

Be a Safety Coach (Part 3) – Coaching

Getting your coaches ready:

As part of a series on the role of the Safety Coach, this article focuses on laying the groundwork for the coaching process. Appropriate coaching is critical to behavior-based safety (BBS). Behavior-based safety is a systematic way to promote safety in the workplace.



The goals of a behavior-based safety program:

- Creating a process that clearly defines a set of safe behaviors and work practices that reduce employees' risks for injuries.
- Providing a way to consistently identify and reinforce safe work practices.
- Reducing at-risk behaviors to a near-zero level.
- Recognizing favorable behaviors.
- Correcting unfavorable behaviors when needed.
- Problem-solving to improve work practices.

Create a coaching program:

Coaching is essential because maintaining the desired behaviors requires frequent, objective, and appropriate feedback.

Observations provide the objective data that makes coaching uniquely effective. Once observation checklists (as noted in a previous "Being a Safety Coach" training short) are finalized, make good use of them by developing your coaching program.

Identify the right coaches:

Considerations include:

- The availability of employees.
- How much training is required for the coaches to understand the applicable roles.
- Whether eligibility extends only to supervisors and leads.

Determine frequency of observations and coaching:

Daily or weekly coaching is the best way to support lasting behavior change. To decide the ideal frequency, first determine the risks associated with the jobs being observed.

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Provide training to coaches:

Consider the existing skills and training needs of your possible coaches. For the Behavioral Safety process to be successful, coaches will need to be proficient in three areas.

1. Observation skill training:

Observation is foundational to evaluation; it is one of the most important skills a coach masters.

Does every coach see the same things? Look at the sentence in the box below; give yourself time to scan it well. Then, answer the question, **“How many “F’s” are in the sentence?”** The answer is located at the end of this document.*

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS
OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH
THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS.

How many “F’s” did you find? If your count is different than the “final answer”, look again.

Observation is not as simple as it seems. Many processes, pre-conceptions and beliefs can interfere. In the case of the exercise, the typical person doesn't recognize the letter “F” in the word “of” because it registers as sounds like “ov.” We seem to have this pre-conceived notion that the letter “f” should sound like the “soft” “f” in the word finish. It's a challenge. An effective coach takes into account similar kinds of challenges when observing. Coaches must be as objective as possible, observing what occurs with no preconceived notions, beliefs or judgments.

2. Observation-based coaching training:

Coaches must be able to:

- Give positive feedback.
- Have a constructive discussion about any observed safety concerns.
- Problem-solve regarding the safety concerns with the worker or workgroup.

3. Training for the role being observed:

Coaches need to understand the basic skills and roles of the employees performing the work tasks being observed.

**Answer to “How many F’s are there?”: Six!*