Effective Safety Leadership Webinar Series
Understanding At-Risk Behavior
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**Effective
Safety
Leadership**
WEBINAR SERIES

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WEBINAR TAKEAWAYS

While a lot of time and effort goes into improving safety in the workplace, most organizations still struggle to achieve an optimally safe environment. Unfortunately some of the strategies used to try to improve safety are not as effective as they could be, and in some cases they are counter productive. Until we understand why people engage in at-risk behavior, at all levels of the organization, our solutions will be suboptimal.

A striking example is incident investigations. Even the most thorough-looking root cause analyses do not get down to causes of behavior. As soon as human error is identified as one of the root causes the investigation stops. But the most critical question has yet to be answered: why did the individual(s) make the error? Why did they engage in at-risk behavior? If the individual was trained, knew how to do the work safely, why did he/she choose not to? Very seldom is it blatant disregard for safety. **There are often compelling reasons that good performers make unsafe choices, and until investigations get to those reasons they are incomplete. Tragically, this means that others may well do the same thing and may get hurt.**

While most people understand that behavior is influenced by consequences, they do not understand the subtleties of consequences. Not all consequences are equal. **Knowing what makes a consequence more or less effective is the first step to understanding.**

There are three classifications of consequences:

Type	**P**ositive Will strengthen behavior **N**egative Will weaken behavior
Timing	**I**mmediate While the behavior is occurring **F**uture Any delay of more than a few seconds
Probability	**C**ertain Always follow the behavior; *high probability* **U**ncertain May or may not follow the behavior; *low probability*

Positive, immediate, and certain consequences (**PICs**), are the most powerful consequences that can be used to **strengthen desired behaviors**. Negative, immediate, and certain consequences (**NICs**) are the most powerful consequences that can be used to **weaken behaviors**. ADI's PIC/NIC Analysis is a practical tool, based on the science, used to understand why at-risk behavior occurs. As the name suggests, it encourages the focus on the most powerful of consequences, those that are both immediate and certain. The analysis views all behavior as choices and requires viewing antecedents and consequences from the performer's perspective. It helps you identify how to change antecedents and consequences to change the choices people make.

Steps for ADI's PIC/NIC Analysis™

- Identify behavioral choices facing the performer
  - o Safe behavior
  - o At-Risk behavior
- List relevant Antecedents for each behavior
- List all Consequences for each behavior from the performer's perspective
- Gauge the strength of each consequence (Positive/Negative, Immediate/Future, Certain/Uncertain)

Dr. Judy Agnew, Dr. Judy Agnew is a leading authority in the field of behavioral safety and performance management and is the co-author of *Safe By Accident: Take the Luck Out of Safety - Leadership Practices That Build A Sustainable High Performance Safety Culture* (November 2010). She is Senior Vice President of Safety Solutions at Aubrey Daniels International (ADI), where she helps clients create behavior-based interventions that lead to a company-wide culture of safety.

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The PIC/NIC Analysis takes the blame out of safety by focusing on the real causes of behavior. Very often the causes (antecedents and consequences) are management-controlled. Thus, blaming the employee may not only be futile, it may be unjust. **By uncovering the true causes of behavior, organizations avoid using discipline unfairly and thus help build trust and a culture of shared problem-solving around safety.**

Achieving (or not achieving quotas), meeting deadlines and realizing profitability are just a few of the consequences that drive management behavior. This fact makes it all the more relevant for managers to search for the why of incidents. Systems controlled by management that influence employee behavior can be adjusted so that future incidents are prevented.

Managers can support a proactive system that examines behavioral consequences at all levels of the organization and then acts on such knowledge in the following ways:

- Provide more PIC's for safe behavior and eliminate as many NIC's for safe behavior as possible.

- Eliminate PIC's for at-risk behavior.

- Change the contingencies (i.e., the relationship among antecedents, behaviors, and consequences) for management and front-line: inextricably link all goals to safety.

- Don't just tell them (i.e., antecedents); show them (build-in positive consequences for safe behavior).

- Remember that taking disciplinary action for consequences that are controlled by management (even inadvertently) only creates mistrust.

Analyzing the contingencies that influence safety practices from the top down and then providing effective solutions is a proven way to make safety a positive focus throughout the organization. Consequences, whether they are embedded in a system or directly issued by management, can be examined and changed to positively alter behavior. When changes are systemic, the whole workforce is safer.

Look for these and other resources at **aubreydaniels.com:**