

Beatings Will Continue Until Morale Improves

training *Are you operating in a punishment culture?*

By Jane Jazrawy

It's a normal day at the office of the Transportation Health & Safety Association of Ontario (THSAO). An instructor—we'll call him Mark—is preparing to teach one of his monthly defensive-driving classes. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Except for one thing. One of the drivers who attended the last class is back again—for exactly the same defensive-driving session as she attended before. Mark notices but doesn't think much of it.

Fast-forward another month. Mark is running his third d-d class and sure enough, the same driver shows up. Mark finally asks why.

The response? The driver keeps backing into things, she says, and the company policy is that everytime there is a collision, the driver involved must take a defensive-driving class.

That company has a "punishment culture". A driver does something wrong and the company reacts with punishment: Go to training. Perhaps she enjoyed the first class, but what about the second two? Defensive-driving courses are not going to help her back up properly. Training like this will not benefit anyone if it's done for the wrong reasons.

"Companies tend to react, panic and

address incidents in a reactive, rather than a proactive way," explains Dave Wallace, THSAO's regional manager for southwestern Ontario.

We know that kids routinely get standardized achievement tests in schools, but that testing isn't used to stigmatize students. Those tests help school boards measure staff performance.

HUMAN RESOURCES: As with "natural" resources, you should try to bring out the best in people.

Teachers—not students—often have to upgrade certain skills as a result of the test. Testing drivers in a fleet is similar—do it to figure out how the company can improve—not the driver.

You will see where your training gaps are and how you should shore them up.

Let's go back to our driver sitting through the same defensive-driving class. She doesn't have a knowledge problem—it's a skill problem. She needs in-cab practice. Clearly the company she is working for doesn't provide adequate training for its people.

If the company helped this driver practise instead of sending her off to a course, she would be less likely to back into something again and less likely to quit in frustration or get fired.

Further, if the company can help her solve the problem, it will demonstrate to her that there's been an investment in her career. Studies have shown that this investment increases employee loyalty.

There are other advantages of training and measurement.

Weaknesses in a company's processes are highlighted. If HOS infractions are generating high costs, it may be because of a confusing log form. Changing the form might have better results.

Specific drivers or other staff who need



help can be identified. Maybe you're training the wrong people. Is it your office staff or dispatchers that actually need it?

Once you have results, you can start the improvement process. Sometimes, it requires a change in a policy or process, or training. If training is required, make sure that you can measure the result.

Make training about improving your company and not punishing your drivers. ▲

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