Workplace Safety
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Is This the Year to Revise Your Safety Training?

With many employees holding onto their jobs, now could be the ideal time to adopt and measure new methods.

by Adrienne Selko

With rapid changes in all aspects of business, maybe safety organizations should take this opportunity to re-evaluate the effectiveness of their safety training.

One reason this might be an ideal time is that current economic conditions are causing employees to say they will remain in their current jobs for the next couple of years. This is an opportunity to improve programs and measure the results.

As is the case when moving to a future state, examining the current state is essential. To review excellence in standards, I turned to the Campbell Institute's (part of NSC) whitepaper, "Foundation for Evaluating Safety Training Effectiveness."

The paper, which interviewed members of the organization and created a Training Effectiveness Workgroup, came to the following conclusions.

- Safety training is widely recognized as a vital component of any EHS program, contributing to injury prevention, hazard mitigation and the development of a strong safety culture. However, many organizations lack a systematic approach to measuring training effectiveness.
- The measurement of training effectiveness is critical for the evaluation and continuous improvement of EHS training programs, regardless of the type of training modality (classroom-based, online or e-learning, virtual reality, mentorship programs, blended learning, etc.).

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- The Kirkpatrick Training Effectiveness Model is amongst the most widely studied model of training effectiveness and remains popular due to its simplicity, relative ease and comprehensive evaluation criteria. Broken down into four levels (reaction, learning, behavior and results), the model served as the framework for the best practices shared by the Training Effectiveness Workgroup.

The paper notes that the basis of a sound training program, as suggested by OSHA in 2021, rests on a few common characteristics.

- **Accurate**: Training materials should be prepared by qualified individuals, updated as needed and facilitated by experienced trainers employing appropriate techniques and training methods.
- **Credible**: Facilitators should have an EHS background or be a subject matter expert (SME) on the topic and have experience training adults or working with the target population.
- **Clear:** Training materials should be clear and understandable – training developers should ensure that readability and language choices match the intended audience and adjust for factors such as language proficiencies and literacy levels.
- **Practical**: Training programs should present information, ideas and skills participants see as directly useful in their working lives for optimal transfer of learning.

One of the challenges to effective training was that since a variety of stakeholders, such as employers and regulators, determine the training, employees may "experience a reduced sense of choice and self-determination when engaging in the training."

This point was further emphasized in one of the paper's concluding statements. "While organizations often employ various metrics to measure their training efforts, many lack a systematic approach to assess the impact on safety attitudes, behavioral changes and overall safety culture."

Looking Forward

Those attitudes and behavioral changes have resulted in training that is very diverse in terms of delivery. A 2024 State of Safety Training Survey found that over 90% of professionals agree that blended learning—mixing live sessions, online courses, videos, and other tools—makes training more engaging and effective. E-learning, in particular, has grown by 350% since 2019.

One of the most talked about technologies, generative AI, is poised to become an increasing part of blended learning.

"Generative AI is transforming workplace safety training by making it smarter, more engaging and tailored to your team's needs," said Rick Tobin, CEO of Bongarde Media, author of the survey and this issue's cover story *(See page 12)*. "Imagine giving your employees access to realistic, AI-generated simulations where they can practice responding to hazards without any real-world risk. Or using AI to personalize training content for specific roles, job sites, or risks—so your forklift operator gets training relevant to their daily tasks, not generic safety lessons.

"AI can even analyze past incidents to predict risks and suggest proactive training modules to prevent accidents before they happen. Need quick answers to safety questions? AI-powered assistants can provide real-time guidance, reinforcing best practices on the spot. By integrating these tools, you're not just training your team—you're building a culture of safety that's dynamic, effective and future-ready."

With new technology and an understanding of the importance of a systemic approach to an overall safety culture, 2026 just might be the ideal time to push for increased safety effectiveness.

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