# People-Based Leadership

## Enriching a work culture for world-class safety

### By E. Scott Geller

PEOPLE-BASED SAFETY (Geller, 2005) is an extension and evolution of behavior-based safety (Geller, 2001; Krause, Hidley & Hodson, 1996; McSween, 2003), which has been found to reduce industrial injuries (Sulzer-Azaroff & Austin, 2000). The components of people-based safety are reflected by the acronym ACTS (act, coach, think, see). Specifically, in a total safety culture, people act to protect themselves and others from unintentional injury; coach themselves and others to identify barriers to safe acts and provide constructive behavior-based feedback; think in ways that activate and support safe behavior; and focus and scan strategically to see hazards and at-risk behaviors.

The ACTS vision is easier said than done. Specific leadership principles and strategies are needed to empower a workforce to become self-accountable for injury prevention and actively care for the safety and health of others. This is "people-based leadership" (PBL)—the focus of this article.

It is important to distinguish between managers who hold people accountable and leaders who inspire people to be responsible or self-accountable (Geller, 1999). While mangers are assigned their supervisory position, leaders earn their role through interpersonal interaction. Everyone can be a leader, including managers. This article offers evidence-based principles that anyone can use to enrich a culture and improve safety.

Geller (2006) critically analyzed conclusions reported in the national best-seller *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001). Collins claims the great companies hire the best people and put them in positions that match their interests and talents. Geller contends that effective leadership can help people improve their work-related attitudes and behaviors. For example, when an employee's behavior does not meet expectations, a corrective action plan can be implemented following candid conversation and a personal commitment to improve or change jobs.

Great leaders bring out the best in people by showing them the intrinsic consequences of their meaningful work, thereby inspiring them to be self-accountable. To do this, they: 1) demonstrate humility; 2) acknowledge the contributions of others; 3) accept personal responsibility for failure; 4) promote a learning culture; 5) demonstrate optimistic success-seeking over pessimistic failure-avoiding; 6) make rigorous and discriminating, rather than ruthless and indiscriminate, personal decisions; and 7) encourage self-motivation. This article expands on these principles and offers some practical ways to bring them to life.

## The LEAD Acronym

Key PBL lessons and strategies can be organized around the acronym LEAD. Each letter reflects key qualities of leaders and implies specific behaviors needed to improve leadership. Thus, LEAD can help readers remember the essence of these PBL lessons and share the principles with others.

## "L" Words for Leadership

### Listen

Listening occurs at five hierarchical levels, including ignoring, pretending, selective, active and empathic. Selective listening—hearing what the listener wants to hear—is the most common, while the best listening—empathic listening—is probably least common.

Leaders attempt to listen actively, hearing both good and bad news. They put aside their biases and pay attention to everything in a communication. The most effective leaders listen with empathy by considering the communication from the presenter's perspective. Before stating their viewpoint or opinion, they communicate respect for the speaker's words and emotions, and ask relevant questions. As Covey (1989) says, "They seek first to understand before being understood."

### Live, Learn, Love & Leave a Legacy

Covey (1989) also advocates these four hierarchical L words—live, learn, love and leave a legacy—that reflect stages of human life and reveal diversity in people's motivations (Figure 1). Empathic leaders

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## Figure 1

## The Covey Hierarchy of Needs
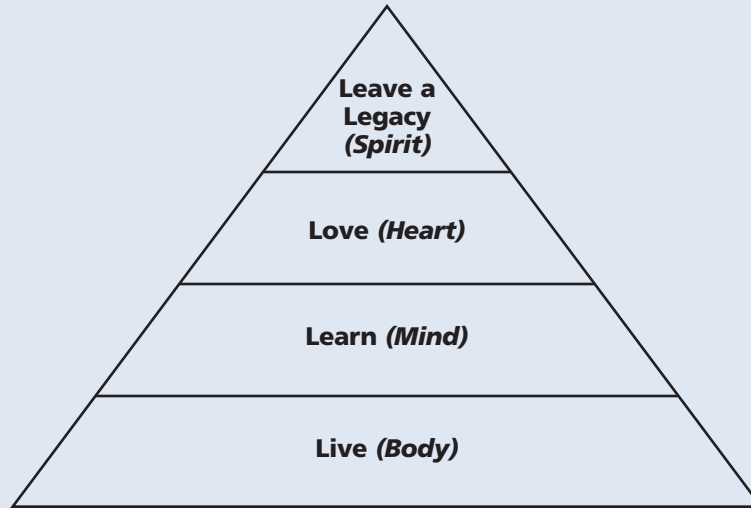


*Note. Adapted from* The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness, *by S.R. Covey, 2004, New York: Simon & Schuster.*

learn the life phases of their followers and, thereby, know what consequences interest them and which can be used to improve their work performance.

Workers at the living stage are working to live and want to receive fair financial compensation for their behavior. Certainly, all employees desire appropriate financial compensation for their work, but some are also motivated by opportunities to learn. Through relevant learning, they are promoted to more challenging positions. Some learn to love their jobs and adopt the mindset of living to work.

As people mature and consider the end of their lives, many contemplate their life accomplishments and wonder how they helped to make the world a better place. Covey (1989) suggests that people imagine their own funerals and the speeches of four individuals—a family member, a friend, a coworker or colleague, and someone from the church or community organization with which they are involved. "What would you like each of these speakers to say about you and your life?" (Covey, p. 97). What could be more meaningful and emotionally fulfilling than working to prevent personal injury and save lives? Safety leaders leave a legacy.

### "E" Words for Leadership
#### Energy, Empathy & Engagement

The subtitle of a recent book on teaching is *Energy, Empathy and Engagement in the Classroom* (Geller & Lehman, 2007). These words were derived from a content analysis of the 39 essays in the book. The best university teachers are energetic and empathic and, thereby, activate engagement among their students.

The same is true for leaders. The best safety leaders are enthusiastic and passionate, and show respect and appreciation for the people they lead.

Leaders understand the power of positive behavioral consequences and seek ways to reward and support desirable acts. This increases employees' energy, empowerment and engagement in their work.

#### Engineering, Education & Enforcement

Figure 2 depicts six E words —those reflecting traditional safety (Petersen, 1991; Winn & Probert, 1995) and those representing people-based safety (Geller, 2005). Engineering is certainly a critical aspect of any safety effort, from designing work equipment and environments that reduce risk of injury to providing the most appropriate PPE for specific tasks. In addition, people must be educated about safe work practices, including the use of PPE. And, if workers do not follow the prescribed protocol for individual and interpersonal safety, the next E word— enforcement—takes precedence.

These traditional safety words reflect strategies that have reduced the frequency and severity of personal injuries in the workplace, at home and on the road. However, many industries have experienced a plateau with regard to safety performance. While their overall safety strategies are vastly better than they once were, continuous improvement remains elusive.

The paradigm derived from the traditional E words will not achieve that end. The three new E words (Figure 2) exemplify people-based safety and suggest strategies for addressing the human dynamics of injury prevention and achieving levels of safety excellence beyond current plateaus.
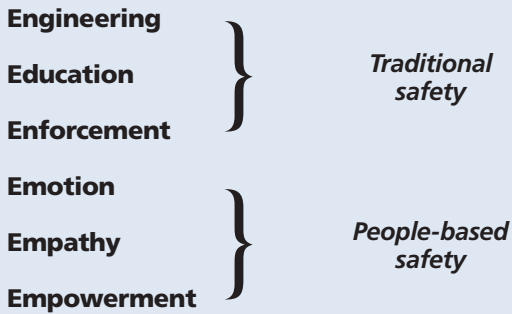
#### Empowerment

Some applications of the traditional safety E words (especially enforcement) have been detrimental to employee empowerment. For example, many companies translate enforcement into a strict punishment approach, which has turned off many workers to safety programs. But the word empowerment is also viewed negatively by many because it implies giving people more to do with insufficient time and resources. "I empower you to take on this additional responsibility," says the supervisor. The employee thinks, "Great, just what I need, more to do in my busy schedule with the same pay. Why me?"

But this management definition of empowerment is not consistent with PBL. The PBL paradigm incorporates a psychological definition of empowerment: People do not get empowerment from others; they empower themselves. People-based leaders establish conditions and contingencies to facilitate empowerment, but they do not give people empowerment,

they enable the release of empowerment from others. It is not about getting empowered, rather it is about feeling empowered.

Three beliefs are necessary to feel empowered. People-based leaders ask three questions (Figure 3) to determine whether an individual feels empowered. First, "Can you do it?" Does the employee have the training, time, resources and personnel support to take on this extra responsibility? If the leader does not hear a confident response, two critical follow-up questions are called for: "What do you need?" and "How can I help?"

Believing one can do something implies self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), but this does not mean the individual feels empowered. People must also know, "Will the process work to achieve a desirable outcome?" They need response efficacy. For example, people can have the skills and self-efficacy to perform interpersonal safety coaching, but will not actually coach others on a regular basis unless they believe the coaching process can actually improve safety. How does PBL facilitate this belief?

Showing research evidence or statistics is the most common way to convince others that an intervention is effective. While objective data from empirical research should be used to justify the application of a particular strategy, such statistics might not motivate individual participation. Most people do not readily relate to research results. Often, it is better to get more personal when attempting to motivate participation in a particular safety-improvement process.

For example, research on risk perception has shown that people become more concerned or outraged about an issue when individual examples are cited in lieu of group statistics (Covello, Sandman & Slovic, 1991; Slovic, 1991). Personal testimonies provide a powerful image. Listeners can relate to an individual's personal story and put themselves in the same situation. Two kinds of testimonies can increase belief in response-efficacy: 1) a personal account of an injury that could have been prevented by a certain safety technique; and 2) an anecdote about someone who avoided injury by using a particular strategy or safety process.
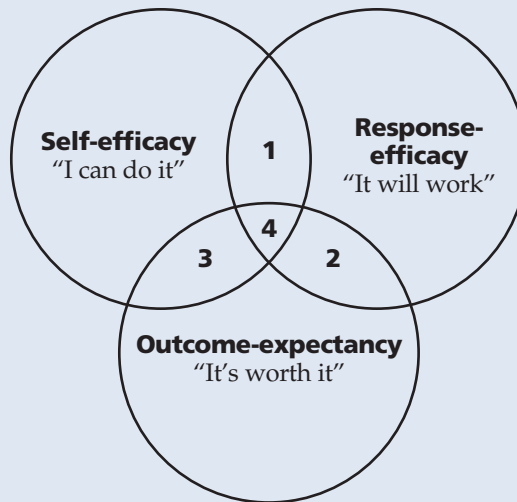
The third empowerment question, "Is it worth it?" is often the most difficult to answer with a genuine yes. For example, a group might believe its safety record is good enough since few coworkers are suffering serious injuries. The possible gain from an inconvenient safety process can seem too small to justify the extra time and effort required. Most people view the probability of getting hurt to be minuscule, so the need to participate in a particular safety effort can seem unimportant.

How can PBL foster outcome expectancy—the belief that the possible effect of a safety process is worth the effort? As with building response efficacy, a case study is more influential than statistics in activating participation. For example, show the details of a single injury that occurred at a particular facility and explain how an intervention such as the one being proposed could have prevented the incident. This approach implicates the final two E words.

### Emotion & Empathy

Personal stories evoke emotions and emotions motivate relevant action. It is not about statistics; it is about people. The most effective motivational speakers for safety are those who portray their personal injuries with genuine emotion. They describe in vivid detail the long-term and wide-range negative consequences of their ordeals—from personal pain and inconvenience to the extreme anguish and distress among family and friends. In other words, they "make safety personal" (Morecraft & Geller, 2006).

Empathy also plays a critical role. The most effec-

## Figure 4

## Do You Achieve Success or Avoid Failure?

**Do you seek success?**

|  | No | Yes |
|---|---|---|
| **Do you avoid failure? No** | Failure accepter | Success seeker |
| **Do you avoid failure? Yes** | Failure avoider | Overstriver |

tive teachers and motivational speakers relate to their audience. They teach their lessons with personal stories relevant to the listeners. The listeners who are most influenced are those who empathize with the speakers. They see themselves in the same situation and vicariously experience the speaker's pain and suffering. The result: The interpersonal empathy and shared emotions motivate action to prevent a similar event. When the listeners know what to do, think it will work and believe the extra effort is worth it, they feel empowered.

### "A" Words for Leadership
#### Audacity

In his keynote address at Safety 2006, Steve Farber proposed that effective leaders "show a bold and blatant disregard for normal constraints in order to change the world for the better." He poked fun at the common slogan "think outside the box" by challenging the assumption that there is a box. The A-word in his LEAP acronym is *audacity* (Farber, 2004).

In the speech, Farber did not connect his leadership principles to safety, which may have elicited cognitive dissonance among some in attendance. Safety standards define a box and performing outside the box implies at-risk behavior.

However, audacity is relevant for safety whenever leaders attempt to go beyond the traditional safety E words to increase energy and engagement in safety-related activities. Thus, in safety there is a box of procedures and policies to follow in order to minimize the severity, exposure and probability of injury. But there is also a box of safety procedures for maintaining compliance. This latter box needs audacious, innovative thinking and acting. In this regard, two other A-words are relevant: achievement versus avoidance.

### Achievement vs. Avoidance

Audacious safety leaders think outside the enforcement box and design interventions that put a positive, achievement spin on injury prevention. Consider briefly the advantages of achievement over avoidance. Skinner (1971) describes "selection by consequences," which means behavior is motivated by events or conditions that follow it. People are motivated to achieve pleasant consequences (positive reinforcers) and to avoid unpleasant consequences (negative reinforcers). Although both types of consequences control behavior effectively, people feel greater personal control and self-accountability when working to achieve positive consequences than when working to avoid negative consequences (Geller, 2005; Skinner, 1971).

The dichotomy of working to achieve success versus working to avoid failure is founded on classic research by Atkinson (1964) and McClelland (1961). As shown in Figure 4, Atkinson identified four types of individuals: success seekers, overstrivers, failure avoiders and failure accepters.

Success seekers are the most desirable participants in a safety-improvement plan. These individuals show the highest levels of self-efficacy, personal control and optimism, and are most likely to actively care for the safety and health of others. With high expectancy for success and low fear of failure, success seekers respond to setbacks with optimistic persistence, self-assurance and a sense of personal control. They are also most likely to be self-accountable for their safety-related actions (Covington, 1992; Covington & Omelich, 1979).

In contrast, failure avoiders have low expectations for success and, thus, avoid challenges. They are unsure of themselves and are overly anxious and pessimistic about the future. They are not self-accountable but are controlled by extrinsic accountability systems (Covington & Roberts, 1994).

Failure accepters are said to be better adjusted than failure avoiders, because their acceptance leads to apathy rather than anxiety. From an organizational perspective, failure accepters are least desirable—they have simply given up.

Most safety leaders are motivated to avoid failure (e.g., a workplace injury or fatality). Geller (2008) relates this motivational state to anxiety and claims it is good for safety. "People who have constant anxiety about the possibility of a workplace injury are going to do everything they can to put themselves in control of preventing injuries, and so put their safety-focused anxiety on hold" (p. 136). Indeed, most safety leaders are probably overstrivers, motivated to both avoid failure and achieve success. However, research suggests these leaders will be more self-directed and optimistic when they put more focus on achieving proactive success rather than on avoiding reactive failure (Covington, 1992; Covington & Omelich, 1979).

It is important to note that these four classifications and perspectives are person states, not traits. In other words, environmental conditions, work contexts and company cultures determine the number

of success seekers versus failure avoiders in an organization. People-based leaders increase success seeking by: 1) asking people what they do for safety; 2) giving priority to proactive process numbers that reflect achievement rather than focusing on reactive injury reports which suggest failure; 3) recognizing individuals and work teams for their safety-related accomplishments; and 4) promoting a safety score card that holds people accountable for completing process activities related to injury prevention.

## Accountability

The suggestions cited for encouraging success seeking imply another important A word—accountability. Whether external or internal (as in self-accountability), accountability is essential for consistent and long-term action. Unfortunately, the traditional accountability approach to safety is failure-focused, which affects another A word in adverse ways—attitude. Specifically, the typical injury rate statistics are negative and not diagnostic. Moreover, when workers are held accountable for their safety-related behavior, it is usually about the occurrence of at-risk behavior or the lack of certain safe behavior. This is failure-avoidance accountability, impacting attitude in undesirable directions.

Imagine a safety score card that tracks the number of 1) environmental hazards removed; 2) near-hit reports submitted and reviewed; 3) safety audits completed; 4) interpersonal observation and feedback sessions conducted; 5) safety suggestions received and implemented; and 6) safe versus at-risk behaviors observed per work team. Such an accountability system puts people in control of an achievement-oriented approach to injury prevention. It not only increases success seeking for safety but also helps to change the accountability focus from external and other-directed to internal and self-directed.

## Authenticity

Authenticity requires a clear operational definition in order to guide behavior. *American Heritage Dictionary* defines *authenticity* as "the condition or quality of being authentic, trustworthy or genuine." The first definition of authentic is "conforming to fact and, therefore, worthy of trust, reliance or belief."

These definitions can incite constructive discussion about the meaning of related words—trust, reliability, consistency and genuineness—with regard to improving organizational safety. More behavioral direction is provided by George in *Authentic Leadership* (2003) and Petersen in *Authentic Involvement* (2001). The connection between these books is obvious: Authentic leadership yields authentic involvement and vice versa. Let's review the primary authenticity directives provided by these authors.

### Authentic Leaders

Authentic leaders "are more interested in empowering the people they lead to make a difference than they are in power, money or prestige for themselves. They are as guided by qualities of the heart, by passion and compassion, as they are by qualities of the mind" (George, 2003, p. 12).

Authentic leaders are vulnerable and open to corrective feedback, and they demonstrate self-discipline to continuously improve. George (2003) claims a person cannot be authentic without compassion. Compassion is developed through profound understanding of other people's situations and feelings. Empathy (a critical E word for PBL) is a synonym for compassion.

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, however, compassion is more than understanding and identifying with another person. It also includes "the inclination to give aid or support or to show mercy." George suggests leaders develop compassion by listening to others' life stories, volunteering for community service projects, having mentoring relationships and traveling through developing countries.

People with empathy and compassion lead others with purpose, meaning and personal values. They do not place an inordinate focus on short-run profits. They do not motivate through warnings and threats, thereby discouraging the development of self-accountability—a key component of authentic involvement.

### Authentic Involvement

Authentic involvement is self-directed and occurs when people are "treated like a mature, adult human being; as an equal, not subordinate, able to use their innate intelligence and skills daily, even hourly; able to achieve; given responsibility; and recognized for doing a good job" (Petersen, 2001, p. 46).

So who treats employees this way? Effective leaders enrich their work culture and help workers become self-directed, self-accountable and self-motivated. Petersen advocates an integration of the humanistic and behavioristic approaches to understanding and helping people. This is the foundation of people-based safety, referred to as "humanistic behaviorism" (Geller, 2005).

•**Problem-solving training.** Petersen (2001) advocates shared decision making between salary and hourly workers, with each side recognizing the need for interdependent cooperation. For this to occur, managers, supervisors and hourly workers need to learn how to interact effectively throughout a systematic process of balanced problem solving and decision making. Petersen suggests training on specific analysis techniques, such as statistical process controls, which include the use of fishbone diagrams, pareto charts, flowcharts, control charts and scatter diagrams.

•**Problem-solving mechanisms.** Petersen (2001) also discusses practical ways to enable regular employee input on safety-related matters, thereby facili-

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tating authentic involvement. These techniques include the following:

1) Safety improvement teams. Management asks employees to address a specific safety issue.

2) Job safety analysis. Workgroups define specific environmental and/or behavioral hazards associated with each step of a job and develop ways to eliminate or control them.

3) Hazard hunt. Employees use a special form on which they report anything that they feel is a hazard. This is followed by corrective-action feedback from management.

4) Ergonomic analysis. After training on ergonomic principles, workers observe the various behaviors of a job and consider ways to decrease the probability of a cumulative trauma disorder.

5) Incident recall technique. Through one-on-one interviews, employees relate a specific close call they experienced or heard about, suggest contributing factors to the incident, then explore ways to prevent similar incidents and potential injuries.

The observation and feedback process of behavior-based safety should be added to this list, including employees' development, application and refinement of a critical behavior checklist (CBC). Workers use a CBC to coach each other, which includes observing work behaviors, defining barriers to safe behavior and facilitators of at-risk behavior, and providing constructive behavioral feedback to the worker. This process (Geller, 1999, 2001; Krause, et al., 1996; McSween, 2003) sets the stage for authentic involvement. However, the quantity and quality of employee involvement depend on management support and PBL.

### "D" Word

The "D" of the LEAD acronym stands for one word—data. Data provide both direction and motivation for behavior. By observing the results of their actions, people learn how well they completed a task and what they can do to improve. Sometimes, data are derived from a faulty or insufficient measurement system, resulting in deficient diagnostics. For example, injury statistics based on self-report are vulnerable to personal bias and have minimal diagnostic value. Moreover, such reactive numbers can actually activate distress or a false sense of security. Leaders need to use data strategically in order to provide appropriate direction and motivation for themselves and others.

### Accountability Data

"What gets measured gets done." This slogan reflects the connection between data and accountability. But using wrong data to assess accountability can be disastrous. "What could be worse [than] holding willing workers accountable for numbers they cannot control?" (Deming, 1991).

•**Behavior versus performance.** The critical difference between behavior and performance is a distinction needed to select and examine the right data (Deming, 1991). Many behavioral researchers and safety professionals use these words interchangeably, but the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* defines performance as "something accomplished" and behavior as "the manner of conducting oneself."

In other words, behavior contributes to a process, whereas performance reflects the results of a process. Behavior-based feedback reveals data that inhibit, facilitate or improve a process, whereas performance feedback occurs when productivity or injury data of an organization are reviewed. Such outcome data are certainly influenced by behavior, but many other factors could be implicated—from environmental conditions to attitudes of the people involved.

•**Feedback data.** The behavior/performance distinction is critical for giving the right kind of feedback. Specifically, when can people hold others accountable for data? The answer is simple. Hold people accountable for data they directly influence.

For example, in safety it is fair to hold people accountable for the variety of activities they can do to prevent personal injuries—from coaching others to completing hazard recognition and near-hit reports. Likewise, if an individual's behavior or lack thereof is clearly linked to an injury, it is legitimate to hold that person accountable (in part) for the performance data reflected by injury statistics. However, the contribution of factors beyond the individual's control should be acknowledged.

Some performance deficits result from behavior that deviates from the process. However, performance deficits also occur as a result of system factors independent of process-related behavior. Hold people accountable for the first, but not the latter.

While this seems like common sense, it raises the question: Why is there such emphasis on injury statistics or performance data at safety meetings? How often is a graph of safety-related behavior displayed to illustrate accomplishment (or failure) at injury prevention? Instead, show individuals and groups process data that reflect their controllable actions associated directly with performance data.

### Leadership Data

Almost every book on leadership presents information on the person characteristics of leaders. For example, Krause (2005) connects leadership with five personality traits—emotional resilience, extraversion, learning orientation, collegiality and conscientiousness. He also distinguishes between transactional leaders (or managers) and transformational leaders with certain interpersonal styles (including challenging, engaging, inspiring and influential). Geller (2001) describes leaders as individuals who are energetic, passionate, open, trustworthy, compassionate, goal-directed, self-confident, intelligent and flexible.

•**Applying person data.** It is fascinating and enter-

taining to explore one's personality and consider correlations between specific person factors and behavior. For example, many readers have likely taken the Myers-Briggs or a similar personality inventory and learned about the behavioral implications of certain person qualities and styles. People often have rapt attention when a trainer displays data related to their own personality or job assignment.

However, caution is needed when considering these data. First, the assessment tools for personality data are often unreliable and invalid (Geller, 2005). Second, the connection between most person data and behavior is ambiguous or weak.

The critical issue is applicability. How can data suggesting leadership-related personality traits, states or styles be used? Can such data provide directional or motivational feedback? Using these data to influence people is analogous to developing an action plan from an organization's injury data. In both cases, the data are unreliable and influenced by undefined factors independent of people's behavior. Furthermore, neither provides useful diagnostic information to direct continuous improvement.

•**Practical leadership data.** Krause (2005) acknowledges low practical value in assessing the leadership-related characteristics of people. For example, telling people they score high or low on a measure of charisma gives minimal direction for improving leadership.

However, to the extent it is possible to define a particular leadership quality in terms of specific behaviors, personality data can be useful. For example, by observing people judged to be charismatic, it might be possible to identify behaviors that reflect this label, then tell people what they can do to demonstrate charisma. Subsequently, a person can be observed and given behavior-based feedback related to the presence or absence of charisma-related behaviors.

Daniels and Daniels (2005) offer a different perspective. They contend that the measure of a leader should focus on the behavior of the followers. In other words, leadership should be defined by follower behavior rather than by leader behavior. The key type of follower behavior to look for is "discretionary behavior" supporting the leader's vision.

What is discretionary behavior? It is behavior that exceeds a worker's job requirements. It is self-directed, meaningful and intrinsically reinforcing. When it relates to injury prevention or health promotion, this type of behavior can also be called "actively caring" (Geller, 1996, 2001, 2005).

### Increasing Discretionary Behavior

Daniels and Daniels (2005) focus on the appropriate use of positive reinforcement to increase discretionary behavior. With threats and punitive consequences, people do not become self-accountable; they do only what is required. Effective leaders reward behaviors consistent with their vision and, thereby, motivate the successive occurrences of relevant discretionary behavior.

Consistent with these suggestions are various approaches advocated for increasing actively caring

behavior (Geller, 1994, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2005). Briefly, research indicates that people are more likely to help others (or emit discretionary behavior) when they have relatively high levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, personal control, optimism and a sense of belongingness. Therefore, anything a leader does to increase these person states will increase the likelihood of discretionary behavior.

Genuine behavior-based rewards and recognition are likely to enhance self-esteem, self-efficacy, personal control and optimism—and in some cases, belongingness. There are other ways to facilitate the occurrence of these person states and thereby increase the probability of discretionary behavior (Geller, 2001, 2005).

### Final Thoughts about Data

Any discussion of the collection and application of data will necessarily be narrow and incomplete. In fact, entire university courses focus on data acquisition, analysis and interpretation. This discussion has barely scratched the surface of this important topic.

In all cases, the author recommends being skeptical of opinions, even if they sound like good common sense. Frequent use of the phrase "Got data?" is a good first step. Then, when someone displays data, ask, "How can these data be used to facilitate continuous improvement?"

### Conclusion

The terms "management" and "leadership" are used interchangeably, but these words reflect different job assignments and responsibilities. Both are necessary to achieve the quantity and quality of engagement needed to achieve and maintain an injury-free workplace. Simply put, managers hold people accountable for doing something, whereas people-based leaders inspire people to want to do something. In other words, managers provoke other-directed involvement, while leaders influence self-persuasion and self-directed engagement.

Although it is usually more desirable for people to be self-directed than other-directed, much behavior is other-directed. People do certain things because of an external accountability system. Managers are in charge of these systems—it is part of their job description. They are held accountable for monitoring a performance evaluation system that holds other people accountable for accomplishing specific goals or reaching certain milestones.

Safety management is necessary at times to hold people accountable for doing the right things for injury prevention. However, management alone is

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not sufficient to achieve and sustain an injury-free workplace. PBL is needed to build the kind of culture that inspires responsibility or personal accountability for safety.

Key PBL qualities are organized around the acronym LEAD, with each letter reflecting key aspects of PBL. For example, people-based leaders listen with empathy before offering advice or direction, and they aim to enable feelings of empowerment. They assess whether people feel empowered by asking three questions: 1) Do you believe you can do it? 2) Do you believe it will work? and 3) Do you believe it's worth the effort?

When the answers to these questions are not "yes," PBL leaders ask a key actively caring question, "How can I help?" They take the time and provide the support needed to achieve a "yes" answer to these questions. Why? Because when people feel empowered, they also feel ownership for the process and go beyond the call of duty to make the process work. They become self-accountable.

Accountability is a key component in this process. External accountability systems are needed to manage and maintain desirable behavior. Since people are not monitored constantly nor are they always motivated by extrinsic contingencies, self-directed accountability is needed. The PBL principles reviewed in this article can help build self-accountability in a workforce if they are practiced regularly and with authenticity.

The critically important D word is data. Without data, progress is impossible. People cannot improve without specific feedback about their process-relevant behavior, and such feedback requires appropriate behavior-based data. Moreover, people's motivation often comes from observations of their accomplishments from the process—in other words, outcome-based data.

The principles and procedures discussed in this article are evidence-based. This means that objective and reliable data were obtained from systematic observations of people's behaviors occurring under conditions reflecting an operational definition of a particular PBL principle. Such data enabled the PBL advice given here.

Extensions and refinements of these recommendations require more data. Data are essential for continuous improvement. The hope is that this article will activate observations, interventions and evaluations and produce data that can enable PBL to further enrich a work culture. ∎

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