

# **Broader Management Skills for the OHS Person**

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## **Introduction**

This is the second of 4 safety e books, the first is Guidance for the beginning OHS professional, the third is What it means to be an OHS professional and the fourth is Lessons I have learnt about management, safety, life and people. The papers What makes a safety management system fly, 30 ways to stuff up a safety management system and What you need to know about health & safety leadership (Available on request to [fgrobotham@gmail.com](mailto:fgrobotham@gmail.com)) have also proved popular.

One of the things that came to me a number of years ago was that the OHS person needs a number of non OHS skills as well as OHS technical skills to be effective. You have to resolve to be a life-long learner; often learning in fields allied to your major discipline will increase your effectiveness in your major discipline.

Be a sponge and soak up all the knowledge and experience you can. Never be scared to ask for advice and experience, never stop learning. Look beyond what others see and learn to understand the 'why' and 'how'.

Finding yourself a mentor will be of real value and constantly discuss issues with your peers.

Deliberately ask for the hard jobs. Putting yourself out of your comfort zone is a great way to learn and do not be afraid to fail. Failure is a great way to learn.

Start your learning at the level you can handle. Simple principles can be easily learnt, you don't need to be an academic.

The following attempts to explore the required non OHS technical skills.

Non OHS technical skills I maintain are necessary include-

1. Communications Skills
2. Interpersonal Skills
3. Management of Organisational Change
4. Leadership
5. Psychology and Sociology
6. Project Management
7. Quality Management
8. Teambuilding
9. Facilitating Meetings / Problem Solving Groups
10. Time Management
11. Mentoring / Coaching
12. Strategy
13. Managing Committees
14. Recognising Displacement Activities
15. Marketing
16. Human Resource Management
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18. Motivation
19. Being a Champion
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21. Commitment to Excellence
22. Empathy
23. Being a Chameleon
24. Relevant Industry Experience
25. Learning

## **1. Communications skills**

### Introduction

An observation of mine is that despite having great OHS technical skills a number of OHS people are let down by their communications skills.

As I get older my critical reflection on practice tells me communications skills are just as important as OHS technical skills. There is not much point having a great message if you cannot get it across, if you have great technical skills but cannot get along with people you will not succeed.

### Keep it Succinct

The biggest problem with written communications is its length; generally I think you must try to get your routine messages across in a maximum of 2 pages. Busy people do not have time to write more and busy people do not have the time to read more. Concentrate on the MUST KNOWS. I am sure some safety people must be paid by the word, the result is long ponderous written communications. You can be certain that if it is too much like hard work to read it will not be read.

### Professor T.J. Larkin's book "Communicating Change"

After receiving their communications employees should return to their jobs, change their behaviour and perform better. The change should be immediate and measurable. If the communication changes behaviour it is good communication, if it does not it is bad communication.

The goal of communication is improving performance, it should change the way employees do their job. If communication is to change behaviour it must be grounded in the interests and desires of the receiver. To be noticed communications must contain something that interests the receiver and touches their values. Communication must be what interests the frontline employees not the bosses.

There are 3 very important principles for effective workforce communications-

1. Use the supervisor not management
2. If it is not face to face it is not communications
3. Focus on the local work area

## Effective Communications

**Effective communication skills are fundamental to success in many aspects of life.** Lots of jobs require strong communication skills and socially people with improved communication skills usually have better interpersonal relationships. **Communication is a two way process so improving communication involves both how we send and receive messages.**

## Improving Communications

- Empathise - Try to see things from the point of view of others
- Encourage - Offer words of encouragement and praise. Make others feel wanted, valued and appreciated.
- Learn to listen - Listen to the words being spoken, how they are spoken and non-verbal messages
- Beware of others emotions - Be sympathetic to others misfortunes and praise their positives. Maintain eye contact and ask others for their opinions
- Treat people equally - Do not patronise or develop favourites and encourage feedback
- Attempt to resolve conflict - Use your listening skills to understand both sides of an argument. Encourage people to talk to each other.
- Communicate effectively - Plan what you say and explain things simply.
- Use humour - No one likes a grouch. Try to be friendly, upbeat and positive. If you smile and stay cheerful people are more likely to respond positively to you.
- Minimise stress - Try to remain calm and focused
- Only complain when necessary – People will not be drawn to you if you are always complaining. If you must complain focus on the issue not the person

## Conclusion

Communications skills are a key requirement for OHS personnel; you are encouraged to learn about them.

## **2. Interpersonal skills**

### Introduction

An observation of mine is that despite having great OHS technical skills a number of OHS people are let down by their interpersonal skills.

As I get older my critical reflection on practice tells me interpersonal skills are just as important as OHS technical skills. There is not much point having a great message if you cannot get it across, if you have great technical skills but cannot get along with people you will not succeed.

## 10 Ways to Improve Your Interpersonal Skills

1. Put on a happy face
2. Show you care
3. Be considerate of others
4. Be an active listener-We have 2 ears and 1 mouth; they should be used in this ratio
5. Promote togetherness
6. Settle disputes
7. Be a great communicator
8. Make others laugh
9. Put yourself in their shoes
10. Do not complain

#### Cite H.R. on Interpersonal Skills

1. Keep skid chains on your tongue; always say less than you think. Cultivate a low, soothing voice. How you say it counts more than what you say.
2. Make promises sparingly, and keep them faithfully, no matter what it costs.
3. Never let an opportunity pass to say a kind and encouraging word to or about somebody. Praise good work, regardless of who did it. If criticism is needed, criticise helpfully, never spitefully.
4. Be interested in others, their pursuits, their work, their homes and families. Make merry with those who rejoice; with those who weep, mourn. Let everyone you meet, however humble, and feel that you regard him as a person of importance.
5. Be cheerful. Don't burden or depress those around you by dwelling on your minor aches and pains and small disappointments. Remember, everyone has their problems. Keep an open mind. Discuss but don't argue. It is a mark of a superior mind to be able to disagree without being disagreeable.
6. Let your virtues speak for themselves. Refuse to talk of another's vices. Discourage gossip. It is a waste of valuable time and can be extremely destructive. Be careful of another's feelings. Wit and humour at the other person's expense are rarely worth it and may hurt when least expected.
7. Don't be too anxious about the credit due to you. Also, pay no attention to any ill-natured remarks about you either. Simply live your truth. Success is much sweeter that way.

The following 3 techniques are invaluable-

### Appropriate Self-Disclosure

I was introduced to and practised appropriate self-disclosure in a Psychology subject. You will find in a new relationship if you reveal a little bit of you (provided it is appropriate) the other party will reveal a little bit of them (provided it is appropriate), if you then reveal a little bit more of you (provided it is appropriate) they will reveal a little bit more of them (provided it is appropriate), and so the cycle goes on. This is very simple, incredibly effective and I use it all the time to build relationships. Of course if you really hang all your dirty washing out it will probably stuff up the process.

### Reflective Listening

On a counselling subject I was introduced to and practised reflective listening. This is a very powerful technique to get to the core beliefs of those around you. Someone says something, you may say "If I understand you properly you think x", this gives the other party the opportunity to expand on their view or "Correct me if I am wrong but I think you are saying y".

### The Formula

There will be times others do things that annoy you, often they will have what they think are good reasons for what they are doing and they will have no idea they are annoying you. A good formula for these situations is to express your feelings as follows-

"When you A, I feel B, because C, and I would like you to do D, because E"

The only person who knows how you feel is you and most people will not know how you feel and many will be happy to adjust their behaviour accordingly. If this does not happen at least you have the basis for ongoing discussion.

I suggest all safety professionals read up on these techniques, it can make your life much easier!

When it comes to recruitment a good understanding of interpersonal skills can make the difference between not getting and getting that dream job.

People Skills by Bolton is a good reference, to get the best value out of the book you need to work through some of the exercises in the chapters.

### The Use of Humour

Humour can be used effectively in formal and informal presentations and in general interaction in business and non-business life.

- Avoid humour that focuses on religion, politics, race, class, sex, age, physical appearance. To use any of these will run the risk of upsetting someone. I hear you asking what the hell else is there that I can use. The only safe butt of your humour is yourself!

- Introduce the humour in the general flow of your conversation.
- For a major presentation rehearse and listen to yourself on a tape recorder.
- Like many things in life humour follows the 7 P rule-Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Piss-Poor Performance.
- Try to use humour that relates to things others see as an annoyance.
- Quotations from famous people are often sources of humour; you can search these on the internet. Laurie Lawrence's web-site has a lot of quotations.
- Stretching the truth is forgivable.

If you are a communicator who uses effective humour, presents well and has a relevant message you will be invited back.

For more information Google the topic and look at the paper, "*The use of humour*" on ohschange.com.au.

### Set the Example

One of the best ways of influencing others in safety is through you setting and living the safety example. You will gain respect. While a simple competency on the face of it, setting the example is very important. No matter how good a line you talk, if you do not match it with your behaviour you will gain no respect. As a leader you are constantly watched by those you work with.

### Conclusion

Great interpersonal skills should be part of the OHS person's tool-kit. There are a number of techniques you can use to enhance your interpersonal skills.

## **3. Management of Organisational Change**

### Introduction

The only thing constant in business is change. General organisational change principles can enhance safety change if they are applied thoroughly.

### Introduction to Change

Change has been around a long time.

*I cannot say whether things will get better if we change, what I can say is that they must change if they are to get better.* Georg Christoph Lichtenstein, 1742-1799

Dr. Merv Wilkinson puts change into perspective when he says: *Organisational change is a generic body of knowledge that is applicable across the board but only when contextualised*

*into the particular workplace within the culture and people characteristics and professions etc. of the situation /workplaces.*

Employees often resist changes which diminish skill requirements in jobs, personal status, authority, power or influence, personal or job security, remuneration, workplace communication and opportunities for social interaction. They also resist changes which are forced on them, are not fully understood, affect accepted ways of doing things, violate behavioural norms, disrupt established social relationships, make people feel ineffective or incompetent or expose personal weaknesses.

### Organisational Change Management Theory

Experienced safety professionals will recognise the relevance to safety change in the three change management practices outlined by Perkins. Managing cultural change requires three things- management commitment, universal approval and appropriate measures and rewards.

#### 1. Management Commitment

In order for anything to happen in an enterprise, including change, executives and managers must be consistently committed to make it happen. Only enterprise leaders can ensure the resources necessary to effect the changes are available. Leaders must continuously and obviously support the changes. The visibility of leadership support is a primary factor in achieving universal approval for change.

#### 2. Universal Approval

Internal change is successful only when the people involved approve of the change. They understand the need for change. They believe the change is good for the enterprise and for them. They agree that the change being undertaken is the right one.

#### 3. Measures and Rewards

Getting everyone to want change is difficult. It requires a level and degree of communication not found in many enterprises. The best way to get and maintain universal approval is to ensure the process and results of change are measured appropriately and accurately and communicated enterprise-wide. Good results and changed behaviour must be rewarded. At the same time, unchanged behaviour and poor results should not be rewarded. Employees will not work toward change if they continue to be rewarded for old practices.

Kotter speaks about the eight steps for successful large-scale change.

1. Increase urgency. Those who are successful in change begin their work by creating a sense of urgency among relevant people.
2. Build the guiding team. With urgency turned up the more successful change agents pull together a guiding team with the credibility, skills, connections, reputations and formal authority required to provide change leadership.



3. Get the vision right. The guiding team creates sensible, clear, uplifting visions and sets of strategies.
4. Communicate for buy-in. Communication of the vision and strategies comes next-simple heart-felt messages sent through many unclogged channels. Deeds are more important than words. Symbols speak loudly. Repetition is the key
5. Empower action. Key obstacles that stop people working on the vision are removed.
6. Create short-term wins. Short-term wins provide credibility, resources and momentum to the overall effort.
7. Do not let up. Change leaders do not let-up they create wave after wave of change until the vision becomes a reality.
8. Make change stick. Change leaders make change stick by nurturing a new culture. Appropriate promotions, skilful orientation and events can make a big difference.

Kotter's text "*The Heart of Change*" is a recommended must-read for anyone undertaking cultural change.

Schein relates how leaders embed and transmit change. The most powerful mechanisms for culture embedding and reinforcement are:

1. What leaders pay attention to, measure and control.
2. Leader reactions to critical incidents and organisational crises.
3. Deliberate role modelling, teaching and coaching by leaders.
4. Criteria for allocation of rewards and status.
5. Criteria for recruitment, selection, promotion, retirement and excommunication.

## Conclusion

The principles of organisational change management must be examined for their applicability to OHS Change. Safety Change will be much more effective if these principles are put into practice.

During author's organisational change studies he discovered the concept that "People support what they create". It is suggested this motto is directly applicable to safety change.

## References and Further Information

For references and further information refer to the paper Organisational Change Management Principles on [www.ohschange.com.au](http://www.ohschange.com.au)

## **4. Leadership**

### Introduction

Leadership can make or break an organisation. It is my contention that general leadership principles are not applied frequently or well in Australian industry.

### Why is Leadership Important?

Leadership defines the purpose, goals, vision, mission and objectives of the organisation. It further sets the direction, lays down the expectations and guides implementation. It is a vital component of strategic and operational management plans. Leaders must manage by walking around and often be seen in the workplace.

### Leadership Perspectives

Having survived a number of years in industry I am acutely aware that leadership of an organisation can make or break the organisation. The importance of leadership is vastly underrated in Australian industry. Leadership is the often forgotten key to excellence in all aspects of business and life. Unfortunately it is sometimes the refuge of scoundrels.

In my experience many supervisors and managers know little about general leadership. I would go as far as to say leadership is not understood by many in management. People are often promoted to supervisor / manager positions because of their technical skills and with little knowledge of and preparation for leadership.

**Leaders** influence, inspire and drive people to a common goal, create vision and excitement; set a direction, motivate and inspire people to follow; align people; and build new relationships and structure. Leadership is about people.

**Managers** keep the day-to-day operations of an organisation running smoothly and must plan and budget; coordinate, control and execute activities; organise staff and work within an existing structure. Management is about systems and things.

General Colin Powell is reported as having said leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible.

Honest and ethical behaviour is the centre piece of leadership, we constantly hear about otherwise highly competent leaders who fail because of ethical issues. When highly ethical leaders do not take up the leadership challenge less ethical people will fill the void. This appears to happen commonly in politics, business and the sporting world.

### Framework of What Follows

The majority of what follows is the wise words of acknowledged experts in leadership gained after extensive research into this topic.

### Management Commitment

Livermore (in Carter, Ulrich and Goldsmith, page 46) observes “The best system or model in the world is not going to do your organisation a bit of good unless you have a top down commitment to making it work. Your board of directors, C.E.O., and senior management have to be firmly committed to being the best of the best .They set the tone and direction of the entire organisation. This creates a trickle-down effect throughout the organisation. Once

mid-level management and low level employees see top executives leading the way, most of them will begin to support the initiative as well.

### Kouzes's on Leadership (The Art and Practice of Leadership Coaching)

The most important quality people look for and admire in a leader is personal credibility. Credibility is the foundation of leadership. If we do not believe in the messenger we will not believe the message. And what is credibility behaviourally? The most frequent response is "Do what you say you will do.", or "DWYSYWD" for short.

Leaders must be clear about their beliefs. They must know what they stand for. Then they must put what they say into practice, they must act on their beliefs.

### Quotable Quote

"The people are fashioned according to the example of their king and edicts are less powerful than the life (example) of the king" *Claudian, c. 365, Egyptian epic poet*

### Leaders Must Build Trust

Introducing change inevitably upsets the established order in organizations and forces people to question their existing role in the organization. Often people will be asked to do something that is different from the norm and to do that which they do not agree with. Persons introducing and leading change must ensure they are trusted by those they are seeking to join them in the change journey.

The above is adapted from Johnson D.W. "Reaching Out" (1990). This text is recommended reading for those involved in leadership.

### Emerging Challenges in Leadership

Having an individual who is a great leader is one thing, maintaining that leadership after that individual leaves the organisation is another thing. Someone much smarter than me said good leaders lead and great leaders develop other leaders.

Much is spoken about developing leadership; an equal amount of effort must be expended on developing "followship".

### What Various Professionals Can Do To Improve Leadership

1. Learn as much as you can about leadership. Reference to the sources of information in this paper will help.
2. Carry out a survey to identify the workforce perception of company leadership, there are various ways of going about this. Sometimes there is value in collating the answers onto histograms, displaying the histograms to the people who completed the survey, discussing the results and trying to establish why the responses are the way they are. This is best done by as senior a managers as possible who does not react defensively to criticism.

3. Survey the leadership styles of your leaders, various instruments are available. Carrying out a force field analysis on leadership may help to focus issues.
4. Identify the relevant learning needs of leaders using a formalized learning needs analysis.
5. Based on the above develop a leadership project plan in association with the stakeholders. Form a project team to manage the plan. Get management approval for the plan.
6. Launch and communicate the leadership project plan. My general advice with communication is to use face to face communication wherever possible, use the powerful influence of the work group supervisor and frame communication relevant to the work environment of the group being communicated to. High powered communications from senior management about the goals, mission, vision and the objectives of the company will not have much of an impact with many of the workers.
7. Carry out interactive leadership learning using Action and Experiential learning models. The learning must have a focus on the reality of the workplace. My advice is to check out both the process and content of potential providers very carefully, there are some snake oil salesmen in this space. I know it is not everybody's thing but properly structured outdoor learning experiences can be a powerful means of leadership learning. Just ensure the focus is on the learning not the outdoor experience.
8. As a follow up to learning facilitation, engage in authentic leadership tasks / activities / projects in the workplace. Progress must be regularly discussed, reviewed and evaluated. Celebrate the success of these. McDonalds use WOW projects in their leadership learning.
9. Meet with the people who attended the learning facilitation and discuss what is going well and what opportunities for improvement have been presented. I know it is not everybody's thing but I encourage leaders to maintain a reflective journal about their leadership experiences, used properly this can be a powerful means of learning.
10. Evaluate, communicate and celebrate success. Establish what was learnt in the process and how you would do it better next time.

### The Top 10 Things that are Essential for Leadership

1. Leaders must visibly demonstrate commitment and focus. Good leaders lead, great leaders develop other leaders.
2. Leaders must set the example.
3. Leaders must create high expectations.
4. High values and detailed standards of performance must be used
5. Leaders must listen to and involve the workforce
6. Leaders must do what they say they will do.
7. Leaders must value goals.
8. Employees must be made to feel they are part of something important and satisfying.
9. Leaders must reinforce, reward and celebrate success.
10. Everyone must be held accountable for performance.

### Conclusion

There is a vast body of knowledge on general leadership that can be applied to industry but this is not done frequently or well in many Australian companies.

Leadership needs to be applied at a higher level in Australia. Various professionals can have a major impact on leadership by application of well developed interventions.

I will leave you with a quote “Managers do things right, leaders do the right thing, always”

(Private communication, S. Munro)

For references and more information refer to the paper “The Things You Need to Know about Leadership”.

## **5. Psychology and Sociology**

I have completed a small amount of study in both of the above areas and think they have significant application in OHS. I intend to learn more. Dr. Robert Long appears to be carrying out excellent work applying the learning from these 2 disciplines to OHS.

## **6. Project Management**

I have had no formal learning in project management but have led a number of highly successful project teams. With good leadership, careful selection of members, appropriate management support, incorporating change management principles and a focused project plan, project teams can be a great way of driving significant change. Detailed work on the project plan is vital. There is a range of project management learning available.

## **7. Quality Management**

In the 1990's BHP-Coal introduced what was arguably the most robust quality system in Australian industry at the time. I was involved in quality auditing, development of work instructions, development of quality procedures, document control and attended various quality training courses. The continuous improvement message was very vigorously incorporated in every aspect of the business. Since leaving BHP I have worked for organisations with no quality system, a quality system in name only even if it may have been successfully audited and effective quality systems. The most striking problem with organisations with no quality system or a poor quality system is the lack of a continuous improvement philosophy.

I have worked in organisations without document control; it is frustrating not to be certain that the documents you are referring to are the latest version. Organisations without a good quality system do not have good procedures and work instructions. When Fred dies, ceases employment, is run over by a truck or goes on long service leave, no one knows how Fred did his job and the organisation suffers.

## **8. Teambuilding**

### Introduction

My motto is- When Initiating Change, Remember People Support What They Create.  
Working in teams is an essential part of most management functions.

### Teams

Teams are small groups of people with complementary skills who work together as a unit to achieve a common purpose for which they hold themselves collectively accountable.

### Effective Teams

- Create clear roles & goals
- Willing to try new ideas
- Build mutual trust
- Ensure mutual accountability and a common purpose
- Establish clear rules for behaviour by the team
- Creating high performing teams
- Get the vision, scope and objectives right
- Create expectations
- Call a spade a spade
- Get the right people
- Require people to do their homework
- Never move slowly on critical personal issues
- Constantly upgrade skills
- Build trust through appropriate self-disclosure
- Consider “What’s in it for me” from the perspective of the other person
- Create short-term wins
- Celebrate success
- Clearly defined roles
- Have fun
- Be a bit crazy when appropriate (calculated risk-taking is good!)
- Do what gives you the biggest bang for your buck

### Teambuilding Workshop

With one organisation I facilitated a teambuilding workshop with a particular focus on newly appointed OHS personnel. The workshop aimed to define and clarify the roles of the various parties in the OHS mix. Participants were the Department Manager, the H.R. Manager the OHS people reported to and existing and new members of the OHS team.

### Objective of the Workshop

Build a highly effective safety team that will lead the organisation to safety excellence.

## Process

1. Existing team members gave a 10-15 minute presentation on -
  - a. What they do
  - b. How they do it
  - c. What the challenges are
  - d. What they would like to do if they had the resources
  - e. What assistance they want from the team leader to help them perform at a high level
2. New team members discussed the challenges they saw integrating into the safety
3. There was some discussion from senior personnel of their expectations of safety team members
4. Discussion on “Where to from here?”-What additional assistance is needed to participants in their journey to build a highly effective team?

## Results

All participants reported that the workshop assisted to clarify their role in the team. We all got to know and understand each other better.

## Conclusion

Teambuilding is an important part of the OHS person’s role. You are advised to read up on the topic.

## **9. Facilitating Meetings / Problem Solving Groups**

### Introduction

Persons in OHS roles are often called upon to facilitate meetings and problem solving groups.

### Discussion

Much can be found on the internet about facilitating effective meetings and there is no need for me to repeat it here. The reality is many meetings do not realise their potential through poor facilitation of the meeting. Keeping discussion focused and deciding on positive means of moving forward are key areas. MORE TO BE ADDED WHEN GET INFO FROM MERV.

## **10. Time management**

### Introduction

It used to be said that man has a finite time on this earth, possibly this is changing to a certain extent with modern advances in medical science. The important thing to realise is that whatever time we have it is important to use it well and manage it wisely.

There is often little correlation between hard work and the level of achievement. Active people do not necessarily get the most done.

Activity = Productivity is a myth. Measure by results rather than by activity.

### Time Management Tips

Develop a time log of a typical day or week to help you analyse your time usage.

“Procrastination is the thief of time”

The following works for me, I do not know if it will work for you. Trim time wasting e-mails. Attempt to be succinct in all your written documents; you do not have time to write pages of waffle that others will be too busy to read. Use management summaries with major reports. Trim non-essential meetings and use video-conferencing instead of gathering people at a meeting where people have to travel to the meeting venue. An open door policy is fine in theory but can waste a lot of time. Instead let people know your not to be disturbed times and the times when you are available for consultation. Come in early, leave early and use the early morning when no one is about to your advantage. At the beginning of the day divide your “To Do” list into the MUST DOS, SHOULD DOS & COULD DOS. Your aim is to complete at least all those on the MUST DO list before you go home.” Excessive work habits are more often a debit than a credit.

### Common Time Wasters

1. Trying to take on too many tasks
2. Poor planning
3. Accepting jobs that should & could be done by others
4. Putting jobs off
5. Lack of organisation
6. Taking on tasks not capable of doing

You need to identify what are the time wasters for you.

### Planning Your Work Will Save Time.

- Refuse to do the unimportant.
- Set deadlines for yourself and others.
- Telephone-Do not be scared to terminate conversations, block calls in your quiet time, pre-plan your call, delegate your calls, do not encourage small talk,
- Handling interruptions-Do not encourage them, filter phone calls, tell people you are busy, you be the visitor rather than encouraging people to visit you, limit the time of the visit, work elsewhere, come in early, keep a certain time of the week free, learn to say no, improve delegation.
- Paperwork-Do you really need that memo? Does Fred really need a copy?, C.Y.A. & J.I.C. paperwork?, be succinct in everything you write, expect succinct correspondence from others, purge files regularly, write on the original rather than produce a new piece of paper, can correspondence be replaced by a phone call?
- Meetings-Do you really need a meeting?, can someone else attend?, do your homework before the meeting, have an agenda, have a time schedule for the meeting,



define the objective of the meeting, allocate responsibilities for agreed tasks, leave if not relevant to you, review meeting effectiveness.

- Travel-Is travel really necessary?, can you video-conference instead?, must it be you who travels?, plan / combine trips to reduce frequency, verify appointments before you leave, have a checklist, take your lap-top with you and do some work, use the airport lounges,
- Reading-Choose what you read, cut down on the reading of newspapers, skim read, read with a purpose, delegate reading and ask for a summary,
- Keep a reasonably tidy desk
- Take the time you need to do a quality job, saves re-work.
- Do it straight away.
- Prioritise, do the important first.
- Ask yourself “Have I got a better way of spending my time?”
- Do not leave e-mail sitting in your in box.
- Do not take on too many tasks at once
- Group tasks of a similar nature and do them together
- Say no
- Get feedback on job performance
- Collect everything needed for a task before you commence it
- Set an example by same day processing of your in basket
- Tell your staff “Bring me solutions, not problems”
- Remember the Pareto Principle, 20% of activity gives 80% of results, make sure the 20% gets done
- Keep one day of the week free
- List your common time wasting problems, causes and actions you could take.

### Conclusion

Busy people need time management strategies to maximise their effectiveness.

## **11. Mentoring / Coaching**

Formal learning is one way of developing inexperienced personnel. Mentoring and coaching by experienced people is another. With a well organised approach all parties will learn.

### Mentoring

Having a mentor is often of great assistance to progress in your chosen field. The following are tips to get the most out of the mentoring process -

1. Learn how to accept and give feedback, ask for regular feedback
2. Share your thoughts and feelings
3. Maintain sensitivity about mentee's personal and learning needs
4. Reflect on learning frequently, both parties maintain a reflective journal
5. Define and focus on mentee's goals
6. Set a regular contact schedule but be flexible

7. Check frequently on the effectiveness of communications
8. Share information and resources
9. Have a definite conclusion to the process
10. Celebrate success
11. Continually work on evaluating the relationship
12. Brainstorm the list of learning opportunities when you start
13. Define purpose and objectives when you start. In some cases carrying out a force-field analysis may be beneficial in the early stages.
14. In some cases a self and others rating of the mentee's competencies may be beneficial initially (Refer to "Resumes" on [ohschange.com.au](http://ohschange.com.au) for a list of possible competencies)

### Coaching

"A good coach will make his people see what they can be, rather than what they are"

### Being a Good Coach

- Build rapport
- Listen a lot
- Ask open questions
- Build confidence
- Give praise
- Be blame free
- Realise people are never failures
- Listen more than you speak
- Try to build trust
- Schedule time
- Be open yourself
- Always support others
- Learn from mistakes
- Smile a lot
- Respect people
- Encourage life-long learning
- Boost everyone's interpersonal skills
- Be a life-long learner
- Ask for regular feedback
- Celebrate success

### Note

An important point about being a mentor or coach is that it is not your role to provide solutions; rather your role is to get others to explore their options.

### Mentoring or Coaching Plan

A plan that is regularly monitored and modified as necessary is essential. The following is an example of one mentoring plan that was developed.

### Mentoring Plan ?

Mentor-George

Mentee-?

The plan lasts for 12 months from 25/8/12, we will meet at George's place every second Saturday, 10am, meetings will generally last about one hour with the exception of the initial one that may take longer. We will keep in contact via e-mail between meetings and if necessary by phone. The frequency of the meetings will be controlled by the mentee on an as needed basis.

### Mentee Objectives - Example

- To get a more fulfilling job where I can make a difference
- Improve my OHS skills and knowledge
- Develop a better resume
- Improve my interview skills

### Mentee Goals

To learn how I can do better as an OHS professional

### Mentee Expectations

To be provided with practical advice of the type I do not learn through formal study.

Mentor Objectives-The objectives are to assist the mentee in improving their level of OHS and OHS related competency in order to ensure they perform well in their current role and to prepare them for the next step forward in their career

Mentor Goals- Mentees to receive a positive performance appraisal at work and, where applicable, progress to a more senior position

Mentor Expectations-The mentor expects the mentee to take responsibility for their own learning, attempt homework where they see it of value and engage in a major project to cement their learning. It is suggested the mentee maintain a reflective journal

### Projects

1. Accident investigation-? to enquire about accident investigation training from Intersafe and have George review his accident investigation efforts
2. Prepare a 15-30 minute presentation on workplace bullying

### Note

1. It is recommended the mentee maintain a reflective journal of their experiences in the mentoring process, the journal should reflect on what went well, what opportunities for improvement were identified and what they have learnt. Up to you put I find they help with learning. Also helps you prepare for performance appraisals with your boss, negotiations about a pay rise and revising your resume. It also helps with writing uni. assignments and writing for professional journals.
2. You should give consideration to the development of a WOW project. A WOW project is one that is so effective everybody says WOW. Some major companies use these as a regular part of learning programs for managers. A well executed project will get you noticed where you work and look great on your resume.

## Conclusion

Well developed mentoring and coaching programs can be a great way of learning.

## **12. Strategy**

### Introduction

Many employers will tell you they value strategic thinking and execution in their professionals. For the purposes of writing this section of the e book I started to research the topic as I have had no formal training in this area. I quickly came to the conclusion that a lot of the literature is quite theoretical, academic and not practical and applied. I decided to comment instead on my experiences implementing strategic OHS policy.

### George's Strategic Experience

For over 10 years I had a corporate OHS role with a major Australian company. I was involved in developing strategic OHS policy and helping the field OHS personnel at the business units implement it. At one business unit I would arrive with the latest innovation from head office and the field OHS Adviser would say something like "That is really impressive, but will it work in the real world?" This was a very profound experience for me and one that I learnt a lot from. There were occasions when it became obvious the strategic approach from head office missed the mark practically.

When I was in the corporate role I forced myself to spend a lot of time in the field so I had some chance of being grounded in reality. I observed others in the corporate office that did not do this and noted the theoretical nature of their strategic recommendations.

I started a consultancy job with an organisation and they said I should read through their strategic policy, procedure and fatal risk protocols. I got to about page 50 of the 150 page documents before I gave up. All very thorough, well written, extremely detailed, all emotionally appealing but would it be read & implemented? Somehow I could not see the people up the sharp end wading their way through all the paperwork!

The thing that really annoys me is the rambling papers one sees in some so-called professional journals. These are often academic in nature, designed to boost the ego of the

writer, usually removed from the real world of work and tell us things experienced people will have figured out for themselves a long time ago. They also take an incredible number of words to say not too much. Often an academic wank!

One organisation I worked for had a large corporate OHS team that developed large strategic policy and procedure, when they came to train the troops the deficiencies in what they had produced were very obvious. My experience is that many corporate OHS departments add little to the bottom line and should be trimmed or abolished.

Two government organisations I worked for were buried in policy and procedure and making even small amounts of progress was incredibly slow and difficult. If they had been in the commercial world they would have quickly gone broke. People got to accept the situation and simply stopped trying to force progress; it was too much like hard work.

Another organisation I worked for introduced an overseas commercial safety management system. Those of us with field experience quickly realised the major weaknesses of the system. Rather than accept that they had been sold a dead duck the corporate people persisted with the system with little success.

### **13. Managing Committees**

#### **How to Have an Effective Committee**

Committees are much maligned and often ineffective. They can easily denigrate to a whinge-fest and end up covering topics that should be dealt with on a routine, every day basis. There is a tendency to save issues up to a committee meeting rather than action straightaway. There is also a tendency to deal with minor issues.

1. Have a well-developed charter for the committee, searching educational institution and government department web sites will find some good examples.
2. Train members in their roles and responsibilities.
3. Deal mainly with substantive issues; give the committee a meaty job to do.
4. Carrying out a force field analysis (Refer [ohschange.com.au](http://ohschange.com.au)) with the committee can be very valuable.
5. A good way to use the committee is to have them do the leg work to recommend major change to senior management.
6. Produce succinct minutes.
7. Ensure people are given the necessary time to attend meetings and carry out necessary tasks; this is a common failure with committees.
8. The relevant professional often ends up being the chairperson, much better to have someone with management horsepower so decisions can be made on the spot.
9. An occasional guest speaker will liven up the show.
10. Substantive discussion and decisions must be feedback to the workforce.
11. Do not take yourself too seriously.
12. Celebrate success.

13. Require members to do their homework
14. Be conscious of Group-Think (Look the term up on Google if you are not familiar with it)
15. COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

Remember that management must respond positively to well researched recommendations from the committee

#### **14. Recognising Displacement Activities**

Industry often responds to the latest fads promoted by high profile, smooth, marketing professionals, often these fads are displacement activities. Displacement activities are things we do, things we put a lot of energy into but which there is little valid reason for doing them. Some occupations are full of displacement activities and these need to be recognised.

#### **15. Marketing**

##### Introduction

I have attended some marketing training but admittedly the focus was on marketing consultancy services. What I have tried to do with the following is provide a few marketing tips I think can be applied to the work of most professionals in a normal employer employee relationship.

##### Marketing Basics

Marketing is putting the right product in the right place, at the right time, at the right place. You have to create a product people want.

Like a lot of things in life the 7 P rule applies to marketing-Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance.

Have a marketing plan with ideal customers specified, a vision, a customer mission statement, goals and objectives.

Marketing people talk about the 4 P marketing mix - Product, Place, Price, and Promotion. It pays to put a lot of work into defining these. People buy products not services and carefully defining your products is vital.

Once you have defined your marketing approach get feedback from your customers to ensure it is really what they want.

##### Marketing Goals

- Increased product use through creating an interest in my products.
- Get more repeat customers.

- Raise my professional profile.
- Launch new products.
- Increase client recommendations.
- Improve relationships with customers.
- Educate relevant professionals and business operators in Safety.
- Be a credible source of best practice information for Safety professionals.

### Marketing Tips

- Focus communications on the C.E.O. and senior management when applicable.
- Formula for advertisements - Attention, Interest, Desire, Attention.
- Have a Unique Selling Proposition that clearly differentiates you from others doing similar things, put a lot of work into defining this.
- Say thank you to customers.
- Give customers “What’s In It For Me” from their perspective.
- Give them an offer they cannot refuse.
- Show the customer how the product will benefit them.
- Keep in contact with old customers much easier to sell to than getting new customers.
- Have a call to action.
- Always treat the customer like a King or Queen-If you do not your competitors will.
- People buy benefits but want to know features.
- Word of mouth from satisfied customers is the best advertising, if they are happy they may tell one person, if they are not they will tell 20.

### Marketing Activities

- Write papers for journals and LinkedIn forums, internal publications, present papers at conferences.
- Put materials on the company web site.
- Record customer details and what they buy.
- Get customer feedback; always make a call after a sale.
- Customer discussion group, sandwich lunch, with incentives to attend, to discuss my latest ideas.
- Send regular e-mail updates.
- Ask for referrals and put on web site, reward customers for referrals.
- Have a regular newsletter to clients and make available through subscription on the web site.

### Conclusion

Marketing skills can improve the impact of many initiatives. A basic search on Google will reveal a number of good, relevant ideas. As I said before - Always treat the customer like a King or Queen-If you do not your competitors will.

## **16. Human Resource Management**

Many organisations indicate their people are their greatest assets, some act this philosophy out and for some it is a cynical exercise that is not practiced. In these days of litigation adhering to human resource management policy and process is becoming increasingly important. Equal opportunity, discrimination, harassment, bullying, health & safety, compliance with legislation are just some of the areas where you can land in a lot of trouble. Modern professionals must have knowledge of and commitment to human resource management practice.

### **17. Ethical High Performance Standards**

You have to be beyond reproach in everything you do. If you are not, it may take a while, but you will be found out eventually and you will lose all credibility. General Norman Schwarzkopf said “Failures in leadership are invariably failures in character, not competence”. People have to trust you; doing what you say you will do is a good way to build trust. The business, political and sporting worlds have been full of otherwise competent people who have failed badly through ethical issues.

### **18. Motivation**

One definition of motivation is that it is the general desire or willingness of someone to do something

#### **Tips for Self Motivation**

- Try a different approach
- Get out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself
- Learn from your mistakes
- Be a lifelong learner
- Never quit
- Have huge but realistic goals
- Prior Preparation And Planning Prevents Poor Performance. Have good plans and regularly review them.
- Have a good work life balance

#### **Tips for Motivating Your Team**

- Lead, set the example, be a role model and assist team members
- Clearly define the mission and vision of the organisation. Work with team members to define their goals and objectives.
- Empower team members to succeed, vigorously promote a continuous improvement philosophy.
- Work with team members on developing their personal development plans.
- Regularly review the progress of team members.
- As well as being a team leader be a coach, mentor and guide.



- Should team members be experiencing personal difficulties pull out all stops to help.
- Have fun and celebrate success.

### **19. Being a Champion**

I have personal experience working with a senior manager who was the OHS Champion; his concentration had an extremely powerful effect. Those in less senior positions can be the champion of their discipline and have a profound effect. A relentless approach and a commitment to excellent standards and continuous improvement are required.

### **20. Counselling**

Interpersonal difficulties occur frequently in organisations and relationships can become strained. It is useful if those in leadership positions have basic counselling skills. The 3 techniques listed under interpersonal skills are basic counselling approaches that can be easily applied to simple situations. One must realise however that human relationships can be very complex and for all but the basic situations you will need people with professional counselling learning and experience.

### **21. Commitment to Excellence**

Excellence is deliberate, not something we stumble onto. You need to realise that sometimes the reason you do not achieve your goals is that you are playing by the rules. I have always been one to challenge the status quo, it has got me in a lot of trouble but I maintain it is better than putting up with fools and average standards. With one employer I was trained in and practiced continuous improvement that has had a lasting effect on me.

Many people in business want to perform their tasks at a high level; unfortunately work systems and supervision sometimes do not allow this to occur. My frequent experience has been if you want to know how to do something better, ask the people doing it.

The motto of the Australian S.A.S. Regiment is “Who Dares Wins”, that motto works for me. Have huge but realistic goals and do the simplest thing that will work.

### **22. Empathy**

One definition of empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. I believe empathy is one of the most important skills for all occupations. Many in management have no respect for the workers or understanding of their plight. Many engineers I have worked with were great with things but lousy with people, while I am insulting people, I might as well say this comment also applies to those in financial services.

Empathy is a double edged sword. I have also worked with people who get so carried away with their loving, caring, sharing approach that they achieve little.

I never cease to be amazed at the strength of character in front line Australian workers. Many, even in what could be considered lowly positions, have amazing intellect and ability.

### **23. Being a Chameleon**

One role I had, could see me one day giving a presentation to senior management justifying significant expense, and on the next day conducting a safety meeting with a group of miners.

One needs to have the ability to be a chameleon and adapt your behaviour and language to the situation i.e. boardroom or crib room. Adaptability and flexibility are important traits.

### **24. Relevant Industry Experience**

I communicate with a number of inexperienced people trying to obtain an OHS position. The problem they report is you cannot get the job without the experience and cannot get the experience without the job. The view of many in management is that is essential for employment applicants to have practical experience in the particular industry. I understand this approach and have seen benefits accrue from its application.

Having reflected on the above approach I am now of the view it can be limiting. I have worked in a number of industries and had little trouble making the adjustments required to operate in particular industries. Certainly there was some work required on particular idiocy cries but I found that could be done quickly and painlessly. I would suggest that if you have extremely sound skills in your speciality you should be able to adapt to most industries.

An acceptance of industry practice and a consequent lack of challenging the status quo can result from employing those with industry experience.

### **25. Learning**

#### Introduction

One of the activities we all do in business is "training" others. It is my contention that modern adult learning principles are not practiced frequently or well in general "training" in industry and in consequence the learning experience is not as successful as it could be.

#### Learning Background

The teaching of adults (androgogy) has many differences to the teaching of children and other young people (pedagogy). Adults have considerable life experience to bring to the training room and are more likely to question training input that does not accord with their life experience.

#### Androgogy

Critical reflection is an important element in androgogy and this happens most naturally when the content of a class invites involvement, when students are encouraged to respond to the material by drawing in a disciplined way from their life experiences. Reflection helps

move learners to greater complexity and sophistication in their understanding of any material presented.

Tough (1979) has demonstrated that mature learners frequently prefer to be in charge of their own learning with only minimal direction from an instructor, facilitator or resource. This has prompted a change in the role of the instructor from that of content giver to learning manager, facilitator and resource locator. The traditional role of instructors was to impart knowledge to receptive learners; nowadays the instructor facilitates and manages the learning process itself. (Heimstra,11) Therefore the instructor or trainer works to assist individuals in taking responsibility for their learning.

For the learning to have meaning activities should be organised to allow participants to discover the concepts for themselves (not always an easy thing to do). Discussions, case studies, practical exercises, role plays are preferred. These are usually more effective learning methods than the lecture but they take a longer period of time. Activities must be as close to real life as possible and a content expert must be on hand should participants feel the need for his/her input.

Far too often training activities are devised by trainers or managers who are removed from the workplace environment of trainees. The content represents what the trainer or manager thinks is what is required, often this approach misses the mark. Major efforts must be made to consult with the work force on their perceived training needs. The SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE and ATTITUDES (OR ABILITIES) to perform tasks must be examined to gain insight into deficiencies; in some cases when gaps between current competencies and desired competencies are revealed, training will be an appropriate remedy.

Explain "What's in it for me" early in the session and elicit participant's expectations of the training in initial stages.

### Interactive Learning Strategies

For adults interactive rather than passive learning strategies are preferred.

It has been suggested that we retain:

- 10 percent of what we read;
- 20 percent of what we hear;
- 30 percent of what we see;
- 50 percent of what we hear and see;
- 70 percent of what we say;
- 90 percent of what we say and do.

Saying and doing are certainly important for retention and later application.

## Smith and Delahaye Learning Principles

In their excellent text *How To Be An Effective Trainer* (Smith and Delahaye. (1983, 9-23) refer to certain learning principles.

Whole or Part Learning divides the learning into manageable segments and work from the known to the unknown.

Spaced Learning Learning that is spaced at reasonable levels is usually superior to massed or crammed learning if you want long term retention.

### Active Learning

If trainees are actively involved in the learning process (instead of listening passively); they will learn more effectively and become self-motivated. Active learning is often described as "learning by doing".

### Feedback

Give the trainees feedback on progress early and regularly and also obtain feedback on how you are progressing as a trainer.

### Over Learning

Stated simply, over learning means learning until one has perfect recall. Then learning it some more. In other words, forgetting is significantly reduced by frequently attempting to recall learned material.

### Reinforcement

Learning that is rewarded is much more likely to be retained.

### Primacy and Recency

Given any sequence of facts, trainees will tend to remember what they heard first and last. What they heard in the middle they often forget. Therefore, emphasise and reinforce facts that are in the middle.

### Meaningful Material

When presented with new information, we unconsciously ask two questions:

1. Is this information valid when I compare it with experiences I've had in the past?
2. Will this information be useful to me in the immediate future?

The implication of these questions means that one must move from the known to the unknown and ensure information is readily usable by participants.

## Multiple-Sense Learning

Always use sight and hearing but do not neglect the other senses.

## Transfer of Learning

The amount of learning that trainees transfer from the training room to the workplace depends, mainly, on two variables:

The degree of similarity between what was learned in the training program (and this includes how it was presented) and what occurs at the workplace.

## Lawler's Principles of Adult Education (Lawler 1991)

- Principle 1. Adult education requires a physical and social climate of respect.
- Principle 2. A collaborative mode of learning is central to adult education.
- Principle 3. Adult education includes and builds on the experience of the participant.
- Principle 4. Adult education fosters critical reflective thinking.
- Principle 5. Problem posing and problem solving are fundamental aspects of adult education.
- Principle 6. Learning for action is valued in adult education.
- Principle 7. Adult education is best facilitated in a participative environment.
- Principle 8. Adult education empowers the participant.

In *The Keys to Adult Learning Theory and Practical Strategies* Lawler offers practical advice on utilising these adult learning principles and is well-worth a read.

## Action Learning

There is a large body of research literature that suggests that action learning is particularly appropriate for adults.

Marsick (1991, 23-45) speaks about action learning (Project work on real-life problems and reflection where participants draw out the lessons learned from their project work.)

There are three key components of the action/learning facilitation process: action, reflection and the building of one's own theories (Marsick 1991, 32-33). The action component is developed in two ways "through appropriate experience provided by the project work and through an action oriented approach to the way in which people learn from experience.

The video "An Introduction to Action Learning" The National Staff Development Committee (1995) outlines the benefits and process of action learning.

The following equation is referred to:

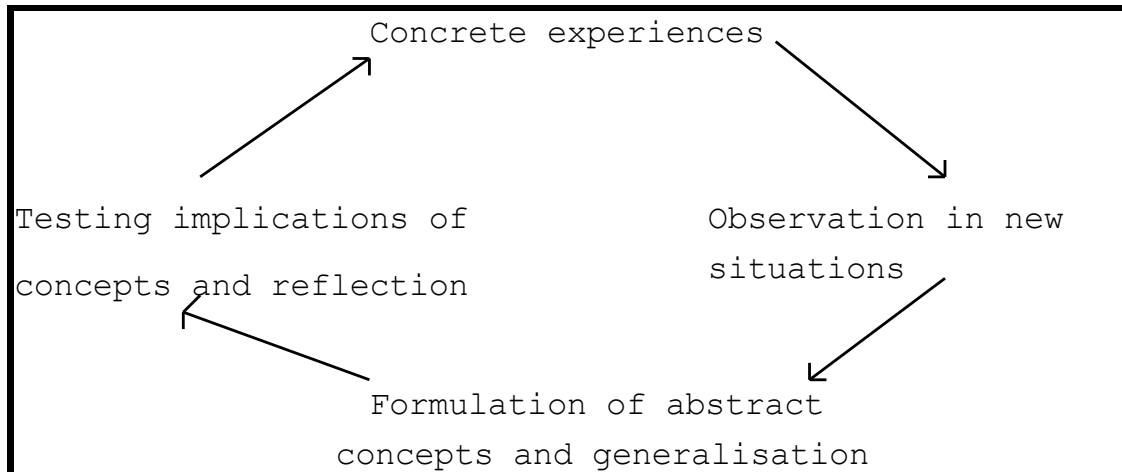
$$L = P + Q \text{ where}$$

L	=	Learning
P	=	Programmed knowledge balanced with
Q	=	Questioning insight

## Experiential Learning

This has some similarities to action learning and once again is thought to be particularly relevant to adult learners.

Kolb and Fry (1975, 33) have developed an experiential learning model.

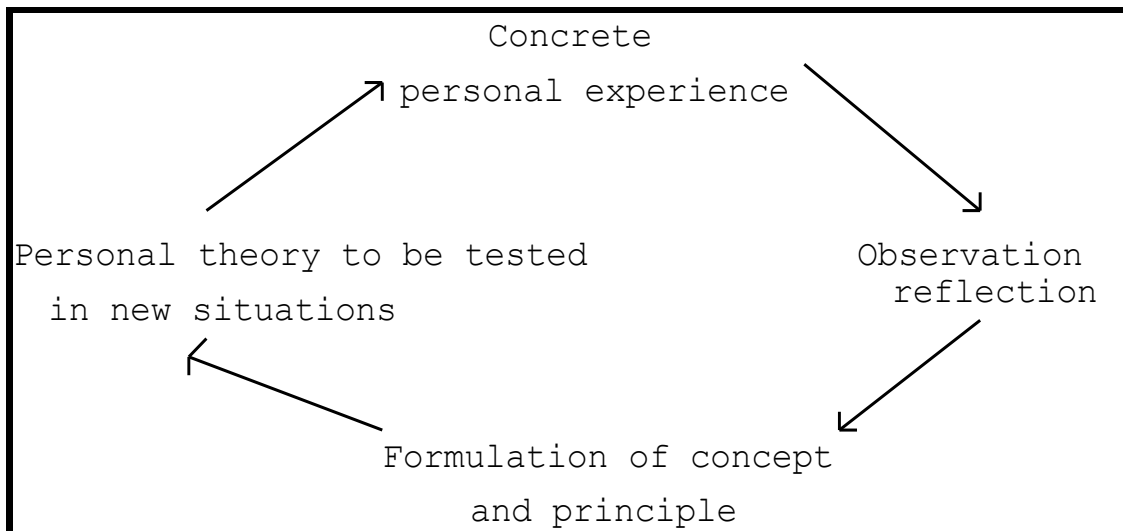


*Figure 1 : Experiential Learning Model, Kolb and Fry (1975, 33)*

Experiential learning is based on three assumptions (Johnson 1990, 20). People learn best when they are personally involved in the learning experience; knowledge has to be discovered if it is to mean anything or make a difference in behaviour and commitment to learning is highest when people are free to act their own learning goals and actively pursue them within a given framework.

The process of experiential learning is shown below. (Johnson 1990, 20) The learner reflects on their concrete experiences and examines their meaning in order to formulate a set of concepts or principles. The sequence is concrete personal experiences followed by:-

Observation and reflection and examination of one's experiences and this leads to the formulation of abstract concepts and generalisations which leads to hypotheses to be tested in future action.



*Figure 2: Experiential Learning Cycle (Johnson 1990, 20)*

### Learning in the Workplace

Billett (2001) “Learning in the workplace-Strategies for effective practice” is recommended as a “must-read” for those responsible for facilitating learning in the workplace. Many workers are not prepared for work through vocational education programs; instead they learnt their vocational practice through working. Traditional educators point out many disadvantages to workplace learning without considering the many problems with a traditional class-room education. One of the distinguishing features of workplace learning is that, unlike class-room learning, it is directly relevant to the work being performed

In Billett (1993, 1) it is argued that informal learning settings such as workplaces provide an optimal place for the acquisition of robust and transferable vocational skills. The training that is conducted is in the workplace using situations as close as practicable to those encountered in the workplace. The process used models the most traditional forms of learning - the notion of an expert novice relationship (Billett 1993, 2). The approach used utilises activity theory originally proposed by Vygotsky who claimed that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed. Central to Vygotsky's view is that the relations between the learner and the teacher/expert are socially constructed. Consequently, the quality of the relationship will determine what type of knowledge the novice has access to and is allowed to learn (Billett 1993, 3).

Billett (1993, 4) maintains the authenticity of learning activities is a determining quality of learning experiences.

Research carried out by Billett (1993, 5) in the Queensland Coal Mining Industry revealed a preference for learning by doing on behalf of respondents. The respondents also believed that the expertise for learning was already on site. The following quote from Billett (1993, 10) appears relevant.

"The engagement of learners in authentic activities in natural settings, guided by experts with reference to other learners and by allowing the learner to experience both the process and the product of their activities have the potential to make the workplace a powerful learning experience."

Billett (1992, 4) indicates the skill development activities and assessment should only be conducted by those who have and are seen to have a strong base of skills in a specific area (a content expert). It is also postulated that activities should closely reflect the activities that are used as part of everyday practice in the workplace (authentic activities). This emphasises the role of natural settings and authentic activities and reflects the research of Glaser (1984), Glaser and Bassok (1989), Collins Brown and Newman (1989), Collins and Duguid (1989), Gott (1989) and Raizer (1991). Billett (1992, 5) speculates that a learning process that gives responsibility for the learning to the learner, engages them in dialogue with more expert workers, asks them to problem-solve real situations and then provide an analysis of their approach is appropriate. Billett (1992, 6) says that learning tasks must be realistic, challenging but ultimately achievable.

### Conclusion

Facilitating effective learning can be quite complex, modern adult principles and process must be used. The paper Adult Learning Principles And Process goes into considerably more detail and provides the references.

### **Conclusion**

The above are my thoughts on the non OHS technical skills OHS personnel need to have. Having these skills can make your safety life much easier. My parting note is to park your ego at the door; it is about them not you!

George can be contacted on [fgrobotham@gmail.com](mailto:fgrobotham@gmail.com); he welcomes debate on the above. (It would be indeed a boring world if everybody agreed with George)

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