

# COMMUNICATING SAFETY

## SESSION NOTES FROM GARRISON WYNN

**This document contains an overview of Garrison's presentation and is designed for people who have attended the session.**

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### FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS

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#### The research

- 5,000 top-performing people of influence in multiple industries. **They had the trust and relationships in place to make safety happen every day. They were looking out of for each other!**

#### Being right!

- **The ideas of others – If you criticize others' ideas about safety, they will almost never listen to yours, no matter how good your ideas are!**
  - How you make people feel – If you make people feel important, what you offer is more important to them.
  - People don't choose the best safety strategy. They choose what they are the most comfortable with, whether it's the best or not.
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### THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUST

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#### We are judgment machines.

#### Everybody knows something you don't.

- **The minute you think you know everything about safety, your wisdom leaves you.** I think we understand that everyone knows something you don't when it comes to safety. The problem is sometimes people are just wrong!
- The top 1% didn't use the word "wrong." Instead, they said things like "Please tell me more." When they took that tactic, they noticed three things that could happen:
  1. You might find out that you are more in agreement than you previously thought because you listened.
  2. You listened and found out they don't make any sense, but now you know *why* they don't make any sense because you listened.
  3. They start to change their story to match your story in an effort to look right in front of other people.
- The beginning of trust: You've known people for 5 years who still don't trust you, and you've known people for 5 minutes who do. Most information on trust stresses that it takes time. But actually looking at research from 1916 to the present reveals the truth about trust.

## **Trust is built on the foundation of two things: compassion and competence.**

- If people know you care and they believe you can do your job, they will trust you. Believability gives you credibility as a safety leader.
- The listening test: 78% of us don't listen very well. But that doesn't mean you can't learn to be a better listener. Be present in the moment and make people feel heard.
- How can you prove you care and are competent? Make sure people feel heard and can see their input in your idea.

## **What most people won't do, and what the most effective always do**

- People you can't stand: Are you willing to own 5% of their problems to gain more influence? Are you willing to look at the role you play in their behavior or reaction?
- People you don't understand: We let others' "odd" behavior take up a lot of our thoughts. We believe everyone has a different agenda. But people basically want sincerity, value, and prestige.

## **Sincerity**

- Does your sincerity match the situation? Are you seen as real? If you aren't sincere enough, people see you as cold. But if you're overly sincere, they see you as fake.

## **Money/Value**

- Multiple solutions for a single problem – If you tell people there is only one way to do something, you have no influence. Younger people were raised to believe there are multiple ways of doing everything. Finding those avenues makes them feel valuable. **What to say:** "There are other ways to do this, but this is the way most people agree works best."

## **Prestige**

- Will working with you make them look good to others? Can you make them look good in front of the people they want to impress? Can you make them look smart?
- **If people know you are being real, you have more than one way to solve their problems, and you can make them look good to others, they will listen to everything you say every time you speak. That's the foundation of influence.**

## **Believability**

- Some things may be true but not believable. The issue: Some people believe a thing so strongly that they just look for reasons to prove what they already believe is true.
- The key to influence: Make sure people feel valued. They will look out for you and make fewer mistakes.
- When introducing change, reassure people that what they already know will help them. People don't want to change if they feel a new way reduces their value or expertise. **No one wants to be a senior beginner.**
- Similarities first: Show how what you offer is similar to what they're used to, and then show the benefits of what you offer – how it's better than what they're used to. **People who feel valuable make fewer mistakes. People who feel valued are more loyal to company policy. You prove to people that you believe they are valuable by letting them know you have faith in their abilities. Let them know you are glad they are on your team!**

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## WHAT THE MOST INFLUENTIAL HAVE IN COMMON

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### They know the impact of value and clarity.

- Can you clearly explain your value in 20 seconds? Your value must be easy to understand.
- Don't let your brilliance prevent you from making sense! It doesn't matter how smart you are if no one knows what you're talking about.
- If you are intelligent, you may lack tolerance for those who don't understand things as well as you. If that is the case, you may be labeled a poor communicator, which robs you of influence.
- **A clear example: If your job is to get everybody on the same page, you should at least make that page a lot easier to read. Does everyone agree on what successful safety looks like?**
- Safety communication is not just about making the information available; it's about making sure people understand what you've told them. Zero accidents are about clarity about being present in the moment.

### They clearly communicate their point.

- **Beware of mixed messages such as "Be safe but hurry up!"** Better message: "Do the best you can between safety guidelines. If you are outside the safety guidelines, stop and rethink it!"
- It takes courage to say, "Stop the job!" Can you tell your boss that he or she is not safe? Accidents happen because people are not present in the moment; they're working on one thing but thinking about something else.

### They show value clearly.

- Clarity is the foundation of value. People buy into what they can understand quickly. If you are easy to understand, you have more influence. Getting buy-in on safety requires that you make sure the value for a specific person or group is extremely clear. **Contractors and other cultures need to see how your "lifesaving rules" apply to them personally. That means you have to know what they value to make safety consistently live in their minds.**
- To get top managers to buy into safety, you must be clear and brief. "Not putting time and money into safety makes it seem to the public like we don't care. If there is an accident that they suspect we could have prevented, we have a very expensive publicity problem. Statistically, we are going to have an incident; how deep the effect is on our pocketbook and our reputation is up to you."
- There are people out there who have less value to offer than you do; they're just better at explaining it. It seems that actually *having* value is not quite as valuable as *explaining it well!*
- Make it clear that your people are valuable and that they value safety enough, in general, to do what it takes.

### They know the perfect team is not perfect.

- The definition of a team is people playing different positions to achieve a common goal. Teamwork is the key to efficiency.
- The foundation of true agreement is disagreement. To make safety part of your culture and ensure that it carries realistic expectations with it, you need people to be honest. You **do not need** people paying lip service.
- **A leader can forge team performance that you can't get from people who say "yes" to your face and "no" behind your back. Safety might not always be easy, but it needs to be easy to understand, so it's simple to repeat to others.**
- A good leader can hold a team accountable and make them feel valued as a unit. Safety is an organized effort.

### **They know the leading cause of stress.**

- Stress (the most common cause of illness) arises from knowing exactly what you are supposed to be doing but consistently doing something else. Practicing safety lowers your stress. It's the true link between safety and wellness.

### **They avoid jellyfish management.**

- No spineless leaders! True leaders do not blame those above them for what the company requires.
- Non-jellyfish statement: "Our new process is different but definitely doable."

### **They know that older and younger workers must work better together.**

- The worst leadership strategy you could ever have is wishing people were just like you.
- Younger workers may be more organized but often lack a sense of urgency. "Now" means now!
- Influence younger workers with your praise and attention.
- You can't lead by example if you're a bad example! Don't create unsafe behaviors in others by telling them "how we used to do it before safety equipment." Young men will try to prove their bravery if you challenge them.
- **Show that you believe in the change. The definition of leadership is when others follow someone because they want to, not because they have to.**

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## **THINKING LIKE A SAFETY LEADER**

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### **Expect bad news**

- The media vs. reality – Don't let the media tell you what your life looks like. That's for you to decide. Good news doesn't sell newspapers.
- Watch more History Channel and less nightly news.
- To make change work, you have to spread **good** news (i.e., "Why Safety Is Good for Everyone"), which requires effort.

### **Points worth reiterating**

- If you sincerely criticize others' ideas about safety, they won't use yours!
- They will trust and listen to you if you make them feel valued. People who feel valuable have fewer incidents.
- You must be clear and explain the value of safety to an individual or a specific group.
- Your behavior can create safety issues for others. What comes out of your mouth can influence the safety culture.
- You cannot make safety work by yourself. Being honest with each other builds the trust that creates a safer environment.
- You have to stand up for safety regardless of your opinion.
- If you do all that we've talked about, we will all be looking out for each other's safety.

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## CHANGE

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- **Action and adaptability** – Change is not the problem; resistance to change is the problem. The tool of the day is influence.
- **We have a choice** – Success lives in you. The best way to stay motivated is to motivate each other.
- **Don't wait for bravery** – The most successful people take action while they're afraid. You do that a few times and you develop courage.
- **Your value** – If you make others feel valued, you'll be seen as more valuable. People who trust each other and communicate look out for each other every day.

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## CONNECT WITH GARRISON

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If you want to find out how you can use the research and information that I talked about today to increase employee engagement and improve performance, go to <https://www.motivational-speaker-success.com/evolve/>

# Safety Is Not A Goal; It's A Lifestyle

By Garrison Wynn

Let's liberate ourselves from the BS. Many of us who try to make the safety programs work at our organizations are not dedicated, safety professionals. We have what is commonly referred to as "a real job." This is not meant to be offensive to trained and highly skilled safety folks, for whom safety is indeed the *real job*. More accurately, my point is that for some people, safety is a chore they're required to do to be viewed as compliant. To them, it's not as important as other responsibilities requiring their focus. Perhaps that's because bad things seem to happen to *other* people, not to us—until they do, of course, and then we say it's bad luck and life is unfair.

**Living safely and helping others do the same is one reason we're not extinct as a species.** We seem to have a bit of a knack for not being consistently dead! Lots of research tells us that worker safety is dependent on behavior and human factors. Over the years, through all this research and experience, we've accumulated awareness of things we need to pay attention to and look out for when it comes to safety. Here is my shortlist of long-sought-after safety principles:

**Stay alert.** It's astonishing how many incidents occur that no one saw coming. In reality, how often are you surprised by something that you *did* see coming? A safety program can be hamstrung by two types of employees who lack alertness. There's the obviously inattentive person, of course, but more difficult to identify are disengaged workers who don't feel valuable. Often, these disengaged workers emotionally check out and become less aware. The warning here is that being an unhappy, miserable person (or working alongside of one) sets you up to be injured. So let's all start smiling immediately!

**Use the right tools.** Sometimes using the wrong tools is easier than finding the right ones. A Japanese plant manager once told me, "We only have the right tools near the job site." He also stated that if someone tried to use a screwdriver for a job that required a hammer, the employee had the wrong job and, in fact, should never have been hired.

**Back your safety program.** You cannot lead by example if you are a bad example. My high school shop teacher was missing two fingers. I guess he knew what to do; he just wasn't very good at it! You reinforce your safety program by your own good example. Also crucial is a safety application or system ([incident reporting software](#)) that allows quick reporting of any unsafe behavior observed in the field. This kind of system keeps people tied more tightly to a culture of safety.

**Get first aid immediately.** It's amazing how many relatively minor injuries become serious when people don't pay attention to them. If you're bleeding or limping, I have news for you: you're hurt! We really must do away with the mindset that recordable incidents are some mark of failure. They're designed to capture or record the circumstances leading to an incident (that's why they're called *recordables*) so improvements can be made.

**Please get some help.** When you're 22 years old, you're nearly indestructible (and also inexperienced, which can be a bad combination). When you're 55, it's possible to pull a groin muscle while changing channels using the TV remote. There is a reason we don't have any 55-year-old quarterbacks in the NFL (though I did see what appeared to be the mummified remains of Vinny Testaverde having a great game not long ago, and Tom Brady could turn out to be an immortal magic robot). The important truth is that it takes more guts to ask for help than it does to say you don't need any help! Remember, when you're experienced, it's your brain that has value—not just your brawn.

To live the lifestyle of someone who's safe, looks out for others, and uses personal influence to move safety through the organization, it requires effort. But that "real job" of yours goes away if your organization's safety record is so bad that you're off the vendor list or the facility burns down. So, basically, the goal is to not be dead *and* have a job. That dual objective requires you to embrace a safe way of living, working, and interacting with others.

What's more, you should give those safety professionals some love. (Let me be clear for the HR people: I'm not promoting any inappropriate physical embracing of safety professionals.) They're simply trying to help you! They are not crazed profit-killers trying to shut down success. Some reasonably profit-minded executives have been known to

respond to the mantra “Safety First” by saying, “The idea sounds wonderful, but we are not in the safety business. We are in the ‘making money’ business, and safety—though obviously important—is not our goal. The job we do is dangerous and incidents are to be expected.” That’s all well and good, and it makes perfect sense; we all know we have to take some risks to achieve success. And I agree that safety is not technically a goal when referring to business objectives. But you cannot reach a goal without specific tasks. And if those tasks are not completed in a style or manner that involves safety, then it obviously reduces your chances of success.

A safe lifestyle doesn’t mean you drive down the road in your Volvo wearing a fluorescent orange jacket and a helmet (though that’s not a bad idea on New Year’s Eve). It just means that a focus on safety is part of your natural consciousness. It’s the foundation that supports all your goals and allows you to live a lifestyle of awareness.