Debunking the Training Myth: Why Most Safety Classes Don't Work and What to Do About It

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Introduction

Safety professionals are more than a little preoccupied by the need to drive down injuries across industries, organizations, and communities. We are fiercely driven to protect the people we serve whether that protection extends to fingers, backs, or lives. Truly, our work in safety is an all-career, all-consuming thing—often requiring us to forego time off or time with family.

Because we match the high stakes of safety with an equally high professional commitment, we naturally regard the tools we use as impactful on the people we strive to protect and the organizations that they serve. Training includes one such tool that we revere, and we faithfully select relevant topics and willingly present them to one and all. And, over time, our training lifestyle legitimizes the following training myths:

1. Regulatory requirements drive not just what we teach but how in order to build safety awareness.
2. Participants must demonstrate their commitment to changing thinking and behavior by applying what they learned on their own.
3. A well-attended class equals a successful learning event.

Unfortunately, demonstrating our commitment to fingers, backs, and lives by sharing information and lending subject-matter expertise in the classroom is typically ineffective. While many of us thrive on serving our colleagues through instruction, role play, simulations, and discussion, the impact of our labor is often unseen months, weeks, or even days after the learning event. As Dan Petersen wrote in Safety Management: A Human Approach, "it has not been proven that improvement in skills and attitudes have any effect on job performance" (2001). There is, at best, a dotted line connecting our teaching efforts to results.

Organizations rightfully demand results from training programs, and so must we. However, we must temper organizations' demand for numbers only because that request triggers a decades-long, conditioned response in us to create well-ordered audit trails that inspectors and lawyers approve of but that focus on stuff more than people. And it's in people where the heart of excellent safety culture truly lies.

Those of us who are responsible for developing or strengthening employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) must assume responsibility for showing what we believe: educational efforts do change minds and behaviors, resulting in fewer injuries, safer employees, and healthier organizations.

The key to demonstrable results does not center around the content of our training sessions, impeccable presentation skills, or well-managed documentation of employee training provided. In fact, the key to demonstrable results does not center around us at all.

In this article, we—Lee Aumend, of Pinsly Railroad Company, and Christina Schulz, of the Hile Group—discuss how we avoided the above-listed myths when we supported leadership development at Pinsly Railroad Company, a short-line railroad and railroad distribution service organization headquartered in Westfield, Massachusetts.

Case Study Introduction

A major shift in leadership of the Pinsly Railroad Company (PRC), matched with a dramatic realignment of business strategy, marked the turning point for safety. As PRC reviewed its business practices, the need for a major shift in safety culture became obvious. In 2005, PRC contacted the Hile Group, a performance consulting firm that focuses on safety, leadership, and culture change, in the interest of improving its safety culture.

The overall goal for PRC was to leave behind a culture where safety and operations are separate and launch a more integrated model. It should be stated clearly that this shift marks an important one, since this way of setting safety to compete with operations still characterizes many railroad workplace cultures. The Hile Group helped PRC assess its safety culture to determine what strengths supported, and what gaps prevented, the company from making the crucial shift to safe operations as the heart of its mission.

Between 2005-2006, PRC's senior leaders, middle managers, and safety committees worked with the Hile Group team to produce the following deliverables:

- Safety vision with corresponding priorities and goals communicated in Safety Action Plans (SAPs)
- Internal safety committees to promote better information flow and processes
- PPE booklet that provided craft-specific required and recommended PPE in general and for specific job tasks, which was built by the employees who best knew the work and protective equipment because of their experience in the field

- Corporate Safety Director position in order to ensure internal, tied-to-operations championship of PRC's long-term achievement of its safety vision and goals

The development of these deliverables relied heavily on a key PRC strength—local ownership of processes. The development of these deliverables also began remedying a key gap in PRC's culture—cross-organization expectation and standard setting.

In 2006, Lee Aumend assumed the role of PRC's first Corporate Safety Director. Lee has over 20 years experience in safety and safety training. When he accepted the position of CSD, he immediately lent his experience and skills to:

- Build new relationships across the company to better inform safety navigation
- Support the implementation of newly-developed safety processes and documents related to the work done with Hile Group
- Assess the alignment between role definition and corresponding responsibilities across PRC locations as they related to safety and employee support
- Become a known, visible part of the PRC community

A shared commitment to building organizational health around employee empowerment and cross-company interaction cemented a positive working relationship between Lee and the Hile Group. As partners, Lee and the Hile Group buttressed PRC from inside and out as it progressed toward the business model of safe operations, where production and safety do not compete for attention or resources but are treated as mutually reinforcing in word, deed, and dollar.

Although the proceeding year was not conflict- or bump-free, as 2007 began the senior leadership team had articulated vision while respecting the front-line ownership of safety. In addition, PRC had set down roots in its shifted model reinforcing safety as an integral part of operations. Communication from top to bottom, as well as location to location, was building momentum. But what should PRC attempt to do next to ensure its momentum continued? What key issues needed Lee and Hile Group's attention?

Candid reflection and feedback from Lee and senior leaders resulted in the following list of next-step needs for evolving its culture further:

- Middle managers had a difficult time making independent decisions and expressed uncertainty about their responsibilities
- Incident and injury rates varied from location to location, indicating there were issues that needed attention and already-existing best practices that could effectively combat them
- Help was needed to make good use of the newly-developed safety management tools: SAPs, PPE Booklet being two examples
- Geographical and cultural diversity across PRC locations prevented middle managers from networking with one another to learn from and support one another
- Railroad Distribution Services was inadvertently set up to be separate from the railroading part of PRC and half-jokingly referred to itself as PRC's "step-child"
- PRC's business plan called for formal and informal succession planning that were into early stages of development

- Location management had not yet built strong enough relationships with Lee to allow for shared safety expectation setting and decision-making
- Senior leaders needed help using the existing company safety committees as the venue for exchanging regular feedback and support
- Locations lacked access to company-wide information to let them know how they were doing as a whole organization; suggesting that a company-wide identity was not firmly rooted across PRC

Recognizing that middle managers were an important bridge between senior leaders and front-line employees, Lee centered on their need for clearer responsibilities and spelled-out strategies for executing them effectively. Lee also wanted to ensure that his newly-formed position did not reinforce a traditional assumption at the middle management level: let Safety take care of people while we concentrate on doing the work and maintaining the equipment. Bringing key people from across the organization together was essential to unite various locations and business endeavors, clarify roles and responsibilities, and apply a consistent set of tools to manage performance.

Lee approached Hile Group with an invitation to partner in order to connect concurrent organizational needs, safety performance improvement, and leadership development among middle managers across the company's three locations, Arkansas, Florida, and Massachusetts. Senior leaders approved the partnership, and Leadership Toward Learning was underway.

Clarifying the Limitations of Training

To better understand the significant features of Pinsly's leadership development process, we should explain the limitations of going training-only to effect safety results.

Below, we have provided a model for analyzing why people work the way they do, which Hile Group adapted from Rummler and Brache's research on organizational performance factors. When answers to the following questions come up as "No" or "Don't Know," there is a gap in performance. When gaps build up, safety culture momentum can slow down, managers can tolerate unacceptable risk, and people can get hurt.

**Exhibit 1. Use these questions to determine what is contributing
to employees' strong or weak performance on the job.**

Training events live in item #6. Training provides people with the necessary skills and knowledge for working more safely and effectively. So, as safety professionals, we are partly right to view training as impactful on our participants. However, notice that training is only one of six factors that affect an individual's performance and also the organization's culture. Therefore, without linking our efforts in the classroom to these other factors, very knowledgeable employees can go back to their work and do zip with that knowledge. As Geary Rummler has said, "Put a good performer in a bad system…and the system will win every time" (2004).

Making the Case for Better Transfer of Learning to the Workplace

As Lee and Hile Group stated in the beginning of this article, many of us in safety believe that the classroom is a powerful opportunity to open minds and change behaviors.

But we cannot be naïve in thinking that a single class—even a very long class, such as a 10-hour OSHA refresher—can translate into immediate application of safer KSA. Barriers to transfer exist, and they can prevent participants from transferring what they learned back on the job. Without that transfer, "there will be no business result, no matter how much was 'learned'" (Wick and Pollock, 2004). However, by looking more closely at how we position training and the roles of the people involved in that training, we can improve the quality of the learning experience and the return on investment (ROI). In other words, we can minimize the effect of those barriers so that meaningful impact of our training can occur.

Mapping out strategies will maximize the potential for transfer of classroom-learned materials to job-applied skills. Remember that safety processes are bound by human behavior, which we all

know is complex. To ensure our safety processes go beyond the classroom, we have to appreciate and account for the entire learning environment employees are exposed to, including the interpersonal interactions that set the tone for safety (or not), provide feedback, and assign appropriately positive/negative consequences to demonstrated behavior.

From research conducted by Broad and Newstrom in the field of transfer of learning, Hile Group recommends an approach that distributes the responsibility for providing support, consequences, and feedback across the trainer, participants, and participants' bosses—the people who have as big a stake as those who attend the session in benefiting from improved safety KSA on the job. In simple terms, the approach outlined here is nothing more than a road map for the journey from learned knowledge to applied skill.

In addition to distributing responsibility, Lee and Hile Group have grown to rely on this tool to be clearer about:

- Who has a stake in the learning we are building
- What challenges need to be addressed
- What countermeasures will minimize those challenges
- Measures of learning success for training participants, their bosses, and their organizations

As we consider the table below, we see how our classroom event is one small part of a larger experience that an organization must create for itself if it is serious about seeing ROI from the training events they invest in.

	Before	During	After
Boss			
Trainer			
Participants			

Table 1: With strategies for getting with participants before and after learning events, a boss can better support their transfer of learning back on the job.

What we have to keep in mind is that the trainer's role is not as big as we make it out to be. Instead, we must work to partner with our participants' bosses because they most greatly affect the learners' success if they plan encounters with participants before and after the training event takes place.

In her work applying Broad and Newstrom's research to her customers' learning events and culture change processes, Julie Hile has identified the following requirements for improving the transference of learning back to the workplace:

Before the training event

- **Boss:** Make careful decisions about who participates in training in the first place. Orient participants to what they are in for and encourage them to make the most of the learning opportunity.
- **Participants:** See the boss beforehand for a pep talk or marching orders.
- **All:** Be candid about what could prevent transfer from happening, such as a delay in having the equipment available that people are getting trained to operate, and talk about how learning will be kept fresh until it can be applied.

<u>During the training event</u>

- **Trainer:** Provide learner-centered, active course designs, materials, and methods.
- **Participants:** Foster partnerships, even friendships that can evolve into personal development that continues long after the learning event.
- **Both:** Again, be candid about what might get in the way of using the KSA being taught. Anticipate how those barriers could be mitigated and whose help will be needed to do so.

<u>After the training event</u>

- **Boss:** Follow up carefully with participants soon after they return and provide feedback about what is and is not different since the training.
- **Participants:** Let the boss know what was learned and share that learning with peers and family members.
- **Both:** Talk about what is stopping participants from using what was learned or preventing bosses from expecting to see changes. Seek help from others within the organization, maybe even higher up the food chain, to stay accountable to generating ROI on the training experience.

Too often, we simply put training "on" as if it were merely a presentation of information, not a foundation for launching new thinking or behavioral habits. The above framework—to view training in terms of before, during, and after the classroom session, as well as assigning responsibilities for using each period of time effectively across bosses, trainers, and participants—offers a replicable road map of knowledge building and implementation.

Debunking Training Myths through PRC's Leadership Development Process

As we prepared to introduce PRC middle managers to Leadership Toward Learning, we worked away from the following training myths, previously mentioned in this article's opening section:

1. Regulatory requirements drive not just what we teach but how in order to build safety awareness.
2. Participants must demonstrate their commitment to changing thinking and behavior by applying what they learned on their own.
3. A well-attended class equals a successful learning event.

How to Debunk Myth #1: Set your sights beyond the regulations
While we must comply with regulations, we cannot let regulation compliance regulate us. It is crucial that our vision for safety be the true driver of our work as safety professionals. And safety vision is about a lot more than regulation compliance. To effect changes on our organization's safety culture, we must embed safety within existing organizational issues so that safety learning events become opportunities to address operations issues, too.

Certainly, Lee kept his list of mandatory training and kept abreast of regulatory involvement on PRC operations. However, he made a strategic decision to knit together safety performance gaps with communication and leadership gaps that were apparent to not just him but his PRC colleagues. By doing so, he set safety concerns at an equal level to other organizational concerns, thereby reinforcing PRC's commitment to safe operations.

Leadership Toward Learning (LTL), as a result, was positioned as a professional development opportunity that was intended to result in improved middle manager safety performance, as well the safety performance of the employees they supervised. When it came time to talk about what success indicators were evident across PRC post-LTL, Lee had a large number of co-assessors to depend upon for measuring the impact of applied learning on the job.

More How to Debunk Myth #1 (it's a bugger!): Reposition your role away from trainer toward coach and watch your learning events become more dynamic
Our safety classes' relationship to regulations are most often seen in the titles we give to the events themselves: "Haz Mat 101," "Contractor Safety," "Top 10 Musts in Ergonomics." For both the trainer and the participant, it is expected that during the session, information will be shared, including relevant history of the topic, landmark legislation or regulation, and implications of technological advancements on the workplace and worker. In addition, lists of what to do or what to remember will be made and distributed as handouts or PowerPoint slides. There may or may not be a test at the end, very likely one allowing notes to be referred to, and once the participants and trainer sign the requisite pieces of paper, the learning is complete. Snooze!

Training sessions too often center on *information exchange* from the very-full head of the trainer to the presumably empty heads of our participants. But no one is completely without context; trainers can expect participants to engage in conversation about the topic even at an introductory level. Furthermore, active involvement among training attendees inevitably forces the question of "So what?" or "What am I supposed to do now that I know this?" Turn the question back on them, and participants will build impressive lists about the significance of the topic on their work or peers, as well as about how to put knowledge into action when they go back to work.

Engaged participants most often blend the information that is learned with coaching—either coaching for one another or coaching requests to the trainer as needed. While training lays out the steps of a new skill, coaching is what drives it into the muscle and offers people the opportunity to visualize scenarios that will call for application of that skill and sense their own amount of resistance to it. Opportunities to pair training with coaching "cover most of the bases in the game of change" (White, 2006).

Leadership Toward Learning was positioned as a dynamic learning event, not a training session. Lee and Hile Group did not lecture at a podium, rely upon PowerPoint presentations, or read out

of a teacher's manual. Instead, we planned key questions and participative activities and let the participants do the rest. Also, we prioritized *skills* over *information* and, therefore, focused more on what participants would be able to *do* once *LTL* wrapped up instead of what they would *know*.

Below, we freely give away the recipe for successful classroom events, events that leave participants surprised by the interesting topics, relevance to real life, and instructors' effectiveness. Because the event was mostly about them—their experiences, questions, anticipated use of the learning back on the job—participants feel less grumpy about having missed a regular day at work and more interested in using the learning back on the job.

Tips for Making a Participative Classroom

- Request small tables instead of classroom rows
- Allow food and drinks, keeping an eye on hydration and healthy snacks
- Make meal time a shared experience, if possible
- Suspend policing behavior: do not regulate cell phones, bathroom breaks, short side conversations, or doodling instead of note-taking
- Trust the group's ability to handle a trainer who goes off script—the best questions will be ones that emerge from what is happening in the moment, not what was pre-planned
- Ask questions that cannot be answered alone with "Yes" or "No"—ask "What, How, Where, When, Why, Who" questions
- Enforce wait time, periods of silence that allowed participants to think about their answer before being expected to speak up
- Alternate activities between large group discussion, small group work, and individual desk-time
- Build to-do lists with participants before they walk away, publish, and distribute soon after training ends

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Exhibit 2: To follow the above list in part or entirety puts learners at the center of the learning event and forces trainers to act in service to them.

While Lee and Hile Group strongly endorse using the above-listed tips for improving the chances for learning transfer, we still rely on transfer planning to ensure impact before and after the classroom session.

LTL was also considered a series, not a one-time-dip in the magic pool of effective safety leadership and performance management. Two classroom rounds were developed with an in-field application time set between rounds. As a result, the whole PRC system could not mistake the size of the investment and corresponding high expectations for ROI. And, both participants and their bosses understood that application successes and failures would generate the content for the second classroom session, forcing at least minimal engagement with key *LTL* concepts and strategies.

How to Debunk Myth #2: Regard the transfer of learning back to the job as a shared responsibility—shared across the participants, their bosses, and you, the trainer

With all of the work that goes into a safety training event, from preparing the scenarios or setting up the equipment to completing necessary paper work, it can be difficult to take on the bigger, and potentially barrier-full, job of ensuring successful transfer of learned KSA onto the workplace. However, as we discussed earlier, participants are more likely to use what was taught if there is plan to prepare them for attending and a plan for getting them to use what was learned afterward.

For organizations that are not used to this much planning and follow up, we trainers must carry the brunt of how, when, and where participants apply what was learned and who needs to be looped in about it.

At Pinsly, Lee, Christina, and several senior leaders carefully planned the list of *LTL* participants, expectations for those participants and their bosses, and developed pre-work packets of information to be completed before the first session.

How to Debunk Myth #3: Filling seats is not the same as effecting results—define success by establishing measures of return on investment (ROI)

We are prepared for the following responses to this suggestion.

- "You're crazy! There's no way I can track return on the investment when I am buried in tracking down people who need to attend training, verifying whether someone is up for training this year or next, and rescheduling people who missed into another time slot."
- "I'm burdened by the formal paper work needed to certify people, pay for employees' time, and cover the costs incurred during the training."

While the administrative activities surrounding training events is daunting at best, we must track and document performance results for our training events or else we send the message that the administrative tasks are more important than seeing a return back on the job. We measure what we do—and for many of us, we know exactly how many hours we spend a week working the paper trail aspect of training and safety…but we cannot explain how our training or related efforts has served the employee, organizations, or safety culture. We simply keep doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results, which we would like to point out was Albert Einstein's definition of insanity.

As much as possible, seek out opportunities to gather stories, changes in numbers of things, such as number of job safety briefings before/after a back conservation training event or number of reported incidents before/after a safety communication training. Although we are responsible for some data tracking ourselves, it is very smart to employ the help of others who have been involved in the event to support data collection. In that way, we can get the information that will illustrate where the rubber hits the road without necessarily adding to our already-full plates (mixture of metaphors here, but point is clear).

And, by the way, we would recommend taking another look at the sorter that helps bring gaps in performance to the surface discussed in "Why People Work the Way They Do." An overly-burdened training function may be a sign that training is too often the fix of choice for delivering

safety messages and getting changed behaviors into the field. Seek less draining, more effective, and not-you actions and activities that will address the concerns and gaps that would otherwise turn into training events.

During *Leadership Toward Learning*, we designed application homework assignments that would both reinforce KSA taught in class and generate measures of success, such as:

- Deadlining development of professional goals for 2007 that were driven by participants and reviewed by their bosses
- Documenting successes and failures using leadership KSA in the *LTL* online Message Board, an electronic method for keeping participants apprised of one another's experiences back on the job
- Tracking number of meetings, conference calls, and job briefings where mentoring and coaching took place—whose agenda items include such activities as safety expectations, close call reports, performance expectations, orienting new hires, feedback about things going well/not well were addressed

While the above list captured a vast amount of qualitative data that only people close to the operations could track, Lee continued to watch the hard safety numbers, such as frequency of incidents and injuries, volume of reported close calls, and cost of incidents and injuries, to name a few.

As a result of intentionally designing between-class and post-class activities in this way, indicators of success and barriers to success abounded across PRC, giving Lee, Hile Group, senior leaders, participants, and their bosses plenty of opportunities to gauge *LTL*'s impact on the culture.

Results

We would be lying if we said, "And we all lived happily ever after, thanks to *Leadership Toward Learning*." As we have discussed, any time a learning event takes place, there are barriers that threaten participants' ability to transfer what they learned back to the job. That was certainly the case with us as *Leadership Toward Learning* hit PRC starting in the spring of 2007.

Barriers that we did and did not anticipate:

- Attention span for pre-work and planning information via email and attachments: While our paper materials intended to offer a series of how-tos and to-dos for people involved with *LTL*, there was more detail than prospective participants and bosses could appreciate without further context about the new leadership process.
- Timing of the launch: This leadership development process at PRC kicked off while the company was experiencing changes within the senior leadership team, learning how to work with the new Corporate Safety Director role, and living with newly-developed documents and processes (mentioned earlier in the Introduction to Case Study section). So much change was occurring simultaneously to effect culture change within PRC, it was not clear at first how high the bar should be set for measuring ROI for the leadership development process.

- Attention-on, attention-off focus: Sometimes the demanding nature of responding to the ongoing real-time challenges and issues of the business interfered with *LTL* application. Participants, their bosses, and PRC senior leaders did not always know how to make time to talk about *LTL* or seek data points that would illustrate its impact on the organization.
- Evolving roles and responsibilities for Lee, Christina, senior leadership team, and participants' bosses: Lee and Christina started out as organizers of the process but received additional support from Human Resources and select supervisors to support participants as they completed their homework, as well as modeled importance of *LTL* follow up by completing theirs, too.
- Length of application period: We let this go a little long without firming up points in time when participants needed to complete follow-up conversations with their bosses and peers.
- Power of change resisters: Not everyone welcomed the process or bought into the desired outcomes. Momentum built slowly within PRC during the first few months of the process as resisters weighed the pros and cons of *LTL* and the implications the process had for being able to stick with the status quo in terms of safety and leadership practices.

The internal *LTL* champions get the lion's share of the credit for getting us over the barriers with as little pain and conflict as possible. What saved *LTL* was not Lee's work, Hile Group's influence, or even senior leaders' support. A handful of dedicated, assertive, and ask-for-forgiveness-later participants made inroads within their locations by using their leadership and safety management skills sincerely and unapologetically—resisters be damned. Without these people, *LTL* could have easily experienced the same fate as so many training sessions and shown very little return for the investment made. But because of these people, a kind of wildfire spread that *LTL* could achieve positive things for participants, peers, and Pinsly overall.

Pinsly has enjoyed the following hard-number and cultural successes.

Quantitative Results

- Three-fold drop in reportable injuries
- 60% drop in human factor accidents
- 0% increase in litigation cases
- Insurance premiums at PRC dropped by nearly $10,000 because of the above-listed safety improvements
- Direct cost savings due to these decreases in injuries and human factor accidents is well over $250,000
- Indirect cost savings is nearly $400,000

Qualitative Results

- Sending managers through a leadership development process with a commitment to repeat with another round in 2008 showed employees that "vision" was being translated into reality
- Thanks to the close communications at this small organization, people talked about the process and the invited participants before it even kicked off—setting the expectation that participants were deserving of the program and that a difference within PRC was expected after it kicked off

- Graduates realized their responsibility in managing processes that cost the company money, resulting in significant reduction in expenditures Q4 2007
- Craft-focused conference calls began out of leadership participants desire to improve communications between operation locations. Every call focused on a particular PRC craft, included safety, and was managed entirely by middle managers and their employees.
- Surprised at how much information came out of discussions with employees, the Director of Human Resources continues to have regular check ins across PRC locations using open-ended questions and active listening techniques—opening dialogue about operations, job satisfaction, safety, welfare of the company, benefits
- Stronger partnership between Human Resources and Safety—Safety now has input around performance evaluations, training, discipline, and morale
- The LDP program has given safety the venue to show our managers how safety is a journey, where challenges and successes come together, hand in hand.
- Lee's role has transitioned away from "safety cop" to "safety coach"
- People began taking responsibility for all aspects of their jobs and pro-actively shuffling and restructuring expenses that returned real savings
- Improved communication across the organization—from the field to company headquarters. For a company that historically operated as separate entities—Arkansas, Florida, Massachusetts (Pioneer Valley), and Railroad Distribution Services, respectively—to adopt company-wide safety policies and personnel policies was a huge success indicator of a Pinsly identity emerging across the organization.
- Issues are being handled more and more of the time by local Safety Committees and Pinsly's Operations Sub-Committee. Prior to the leadership process, matters were routinely sent to the Corporate Safety Committee to handle. This change marks a culture shift whereby employees and middle managers are more empowered to resolve issues and communicate decisions up the food chain rather than remain dependent on senior leaders for every decision.
- Lee regularly communicates with senior leadership team members, particularly the GMs at each of PRC's locations; the result of these closer working relationships means that operations drive safety and supports the enforcement of safety as well as development of new aspects of PRC safety culture
- Local safety firmly rooted with Lee in background ensuring corporate alignment
- Better relationship with locations also gives Lee opportunity to be more visible to employees—as PRC first CSD, Lee is showing through working relationships what a CSD brings to the organization

Conclusion

The case study offered by Pinsly Railroad Company illustrates how an internal Corporate Safety Director and external safety consultant repackaged what would have otherwise been safety training into a leadership development process. This process allowed employees to get better anchored in key safety knowledge and behaviors to drive down injuries, incidents, and insurance premiums. It also forced participants and their supervisors to use their own expertise in order to ensure their learning needs were met and that their performance back on the job was different for having attended Leadership Toward Learning.

Safety professionals must remain connected to the bigger picture and use relationships with other parts of the organization to recognize how safety and business efforts impact one another. We must run our assumptions that training is needed through a sorter, such as the one offered by the Hile Group, to see if there are other factors that could better support safer thinking, behaviors, and supervision.

When safety professionals know that training is the most appropriate solution to address safety concerns and needs, we must work through strategic relationships every time we want transfer to happen. We must see the relationships we have with our participants' bosses as opportunities to gain the support of the people with the authority over learners' performance. Safety does not typically have that same kind of authority over people so working with colleagues that do encourages participants' transfer of learning back to the workplace. Furthermore, depend on participants' bosses when it is time to demonstrate results. Since their jobs depend in part on demonstrating fiscal responsibility and commitment to employees' professional development, they will likely be motivated to send successes up the food chain and support problem solving to minimize barriers that are getting in the way of employees' use of what was learned.

Most importantly, when we know that training is the most appropriate solution to address safety concerns and needs, we must do right by our participants. That includes offering them engaging, grounded-in-experience opportunities to learn. Encourage participants to prepare how to use what is learned by leveraging their professional and personal networks for support when back on the job. Give them meaningful follow-up work to do and opportunities to document and publicize results so that they become part of a process for capturing return on the investment upon leaving the classroom.

When we position ourselves at the same table as operations, work the dickens out of relationships with colleagues, and act in service to the people we strive to protect and the organizations that they serve, we can comfortably depend on training without getting caught up in the myths that prevent it from being the potentially injury- and life-saving strategy we need it to be.

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