SAFETY TRAINING PROGRAMS

The questions we ask form the thoughts we think. The thoughts we think precede the action we take.

Abstract:

Each year, the UAW International Health and Safety Department holds a week long health and safety conference at the Western Regional Family Education Center on Black Lake, Michigan. The number of delegates has grown from year to year, averaging 300-500 delegates. Most of the delegates are new health and safety union representatives at their workplaces. During the week delegates attend three core classes, a self-selected set of parallel and pre-post surveys. In the evenings, delegates have the opportunity to attend optional classes or to engage in various social, physical fitness, or poetry reflection activities.

U-M observes selected classes and plenary sessions, conducts interviews and focus groups, and collects and analyzes written quantitative and qualitative evaluations from delegates.

In 2007 the U-M evaluation team modified two of the written qualitative evaluation instruments by adding a few A.I.-based questions. The analysis presented in this poster focusses on the responses to these questions. The overall evaluation completed by all of the delegates at the end of the week long training program.

On the final evaluation, U-M deleted one vague question, “What suggestions do you have for future training?” and added two A.I.-worded questions in its place – a strengths-based question, “Thinking back over the past week, please share a training experience when you felt most fully engaged?” followed by a constructively focused question, “What can be improved to make the Black Lake Health and Safety Conference more meaningful?”

Results

The U-M found the comments from the 2007 evaluation strikingly different from those of prior years in three primary ways:

1. The quantity of comments containing quality information increased.
2. The richness of the responses—they were more constructive, with a greater focus on detail and often included warm, “beautiful” phrases, and
3. The complaints and extraneous comments had a more “mature” or considered tone.

Quantity of Results

As can be seen in Table 1, from 2003 to 2006, in response to the question “What suggestions do you have for future training?” 2004 (n=187) and 2005 (n=155) each year received responses from over 150 delegates.

Quality of Comments

Although an additional open-ended question was added starting in 2007, this did not diminish the response rate. As shown in Figure 1, from 2003 through 2006, the response rate on the Improvement question ranged from 0.4 to 0.8 with an average of 0.6. However, on the Strengths question, the response rate increased to 0.8 to 0.9 with a response rate average of 0.8.

Conclusions

In conclusion, a traditional deficit based evaluation approach has been helpful to the UAW during their early formative years of the HAZWOPER training program. The U-M evaluation team and the UAW are encouraged by the richness and usefulness of the results when using Appreciative Inquiry. The U-M’s future work includes continuing to gather and present these types of data to the UAW through focus groups and other means to provide the quality of information necessary to build on the best of its successful peer-trainer led training programs to meet the emerging needs of a changing workplace.

The Appreciative Inquiry Model

Appreciative Inquiry focuses on strengths, on what is working, and creating an environment where these strengths can flourish and grow. And when we focus on strengths and positive qualities of a program, we change what we look at and what we evaluate in a powerful way.

In the framework of a continuous loop around a topic of inquiry, Appreciative and his colleagues identified four intervening phases, referred to as “The 4 D’s of A.I.” EnCompass LLC modified these to provide more accessible language to business: the 4 D’s of A.I.:

1. Discovery – Inquire (Appreciating the best of “What is”)
2. Design – Imagine ("What might be?"
3. Diagnose – Innovate ("What should be?"
4. Destiny – Implement ("Navigate the change")

The following case study focused on implementation of the first two steps in an evaluation setting: Inquire and Imagine.

Picture

Table

Figure

AUTHORS:

Katherine King and Judith Baltzer HAZARDOUS MATERIALS TRAINING EVALUATION PROJECT

Building the best: using an appreciative inquiry to evaluate worker-training in health and safety programs