never told me. Maybe it was a survey or something? But the worst part was how they surprised me in front of my peers and told them I was the best, and they weren’t. Now, two of those ladies won’t speak to me. It was, the worst day of my life!” said Rose.
To fully understand the pain this caused both Rose and her co-workers, consider this scenario:

I have two daughters: Carli and Daphne. What if I pop in one day from a business trip, line them up, and say, “Hey Carli, give Daphne a hand, ‘cause she’s Daughter of the Month, and you’re not.”

How’s that going to go over?

Not well.

Anytime we set up one employee to win at the expense of everyone else, we have given our workplace culture a suicide pill. Competition is what we do in the marketplace, not what we do with our co-workers. Our team rises and falls based on the teams’ achievements.

Many managers have seen the folly of the “... of the Month” genre, and so they’ve swung the positive reinforcement (R+) pendulum 180 degrees to the opposite extreme: **ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL R+**

Too bad they pass that valuable option right in the middle called *behavior-based recognition.*

(By the way, R+ is just behavioral jargon for positive feedback, reinforcement, recognition, awards, and so on. It’s R+ if it increases the behavior that precedes it, and if the employee likes it.)

So, our well-meaning managers have launched into a series of picnics, barbecues, T-shirt giveaways, and endless other celebrations to commemorate safety, sales, quality, and other milestones. In these systems, usually a lagging indicator (result) is rewarded, and in the case of safety those results may have been achieved with unsafe behaviors and the suppression of injury and incident reporting.

This Pandora’s Box of bad habits is one reason that the behavioral community often argues against incentive systems.

“Hey, the one-size-fits-all method is at least better than Employee Of The Month!” says the hospital manager.

But is it really?

Not in my book.

Here’s why:

As I’ve traveled the world speaking, I’ve used CAVE People to explain why one size does NOT fit all, because everywhere I’ve been, every manager has employees who are CAVE People.
What's a CAVE person?

My good friend Kenny Sawyer says they are….

“C.itizens A.gainst V.irtually E.verything”

Do you have any CAVE people at your company? I bet you do. They whine and complain. They sleep through training meetings. They break the safety rules and drag down your team. They insult your clients and bring your customer satisfaction scores down. Studies show over 15 percent of employees fall into this category. Some put that percentage even higher.

Thank goodness you also have people who are hard workers . . . those above-and-beyond people who value delivering a safe, quality product or customer experience.

The trouble is, as my friend Leo Inghilleri says, less than 2 percent of the workforce are self-motivated, high performers. And the only problem with these workers is that they think everyone else is as motivated as they are, or at least they should be.

All of this means that about 80 percent of your employees fall in that no-man’s land of being just average performers. They are the “invisible men (and women)” when it comes time to measure what they did to make a difference.

Now, given this cross section of the average workforce—the above-and-beyond workers, the CAVE people, and the invisible men (and women)—what have we done in our infinite wisdom and intelligence for some 50 years?

We’ve used that tried and true ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL method of recognition, like this:

“Err, excuse me folks . . . we would like to recognize your performance for this past quarter.

Now, I know that 10 of you above-and-beyond workers have burned the midnight oil to help our company meet its goals, while 10 of you CAVE people have slept through every training meeting, broken every safety rule, and missed every deadline. Lastly, let’s not forget our 80 invisible men (and women) who show up here day after day and accomplish ZERO of the company’s objectives.”

Now the manager holds a $100 bill over his head and announces, “So, in honor of your department’s efforts, here’s a $100 bonus for everyone, and we’re going to have a picnic this Saturday plus you get a free T-Shirt if you show up.”

Wait a second!

If you adopt this one-size-fits-all method, did you just positively or negatively reinforce your 10 best workers? (Hint: the answer starts with N.)
How bout the CAVE people? Did you give them positive reinforcement? Yep, you sure did. You effectively said: “Hey go out and break more safety rules, sleep through more training, and do what you’ve been doing some more. This money tells you it’s okay in our culture to do just that.”

And your 80 invisible men and women will at best remain invisible because “It doesn’t do any good to work hard around here. Nobody will notice anyway. Look at those poor above-and-beyond guys. They’re suckers.”

The folly of one-size-fits-all recognition seems clear.

Yet, it happens day-in, day-out, at millions of companies around the world in the form of picnics, profit sharing, gain sharing, goal sharing, and the like. These plans sound great in the CEO’s office, but they’re awful when we see them at work on the front lines.

Do these initiatives change behavior?

No.

Do they improve performance?

No. (How can they? You’re rewarding something that happened in your rearview mirror.)

So, my advice to anyone doing “. . . of the Month” or one-size-fits-all R+ is to just kill those programs. You’re better off doing nothing.

Next, develop a system for reinforcing the right behaviors to drive the results you need. I presented the visual below at the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in Scotland. I think it sums up what I’m trying to say pretty well. What do you think?
Focus on Behavior to achieve Results

In my next article, I want to explore other sources of R+ that are often underutilized—namely peers, customers, and family. I'd like you to meet my friend Ollie, a wonderful lady in Ireland, and hear about Mr. Beckett’s “Fair, Shiny, Silver Plaque” and how it touches her heart to this day.

So, keep an eye out for my Summer Blog, “Mr. Beckett’s Fair, Shiny, Silver Plaque” which I hope to have to you in the next couple of months. Gotta go now. Lots of sand dunes to cross. Take care. —B

Want to know more? Please call us in the USA at 803 600 8325 or SKYPE: billsimsjr

email:bill.sims@billsims.net  Web site: www.billsims.com

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BBS On Life Support: What to do when it fails...

by Jerry Pounds, Bill Sims Consultant

In the last 15 years thousands of Behavior-Based Safety (BBS) processes have been implemented worldwide. BBS is the most commonly used process to obtain order of magnitude improvements in injury reduction. It is participative, preventive, and positive; it is the Six Sigma – the TQM for safety. Its core components are so powerful that it is hard to imagine how you can implement it and not get great results.

I’ve been selling BBS systems for 10 years, and I don’t have an agenda relative to methodology; I just want happy clients. So I listen when the people I talk to are
ARTICLES AND INSIGHTS FROM THE BILL SIMS COMPANY

frustrated; the companies who have attempted to implement BBS and the process foundered and stalled. Or, they are 5 years into a process that everyone has lost interest in and they want to talk about a “booster,” or something to “give us a shot in the arm.”

Amazingly, most people who have a failed system don’t have a clue why it isn’t working. Often, they will bring in another BBS provider (consulting company), in hopes that a new approach with new language will “work.” The employees get cynical, because the new process requires changes that don’t seem to make a difference. The average front line employee sees similar systems with different buzzwords; and they are right.

What went wrong? Why are there so many dissatisfied BBS clients, abandoned systems, bastardized hybrids, and home grown catastrophes? I can think of a few reasons, but I’m not going to pull out the worn-out “maybe you were not ready,” cliché. Most companies have decent safety management systems, and most companies are ready for “the right BBS process.”

Failures and lukewarm BBS systems all have a few common roots:

1. **You Did Not Do Your Homework** – there are several legitimate BBS providers, but there are also a lot of pseudo-BBS providers. Just because a company is large and has a big market presence does not mean they can implement a good BBS process. They just know how to sell and they let their brand do the talking for them.

   Similarly, just because some guy went through several site implementations at the company where he used to work does not make him a good consultant, or someone who is qualified to advise other companies. When I say do your homework, I mean learn something about the core principles of BBS and compare that to the potential provider’s process.

   Does the provider actually know anything about behavioral science – the research-based principles of human behavior? Are their consultants knowledgeable about the science of behavior-change, or are they safety professionals that have seen a lot of BBS? You might think that doesn’t matter, but when you discover that your employees are still taking risks and your supervisors are still favoring productivity and their paperwork over safety it’s good to have someone to ask…why?
2. **You Got an Off-the-Shelf BBS System Instead of a Customized Process** – the large BBS providers have standardized processes. Most of the time their consultants have been thoroughly trained in using a specific methodology accompanied by specific tools and printed material. The company usually has a book written by an authority that establishes their credibility.

When you have lots of pre-printed material, copyrights, trademarks, and patents, you have inflexibility. They can’t change their process to accommodate the nuances of your company, culture, or operation. They tend to force-fit the exigencies of your safety management system into pre-packaged assumptions and solutions. They can not do something differently – even if they know it works better – if it contradicts something that has been published in their sacred text…the book that established their credibility in the first place.

3. **No Pickles, No Lettuce – Special Orders Do Upset Us** – You bought the big name and now they own you. Everybody in your industry knows that you use “X” company as your BBS provider. You have added a new appendage to your safety management system; “X’s” BBS process. It has so much notoriety, that your own safety process has lost its identity. It’s like marrying a movie star; you lose your identity – you’ve become Mr. or Mrs. Celebrity.

What you really needed was a customized process; you needed a knowledgeable, experienced BBS consultant to help you integrate the key BBS components into your existing safety management system. You should have a personalized system – adapted to your nation, region, industry, site, and work group functions. You needed input; an opportunity to learn the basics and make some of the decisions about how, when, and what.

But, the big provider used their clout to shout you down. They’ve done this dozens (even hundreds) of times before and you have to do it they way they want. There is only one way; their way. It is only later…many dollars later that you become aware that you could have screwed up for a lot less money if you had done it yourself.
But now it’s too late; they have you encircled by their lawyers. You can’t do this or that without their approval; if you do, you may be stealing their proprietary material or pirating their intellectual capital. If you want to use another provider in another plant, the big players may have to give you their permission.

4. **You Bought Complexity Instead of Basic Tools** – yeah, but all that detail looked so inviting. All that stuff. It was impressive; there were so many training meetings, team meetings, tools, books, continuing education classes, annual conferences, software upgrades – it was overwhelmingly. You think, it must be good, because it takes so much time.

Nobody told you (even though your intuition should have) that complex and expensive does not equal effective. Everybody thinks, “It’s just me; I think this is all too complex because I’m not smart enough to grasp it all.” You thought you were allergic to something when your eyes began to water while they were explaining the data software.

No, your intuition was on the money. Just because you don’t understand it doesn’t mean you are simple. It may have too many pieces because it favors the providers selling process or their sales price. A BBS process can be implemented for 1/4th of the cost that some of the bigger providers charge.

5. **Your Leaders Are Not Involved** – I don’t mean they just wrote a check. I mean they are out doing observations, talking to frontline employees about BBS, attending Safety Committee meetings, and asking questions about progress and participation.

Leadership involvement needs to be tracked, measured; it needs to be public and they need to be accountability. The best BBS implementations have obsessed leadership; they talk the talk and walk the walk. They won’t let it fail because it is number one on their values list.

Leadership involvement communicates that the company cares about the well-being of their employees. It lets the public know that the organization has a heart. Customers like companies with a heart – with compassion, caring and respect for their employees.
Each leader needs to have a self-developed, self-managed checklist of specific support behaviors that they use to track themselves against – with goals and public transparency. Leaders need to meet and talk about their individual scores…and hold themselves accountable for doing the things that will make safety and your BBS process the key value in the company.

6. **You Did Not Know When to Ask for Help** – your gut tells you that the BBS process is not working. Employees are not enthusiastic – not even involved. Meetings are not being held – observation sheets are being pencil whipped. You don’t trust the data. Your process is dying; atrophy is obvious but you keep looking for a quick fix.

What you need to do is find an experienced free-lance or small group of credentialed BBS implementers and pay one of them to come in for a day and take a look around; talk to them and let them talk to the employees. There is no substitute for third party objectivity. There are plenty of experienced BBS consultants who have implemented dozens of BBS processes who are willing to spend a few days with you to give you some guidance.

Allowing your employees to meet with a BBS consultant and do some course correction and problem solving can energize them. It allows them to make changes their experience has identified – to make improvements that will customize the process to the work, the company, and the culture.

7. **You Don’t Know How to Deliver Effective Feedback, Recognition, and Celebrate Success**

What leadership attend to, what they talk about positively, and what they reward becomes the key values in an organization. Most supervisors don’t know how to interact with employees in a way that energizes critical behaviors – that helps performers identify value added behavior and change behavior that is not working.

Providing positive feedback during observations is critical to behavior change. Recognizing the people who are doing observations, and celebrating the up and down stream data improvements is important to creating energy and enthusiasm. Employees need to know that their behavior makes a difference. In some companies BBS involvement is a condition of employment.
Human behavior is determined by consequences; what pays off for you or what does not determines what you are going to do on the job. If your BBS system has not incorporated the basic principles of behavioral technology – of behavior change, then you are unlikely to be successful at evolving and maintaining your BBS process over the long haul. Celebrating and rewarding safe behavior is essential.

Want to know more? Please call us in the USA at 803 600 8325 or SKYPE: billsimsjr

email:bill.sims@billsims.net   website: www.billsims.com

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May I have the Darts & Blindfold Please?

November 5, 2008 | By Bill Sims Jr.
Bill.sims@billsims.net |

“I’m trapped in a self-perpetuating nightmare Bill.”

So began my chat with a safety manager of a Fortune 1000 company. His boss had directed him to implement a safety bingo program. Against his better judgment, he did.

“At first, the program cut our injuries, but then we had a lost time injury (LTI), and the game ended. Then the injuries came out of the woodwork. 4 LTI’s in one week. If that’s not a sign we have injury hiding, what is? To make matters worse, I’m worried that we are sending a message to our employees that staying safe is a result of chance, or being “lucky”—while I know that safety results from a pursuit of safe behavior.”

This manager went on to lament the problems with the bingo concept. For those of you who don’t understand the game, it works like this:

- Every day without an injury, a number is pulled and posted by the employee time clock. A bingo jackpot is established with money or some other prize that increases each day no injury is reported (translation: hide injuries and the award prize gets bigger for all of us)

- Employees are given a bingo card with a series of random 2 digit numbers and if they get a match they scratch out the number on their card.

- Achieving 5 numbers in a straight line means that employee can bring the card in to claim the jackpot prize.

There are countless variations of this system that circulate—safety poker, jackpot, in house drawing programs, and the like.

Why do these incentive approaches work at initially and then quickly fizzle out?

First, let’s explore what these approaches have going for them:

- They provide feedback to tell the group how the safety record is doing

- They provide a reward or positive consequence for improving performance

- They provide novelty or something “new” a known factor in human behavior.
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These elements help to ensure some early impact. And for many companies, these programs are their first foray into the world of incentives. They are often companies who experience many “Monday Morning Injuries” (workers who milk the work comp system to get a few days off from work with pay). Creating a system where peer pressure causes co-workers to look down on those who lose the team’s safety bonus is a highly effective way to eliminate the Monday Morning Injury. Not a few safety managers have had employees approach them to report a co-worker who is faking an injury. The bad apples are thus weeded out. And the safety record “improves” or so it may seem.

Soon, however, the “low hanging fruit” of Monday Morning Injuries disappears, and the company is left with an environment where the remaining injuries are not a result of questionable worker behavior, but are caused instead by unsafe conditions & behaviors. And these injuries are often hidden due to the peer pressure mentioned above, instead of being reported so that they can be prevented in the future.

But all the old school senior managers remember is how they dropped those injuries so much with their first “incentive fix”.

“You won’t believe what they’ll do for a ball cap!” says the vintage 80’s manager. (sigh…)

Another problem with games of chance is that one person wins, while everyone else (or almost everyone else) loses. Due to this being an uncertain consequence, you inevitably will see a lack of interest in playing “the game”. You will begin to see Scratch off cards in the trashcan and Bingo cards on the floor.

One of my good friends Jerry Howell had a young female employee start to cry when she failed to win the “safety prize”. In a desperate attempt to assure her the game wasn’t “rigged” he went through 1800 names in the hat and told her that if her name wasn’t in the bunch, he would personally give her $50.

Next, the disenchanted safety director announces the Bingo game is canceled…only to be met by a howl of protest from the CAVE people (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) who have been picking up the discarded scratch offs and bingo cards from the trashcan to line their own pockets. Frequently, these vocal few make so much noise that the game gets reinstated, although it has zero impact on behavior.

“Bill, I swear, I could have a bigger impact on our safety performance if my boss would just blindfold me and let me throw a dart into a group of my employees, but what can I do?”

And so my conversation with this safety director ended. I hope that someday he can convince his boss to leave behind the games of chance and lagging indicator rewards. But just in case he can’t, keep an eye out for a blindfolded guy throwing darts. You might have your own near miss or worse….we wouldn’t want you to lose your ball cap now would we?

Did you like this article? Please share it with 2 friends and request my free workshop DVD: “Green Beans & Ice Cream: The Recipe for Behavior Change by visiting www.greenbeansandicecream.com today.

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When Behavior Based Safety Fails: Beef Stew and the Verbal Eraser

August 27, 2008 | By Bill Sims Jr.
Bill.sims@billsims.net |

When I was in Saudi Arabia recently, I asked how many of the 400 managers I spoke with were using a behavioral process. Over 90% said that yes they were, in fact using one of the original systems developed by one of the largest safety consulting firms some 20+ years ago.

My next question: “Would you say that the feedback you give employees when you do observations is mostly POSITIVE or mostly NEGATIVE?”

1 hand went up saying that the feedback was mostly positive.

399 went up to say that they mostly gave negative feedback.

This was a startling discovery for me!

One of the safety managers at the conference told me more. “Bill, we get so tired of giving negative feedback to employees that we begin dreading doing observations. In fact, management has had to give us observation quotas to meet, and threaten us with discipline. But I still have the last laugh,” he said, “I just pencil whip the cards and fake the observations.”

I wondered how common this problem is. Observers who see little or no value in the observation process and who either fake the observations or don’t do them at all.

So I did some informal research, asking safety managers here in the USA if they were seeing negative reinforcement & pencil whipping in the world of safety observation. The sad answer was “yes.”

Why is this?

I believe it is because of a fatal flaw in the design of some of the behavioral processes most widely used today. Here is how they suggest we go about doing an observation…

First, you should approach the employee and deliver positive reinforcement (called R+ in the language of behaviorism), and positively reinforce their safe behavior. Then, we deliver negative reinforcement to point out the employee’s at risk behaviors.

Sounds good right?
And, properly delivered it is.

But all too often it doesn’t go down that way. The attempt to reinforce someone totally flops. Why?

I think the answer lies in Beef Stew.

You see, when I first got married to my dear wife from south Georgia I told her how much I loved Beef Stew. Mom’s beef stew was my special favorite.

And what did Margie do? She worked the whole day to surprise me with Beef Stew for dinner one evening. After the second helping I sat back, relaxed and said (in my infinite wisdom),

“Dear, that was delicious beef stew…."

(this would have been an ideal time to shut up, but oh no, not me…)

“and thanks for your hard work on it today”

“BUT, it would be better if you would use mom’s recipe.”

Ouch. Oops. Ouch again. (In classical conditioning terms, my comment paired my with negative feeling for my wife, so I became an aversive stimulus—which over time, if repeated would create avoidance behavior from my wife.)

To this day I am still amazed that I didn’t wind up wearing that Beef Stew on my new suit.

After some time Margie settled down enough for me to say how sorry I was and we patched it up.

That little lesson of 22 years ago has always stuck with me, and I think it helps us understand an important Achilles heel of a poorly delivered any observation process: The Verbal Eraser—“But”

As Aubrey Daniels puts it, in Bringing out the Best in People, when we use the word, “But” we erase anything we have said before it.

“You did a nice job on that report Sue, BUT, you should have tried harder.”

I came back from a recent speaking engagement where I scored 4.8 out of 5 (pretty good in most people’s book), but as I read through the speaker evaluations I felt myself feeling depressed and discouraged by the 3 negative comments and I totally ignored the 422 who ranked our session favorably.

I had to go read some of the positive ones to get centered again.
In the Beef Stew example, I thought I gave Margie R+ but guess again, all she heard was “mom’s beef stew is better”.

And in the case of poorly delivered BBS observation feedback all the employees take away is “what I did was wrong.”

But negative reinforcement isn’t as powerful long term as positive reinforcement. Telling me what I did right.

Our, ‘You Did It Right!’ card fixes this.

You can be sure that positive reinforcement happens and eliminate the pencil whipping.

This is precisely the idea behind our You Did It Right! Card. Observers now add a second step that of delivering positive reinforcement and feedback while we track and validate where it occurs and ensure there is no pencil whipping or favoritism.

Wish I’d have had a You Did It Right! card 22 years ago to give Margie.

I guess I better head to the jewelry store… 😊

bill sims

Did you like this article? Please share it with 2 friends and request my free workshop DVD: “Green Beans & Ice Cream: The Recipe for Behavior Change by visiting www.greenbeansandicecream.com today. Thanks!
The Great Motivational Debate

I’d just finished my workshop at the national meeting of the American Society of Safety Engineers. After my presentation, I was approached by a senior consultant with one of the biggest behavioral consulting firms; he immediately hit me with a really heavy behavioral question....

"Aren't you worried about robbing people of their intrinsic motivation by giving them gifts like IPODS and other tangible reinforcers?" he asked, smiling slightly.

"What about the jobs where there are NO intrinsic reinforcers?" I responded. He stared back at me, puzzled.

For instance, what if I work at a theme park and the desired job behavior is for me to smile and make eye contact with guests, or voluntarily help co-workers (a core trait of engaged employees). I do this for awhile, but my supervisor never says "Thanks," or notices my extra effort. What happens to INTRINSIC motivation then?

The consultant’s theory of employee motivation had sadly met the real world of business—whether he liked it or not. The world of work positively and negatively reinforces us 24x7. How much intrinsic reinforcement can you feel when your good work is ignored?

I Search for Answers

I felt like I held my own in this discussion, but it deepened my curiosity about the reason psychologists and consultants had disagreements about the way employees respond to extrinsic reinforcement. I asked my friends in the behavioral world to help me understand this controversy.

They told me to read a book by Alfie Kohn, who I learned is kind of like Darth Vader to Behaviorists....he feels that intrinsic human motivation is where the rubber hits the road; he takes a bunch of intellectual shots at BF Skinner and other behaviorists.

Cool! So, there's this whole great debate about why we do what we do. It seems that the battle between the Cognitive psychologists and the Behaviorists has raged for quite awhile. And ne'er the twain shall meet.

For those of you who want the short version of the Cognitive vs. Behaviorism Wars, here it goes...

Behaviorists, followers of BF Skinner, believe that everything we do is a result of what happens to us after we do it. I'm thirsty, so I open up my water bottle and take a sip. I can't see, so I turn the lights on.
They argue (rightfully so) that if the lights didn't come on (positive, immediate & certain consequences or PIC) then pretty soon I'd forget the light switch and carry a flashlight. And, they are right. The other neat thing about behaviorism is that we can directly observe, measure & quantify behaviors, because unlike thoughts, we can see them.

The behaviorists believe that extrinsic reinforcement is not only a good thing, but it is the best way to motivate people. If you want better performance and behavior change—you need to make sure the consequences are positive. They believe in extrinsic motivation.

**Now the Other View**

Cognitive psychologists believe that thinking plays a bigger role in why people behave. They talk about intrinsic motivation and recoil at the thought that human behavior is simply caused by consequences. What about expectations and goals?

Alfie Kohn, in his book, *Punished by Rewards*, pours out some very passionate arguments about how giving people praise, rewards and gifts really robs them of their ability to do their best. He says it takes away their intrinsic motivation.

He cites studies with school kids who earn pizza by reading books. True, the pizza incentive increased performance, but once you take it away, the kids have less desire to read than they did in the beginning. The study implies that kids will read more if you let them do it because they want to, not because you reward them. What if they don’t want to?

Alfie Kohn advocates the removal of verbal praise and rewards from schools, parenting and management.

I felt kind of like Luke Skywalker while reading Alfie’s book. ....I was really worried, and felt the pull of the Dark Side.

Could it be that we are really hurting ourselves by rewarding and reinforcing good behaviors?

**The Rewards of Rewarding**

Then I thought about my own career as a sales person (I noted that the cognitive studies chose school kids as their subjects, and steered a wide path around sales people.)

The sales incentive industry is like the green giant of the incentive world—billions of dollars are spent rewarding sales people with trips, iPods, golf clubs, and cash. Over the last 70 years, they have taught us a couple of interesting things....

Even when salespeople are compensated with money for every sale (a performance
bonus, commission, extrinsic reinforcer, etc.) they WILL STILL WORK HARDER AND SELL MORE WHEN AN ADDITIONAL INCENTIVE IS PRESENTED.

What about kids and pizza? I asked my other expert, my daughter Carli. "Remember how you could read books in elementary school to get pizza Carli?" I asked...

"Sure do, dad. It was fun."

"So did getting pizza make you want to read books less?"

"No, and you still owe me a pizza dad. (I had forgotten to cash in Carli’s pizza coupon, and so I guess I provided a really big NIC (negative, immediate, certain) experience for her."

So, did pizza make Carli less interested in reading? According to her, she felt stifled because the books that were on her reading list were boring. They didn’t resonate with her passion: horses.

Carli went on to say that if she could have read every horse book in the world and been rewarded for it, she would have.

Whether it's a Medal of Honor, Purple Heart, or Mary Kay's pink Cadillac awards, humans are hardwired to respond to tangible and social extrinsic reinforcement.

Why does the Bill Sims Company advocate the use of tangibles? Because people it makes people feel appreciated and their increased performance shows it.

If you found this article interesting, please share it with 2 friends and ask them to do the same. To learn more, watch my free Webinar at www.greenbeansandicecream.com
Injury Hiding-How do you stop it?

By Bill Sims Jr.

"I've inherited a safety incentive program that rewards people for lagging indicators and I'm worried there maybe injury hiding. How can I shift it to become behavior based?"

All too often, safety managers find themselves the unwilling inheritants of an old school safety incentive program based on trailing indicators. These programs reward employees to work a period of time without reporting injuries. While initially sometimes achieving dramatic injury reductions, these programs quickly deteriorate into a "self-perpetuating nightmare" as one safety manager put it.

The common problems associated with these programs are:

- hard to say if the incentive budget is really producing a return on investment
- injury hiding as employees cover things up so as not to interfere with the group winning the award prize
- a "band aid" approach to safety as opposed to ripping out the roots of accidents
- an "entitlement mentality" where employees feel that they should be paid more or somehow earn a bigger prizes based on the number of years they've been injury free.
- safety committees who spend more time picking out the next gift than figuring out the behaviors that should be rewarded and reinforced
- a focus on "what we will give as a prize" instead of "what behaviors will we reinforce?"
- employees who take safety seriously are rewarded at the same level as those who break safety rules and take chances--sending a message that management really only values the safety scores at the end of the year, not the behaviors that led to them.

These are only a handful of the problems associated with lagging indicator reward programs--for a full understanding please visit www.behaviorchangenow.com and view our free webinar.

So how do you drop lagging indicator rewards in favor of behavior based recognition(tm)?

Many companies just go "cold turkey". With a CEO's backing, the safety manager will simply end the trailing indicator rewards and get rid of the sacred cow.

Some companies choose to have no recognition in it's place (not a good idea), but others
work to design a more behavioral type reward program.

In this approach, the new standard becomes ZERO UNSAFE BEHAVIORS & CONDITIONS in place of the old target of ZERO INJURIES.

Raising the bar sets a new standard for organizations who have struggled year after year to attain Zero Injuries but often failed. Now, armed with a behavioral tool that helps them chart unsafe actions, near misses, safety improvement suggestions, they can focus on the upstream and in striving relentlessly for Zero Unsafe Behaviors they achieve Zero Injuries as a byproduct.

Sticking with Trailing indicator rewards will kill this upstream approach every time....in short folks, "what got you here, won't get you there." and it is time to take off the training wheels and move into a BBR solution.

So what are the dynamics of an effective behavior based recognition (tm) solution?

Training-No more spray & pray

New research shows that 95% of all training is forgotten within 2 weeks (some safety managers say it happens in less than 2 hours!).

Many companies fool themselves into thinking that having employees sign a log sheet stating they attended the training meeting is sufficient to say that training has occurred. They use a “spray and pray” approach to training where they spray their posters, newsletters and safety videos at employees and pray that people are paying attention...with no way to measure the impact of their training.

So, one of the most important places to link recognition is to employees who pay attention and learn what you want them to. A further, more forward thinking step is to recognize kids and spouses of employees for their buy in to your process.

Recognition, the Right Way.

One company decided to get rid of their old school lagging indicator programs and replace it with an in house behavior based solution. They purchased a supply of gifts, hired a full time employee to run their store, and printed up little “Safety Bucks“ which were given to supervisors to reward employees who "did something safe".

Over time, they noticed that only the supervisors and their favorite employees were receiving any gifts...the good 'ole boy system was the kiss of death for their program.

Positive recognition has to occur on the spot, immediate, and within 15 seconds of the behavior, according to Aubrey Daniels. This means that you have to create an on the spot reward/recognition solution that eliminates favoritism, and injury hiding....and you
ARTICLES AND INSIGHTS FROM THE BILL SIMS COMPANY

have to get supervisors to buy into it and use it.

We've posted a number of tips and strategies on how to do this at our Behavior Based Recognition webinar which is free and found at www.behaviorchangenow.com.

While the journey from lagging indicators to true behavior based recognition is not a piece of cake, the long term improvements to your safety process will be well worth the effort.

To learn more, visit www.greenbeansandicecream.com or email bill.sims@billsims.net

As president of the Bill Sims Company, Bill Sims, Jr. has developed employee recognition programs for over 1000 companies, including Disney, Dupont, Milliken and Coca-Cola. Bill is currently completing his first book – Green Beans & Ice Cream – The Definitive Recipe for Behavior Recognition.

The Rise of Behaviorism in the workplace...

Behavior Based Safety is both loved and hated. Hailed by some as the answer to all of our human challenges, it is feared by others as a way for "big brother" to control and humiliate the worker.

As is true of most things in life, neither of these extreme views are truly accurate. The answers are often a bit cloudy, and murky since so many consultants have slapped the "behavior based" wording on differing models.

I will attempt to bring some clarity to this discussion by offering the following thoughts.

1. Where did Behaviorism start anyway?

Long before anybody had the idea of applying behavioral techniques to the workforce, a gentleman named BF Skinner developed his theory of behaviorism. I may be wrong, but I sense a little discord in the halls of academic theory. One school of thinking says that the solution to all behavioral problems lies inside the mind. You can only change behavior by sorting through the murky waters of thought.

While that science has it's place, it is slow and time consuming (a good thing if you are just starting your psychology practice).

Behaviorists are sort of mavericks. They say that we don't have time for all that touchy feely stuff, instead, we should just focus on behaviors: which means what people say, and what they do.

I have to tell you that this appeals to me, being the kind of guy who wants to get more done as fast as I can. We continue to flip the light switch (the behavior) because the lights come on (the positive consequences).

We keep eating the donuts (behavior) because they taste good (the positive consequences). Now, of course, eating too many donuts brings about all kinds of negative consequences like obesity, diabetes, death etc. But that won't stop you nor me...
from cheerfully shoving those bad boys down. Pass the milk please.

So, if we understand that people do what they do most of the time because of the positive, immediate, certain consequences that happen to them, we can understand why they do what they do. As Aubrey Daniels puts it, "Human behavior is a function of the consequences that follow it."

2. Who got the bright idea to start applying this to safety?

In my humble opinion, the guy who figured this out first was Aubrey Daniels. I think he figured it out from the academic side. I think the first people who figured out that you could modify safety behavior were probably Dupont.

In the sixties, Dupont learned that you could offer employees a reward for hitting safety milestones such as money, a jacket, a new toaster etc. and that the immediate result was a drop in injuries. That behavior change, of course, was a good thing.

Only one problem, and that is that rewarding a group of people for hitting a safety milestone in about 1 out of 3 instances will also cause peer pressure that makes people afraid to report injuries. That behavior is of course, a bad thing.

This phenomenon was so common that it has a nickname: "the bloody pocket" syndrome. It is alive and well today.

Aubrey's early work was to apply the concepts of behaviorism to provide PICS (positive, immediate, certain consequences) to change the workers behavior from unsafe behavior like taking shortcuts to safer behavior like following safety rules.

You can't get struck by lightning if you stay inside during the thunderstorm. Pretty cool idea. It works.

Now, Dupont Stop came of age probably in the 70's or 80's, and it was a high profile program that many companies still use, although it has been replaced by better approaches from the likes of BST, Safety Performance Solutions, Safestart, Aubrey Daniels and about a zillion others.

3. Why does behavior based sometimes fail?

I think that every ad for a new behavior based safety process or program should carry a label "some assembly required".

That means, that there is no free lunch. Somebody has to open the box and put the pieces together. Here are some common reasons behavior based safety fails...

- They can be overly complex and time consuming to run
- Observations don't really include people intervening to help change behavior
- Pencil whipping (a common problem among older processes like Stop) wherein the observers just fake filling out the forms to meet a quota
- Too Much Negative Reinforcement (it's like Kryptonite to behavior change)
- Hardly any positive reinforcement (it's like steroids for behavior change)
ARTICLES AND INSIGHTS FROM THE BILL SIMS COMPANY

4. Why do some labor unions and workers dislike behavior based approaches?

A wise CEO once told my father, "People who get unions deserve them."

Unions arise because employees are mistreated, cheated, and negative reinforced for so long that enough is enough. You kick the dog long enough and he will bite you.

It's primarily a lack of communication and a serious lack of getting union buy in.

It's also a result of many "Barney Fife" observers nagging people with negative reinforcement. Watch Behavior Man destroyed by Kryptonite! For an example of their common concerns, see the concluding quotation from a popular labor union site.... www.semcosh.org

In the worse of these situations, the union leaders may begin to feel that their existence is threatened when management tries to change their behavior. Thus, the cycle continues and unions will be with us for a long long time.

The solution for this is probably to locate union operations where behavior based safety has thrived. Get these people into your shop to help break down the walls of miscommunication & mistrust. Focus on positive instead of negative reinforcement.

5. What's the big deal with "lagging" versus "leading" indicators?

We have a whole generation of managers who just need to retire. The worst thing has happened to them: They setup one reward/incentive program somewhere back in the 70's or 80's and injuries fell by 80%. Now, they faithfully continue paying people to hide injuries years later.

It's like a gambler who wins one time with the slot machine and then loses everything he owns trying to re-create that first win.

Come on guys, give it up. Incentives are dead. We buried them in 2006. See www.incentivesaredead.com to learn more. Rewarding people because their team worked XXX days or hours without reporting an injury only produces two behaviors:

1. Fraudulent or questionable work comp claims are eliminated as people decide it best not to hurt their buddies and
2. People who are legitimately hurt will often hide the injury and "take one for the team" (see www.greenbeansandicecream.com)

These lagging indicator reward programs don't change any behaviors beyond the ones above. And you have to change behavior to get safer.

6. Why you should forget shooting for "zero injuries"

OUR GOAL: Target Zero Injuries.

Forget it, you'll never get there. Shooting for zero injuries will leave you with a trickle of LTIs and recordables. Instead, shoot for zero unsafe behaviors!
Now there you have something. And raising the bar means you have to get upstream and become "behavior based" in your thinking.

Are the lights on yet?

To learn more, visit www.greenbeansandicecream.com or email bill.sims@billsims.net

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This workshop is packed with tips and strategies you can apply immediately. Don't miss this chance to get the latest research and results on behavior recognition and retention!
Rose works for one of the top luxury hotel firms in the world. The hotel’s reputation for service is legendary—and so was their approach to employee recognition, or so I thought, until I met Rose.

Doing a survey to assess the impact of recognition at work, I asked Rose, "So how many times have you been recognized in the three years you've worked here?"

"Once. I was selected as 'Best Customer Service' in the spa," said Rose.

"Awesome!" I said, "What did you do to earn that award?"

"I don't know, Mr. Sims . . . maybe it was a customer survey or something? They never told me. But the worst part for me is that they surprised me in front of all my co-workers and told them that I was the best. Now, two of the ladies won't speak with me anymore. I wish I had never won the award."

Sound familiar?

Rose's story illustrates a common problem that plagues employee recognition efforts like Employee of the Month. I like to call that problem . . .

"WHY THEM? WHY NOT ME?"

In 1959, Dr. Herzberg discovered that recognition and achievement were the top two job satisfiers. Money came in at number six. "Big deal", you say. "I already know that."

What you may not know, however, is that the top two “dissatisfiers” were money and perceived favoritism by the manager.

So, by creating an environment where employees feel that management plays favorites, you create a big group of unhappy employees who are ready to leave.
Perhaps almost as bad Rose's dilemma is the one from Martha, a customer service manager at a large trucking firm. Her 350 customer service agents had their phone conversations reviewed by the Board of Directors.

"Martha, you and your team aren't 'wowing' our customers. You need to come up with a recognition or reward program to turn that around!" said the president.

Martha asked her president to define the behaviors that would create the "Wow!" experience. "We'll get back to you on that," her boss replied.

Martha never heard from him again. Clearly, an obtuse, vague approach to recognition creates confusion and frustration from employees who aren't picked. New approaches like Behavior-Based Recognition fix this problem and problems like those that Rose experienced.

I once heard a talent management presentation from a company with 36,000 employees . . . and only 343 people were eligible. If only 343 people of 36,000 are worth developing as "talent" then there must be an awful lot of unworthy, untalented people doing the work.

You can view the session we present on Behavior-Based Recognition, as recorded in Athens Greece, free of charge. Log on to www.billsims.com/webinar.htm to learn more.
Playing the Right Cards for Safety

“A lot of chemicals, a lot of machinery—this can be a pretty hazardous area if you don’t know what you’re doing.” That’s how Keith Johanson, chair of the department safety committee, describes the sprawling facility of Longview Fibre Paper & Packaging, Inc., based in Longview, Washington. Johanson ought to know. He’s been with the company for almost twenty years and has seen quite a few safety initiatives come and go. His statement holds the key to the plant’s focus on safety—“Know what you’re doing.”

For people to know what they’re doing, they have to be aware of what they’re doing, which is the primary reason Longview Fibre’s safety committee selected the Bill Sims Company’s behavior-based safety process as their top choice. They needed an approach that made a difference in real-time safety behavior, and they required a process that would help them achieve a significant and sustainable change from their safety history.

Longview Fibre began processing pulp for paper products back in 1927 and has since grown to one of the largest pulp-paper mills in North America, producing specialty paper and containers in seven converting plants across four Western states. The plant was family-owned and operated until a few years ago when it was purchased by another organization. “Safety takes a front seat to everything,” says Johanson, “but because of our poor safety record, our new insurance premiums were through the roof.”

So were the negative numbers. In 2007, the facility tallied up 255 incidents, 118 recordables, 41 lost times, and 44 restrictive duties. “That was pretty much the norm,” admits Johanson. At the time, the plant was using a behavior-based process that included observation of specific safe behaviors and positive feedback. “We never really got over the hump with that process,” says Johanson.

So what went wrong? Johanson points out several factors: the program was rewarding trailing indicators (results), departments gave out different rewards, which employees started comparing, and then there was the “bloody pocket” syndrome. “People weren’t turning in the little stuff. Some accidents you can’t hide, but if you smash your thumb or smack your head, you just say, ‘I’m not going to mention anything because I don’t want to screw up everybody getting a VISA gift card,’” explains Johanson.

The plant wanted a system that could be applied mill-wide. Johanson remembered hearing about the Bill Sims program at the Western Pulp & Paper Workers Safety & Health Conference. He invited Sims and two of his competitors to present to the safety committee. “It was pretty unanimous that Bill Sims had the best process,” says Johanson. Why? The Smart Card training aspect of the program features new safety behaviors every month in an easy-to-learn format with photos of Longview personnel demonstrating those behaviors. Employees simply call a central number to answer the true/false questions on the cards for which they automatically earn points. This activity reinforces the safety lesson and adds some fun and anticipation to the process. The You Did It Right Cards, handed out by supervisors or peer-to-peer, provide on-the-spot recognition for performing safely and both the giver and the recipient earn points that can also be
redeemed for rewards which employees select from a diverse catalogue. Another plus is the easy administration. While Longview targets the recognition of safe behaviors, the Bill Sims Company does the rest: collects and compiles the data, sends monthly reports to share with employees, and manages the reward point redemptions. Ultimately, for everyone, the process gives safety the time it deserves without taking much time from a person’s daily routine.

The program has made a difference, according to Johanson, and according to the data. When Longview first started the process their latest safety numbers for the previous six months were as follows: 104 incidents, 34 recordables, 12 lost times, and 13 restrictive duties. Within three months of implementing the new initiative, those numbers dropped to 28 incidents, 2 recordables, 2 lost times, and 0 restrictive duties, with conservative estimates placing savings at over $1 million using OSHA cost of injury guidelines.

As Johanson points out, safety is not an optional card to play. When data is shared at this mill, the feedback isn’t just about the numbers, it includes the human factor—“This many of your coworkers were hurt this month.” “This many people suffered a recordable incident.”

“It is going to affect the company if I get hurt and can’t come to work,” Johanson says, “But it’s hurting me more than anybody else. It’s our own personal safety we’re talking about. “The key is people paying attention to what they’re doing, looking at what they’re doing, and watching what others are doing. If you see someone doing something that might not be safe, have the courage to say, ‘Hey, let’s talk a minute, get some help, or think about this.’ And that’s starting to happen.”
I'm confused . . .

Recently I was greatly honored to be asked to do a keynote speech at the Behavioral Safety Now (BSN) conference (www.behavioralsafetynow.com).

"Who, me?" I asked.

Most of you know that the folks at BSN have pretty much set the gold standard in behavior based safety (BBS) thought leadership for some time. In fact, I learned when I got there, that I was the only non-PhD keynote speaker ever in 17 years!

So what could a guy like me bring to the party that hasn't been discussed already?

Now, my usual morning routine is to push a 100-pound dumbbell up into the air while listening to Bon Jovi at a level which usually gets my wife pretty mad, although my dog Elvis seems to like it.

Lately, my wife's been pretty happy, since I've decided to forego my favorite music in favor of listening to my collection of past presentations from the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), the National Safety Council (NSC), BSN, and the like.

It's taken a lot of self discipline to go from working out with Bon Jovi to pumpin' iron with BBS consultants, but I am glad I've done it.

And, having sifted through the absolute BEST and WORST speakers of these conferences, I have become . . .

Confused.

Here's why:

I heard a BBS consultant do a presentation on the role of steering committees in BBS. I was eager to learn more!

The gentleman started with a few introductory comments saying, "I have absolutely no research to back up what I'm about to say; it's my opinion."

(Immediately, red warning lights flashed through my brain! I almost dropped the 100-pound dumbbell on my head but caught it in the nick of time.)

So, ok, I'm about to hear some consultant give me an opinion without any research to back it up. This should be fun, I thought.

The consultant went on to offer his advice:
1) "I tell all my Steering Committees you should meet weekly to decide who to positively reinforce or ‘R+’ in behaviorist lingo."

_Good, weekly is sure better than monthly recognition, I thought._

2) "You should go out and find a person who has done an observation and recognize them in front of their peers."

_Huh? I thought that public recognition can backfire, since some people are afraid that their peers will perceive them as the teacher's pet. From what I've read, you never publicly praise a person in front of others without asking that person's permission in advance._

3) "You should know your employees, and know what's really reinforcing to them. So, you need to learn as a manager what each person likes and find something you can say that links to that. For example, if they like bonsai trees, you should find an article about bonsai trees and give it to them and tell them you thought they'd like it."

_Now, maybe you know a lot of guys who like to grow bonsai trees but I don't. And if I ever do take up bonsai growing, I'd probably like a bonsai tree more than an article about one. Plus, while it's important to know what people like and are interested in, it's also important to let them choose what's positively reinforcing to them._

4) "You should celebrate improvements in the process monthly, but never do the same kind of celebration twice in the same year . . . and oh yes, never, ever give people tangible award gifts. Mix up your celebrations; do pizza this month and watermelon the next. That's the key."

_Hey, last time I checked, pizza and watermelon ARE TANGIBLE . . . unless someone has invented anti-matter pizza. While there is a place for company picnics and they have some value, one safety director lamented the fact that "We feed them for being safe and the next minute we tell them to lose some weight in our new wellness program."_

5) "Celebrations should be linked to contingencies. Don't throw a ‘safety party,’ but be specific about what your team did, and why we're celebrating."

_Now I like this one! The whole idea of pinpointing a behavior or result and then celebrating as a team how we improved performance is a powerful concept._

6) "It's wrong to focus on gifts and awards; you lose the personal touch. You shouldn't give the same gifts to people, but if you do, make sure they have a logo on them."

_"Ahh, earth to consultant, the latest research of Fortune 100 managers puts logo gifts as the least effective motivator of all. Bill Sims research shows that over 90 percent of us have received a logo gift we didn't want, need, or use. Conclusion: most logo gifts become throwaway items in a landfill._"
7) “500 coffee mugs isn’t R+ for anyone.”

*I totally agree, but you have contradicted your earlier statement, where you suggest that giving everyone watermelon or pizza is a positive reinforcer. If we can’t make 500 people happy with a coffee mug then logic says we can’t do it with 500 pieces of pizza. Plus, I just started my new Dr. Atkins high-protein diet!*

8) “Make the recognition cost as little as you can. When you budget for recognition, less is better.”

*Hold on here a minute! If you do that, will you be giving people a pepperoni pizza minus the pepperoni and cheese? Now, that is positively punishing in my book. Instead I say walk softly and carry a big P.I.C.—no pun intended Aubrey :) National research shows $100 to $200 per employee for the year is the norm for recognition and the numbers are climbing steadily.*

9) “Assume everyone will be at 100 percent participation.”

*This is a classic beginner’s mistake. In this scenario, the beginner takes his or her tiny $25 budget and assumes a worst case scenario that all employees will participate, and so they make the reinforcer an “itsy bitsy, teeny weeny” whatever. In fact, it’s hard to get 100 percent of people to do anything. Studies show that 40 percent of all employees do not cash in their Wal-Mart, Visa, and American Express gift cards. So, by planning that*
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100 percent of the people will participate, you actually shoot yourself in the foot. Instead, make the R+ bigger and you’ll get more people to engage.

10) “You should reserve 10 percent of your budget for individual recognition and 90 percent for monthly group celebrations.

This one flies in the face of all logic and reason. First, of all, we know that the most powerful R+ is that which is linked to the behavior within 15 seconds. That means we need to reinforce INDIVIDUALS and NOT GROUPS. Group reinforcement, while creating powerful peer pressure, may be positive, but it certainly is NOT IMMEDIATE and, by George, it is UNCERTAIN. In Aubrey's book and in mine PIC blows the doors off PIU's hands down.

Maybe you are as confused now as I was. There sure seems to be a lot of confusion on the part of companies who have implemented BBS over the last 15 years. Some of it is absolutely hilarious. For example, a company was interviewing BBS consultants in their selection process. One PhD was asked, “How many failures have you had?”

He replied, “We don’t know. We don’t follow up with our clients after we train them in our process.”

To prepare for my BSN keynote I conducted a survey of companies to see how their BBS processes are going. You can get a copy of that survey along with a link to one of my presentations free of charge by going to this link: www.billsims.com/bsnbreakout.htm.

In a future blog, I’ll give you my analysis of the BBS survey data. But the bottom line is this:

Lots of today's mature BBS processes are STUCK. People go through the motions, collecting data, with the pencil whipping and negative or non-existent R+. We need to help these companies build a culture, as my good friend Bob Veazie says. We’ve done that for many companies, helping them fix broken BBS systems. In my next blog, I’ll share more thoughts on how to do it.

In the meantime, if you’re doing your workout, I suggest you join me and Elvis as we listen to Bon Jovi. At least you won’t be . . .

confused.