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# New technology can result in better safety

Like businesses across the globe, the construction industry is taking advantage of new technologies and business intelligence. In a competitive environment, leveraging technology and predictive analytics is crucial to business success. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the strides our industry is making to enhance safety practices. I believe, like you, doing things the safe way is the only way.

Of course, safety methods are constantly evolving because of exciting advances in construction equipment, PPE and technology. Over the past 10 years there have been significant advances in PPE and important innovations in allowing machinery to operate much more safely. And new software allows us to audit performance metrics to identify opportunities to improve safety.

Technological advancements are all around us and come in many forms. Case in point: Years ago, wearing a hard hat on a jobsite was viewed as an encumbrance. Technology improved comfort and reduced cost while providing better protection. I'm not old enough to have witnessed the introduction of the hard hat, but I'm sure there were some who resisted the change and others who embraced it because there are always two groups of people: Those who adapt and those who challenge.

Today it seems preposterous to say wearing a hard hat was a "technological advancement," but it once was, which is why I believe many of the new technologies we see today will be as commonplace and accepted as the hard hat. There will always be those who resist change, but the will and commitment of company safety leaders to educate themselves about the rapidly changing methods available to enhance safety performance must win in the end if we are to be a bridge home for our teammates.

My philosophy is simple as it relates to safety and other advancements in our industry: We are not married to anything but improvement. Just because we have done something a certain way for a number of years doesn't mean we shouldn't analyze and make changes to improve. Performing a task 99 times "without incident" doesn't mean it was safely executed. It's a subtle but noteworthy difference. It is possible we sometimes executed well and other times incorrectly. Luck will eventually run out. What then? We need more than luck. We need to be vigilant about tracking and analyzing performance to identify issues before they become accidents. Luck just isn't a sustainable safety strategy.

So how do we go from being a lucky organization to an organization with a sustainable safety strategy? One proven method is to analyze the data and determine what it is telling us. We can use gap identification to develop tailored training based on needs and indicators revealed by the data. By using technology like scheduling software, the safety professional can facilitate and manage the project scope and help guide the focus to the critical areas of concern. We should be analyzing trends to find leading indicators that tell us there's a change we should be making to be safer. We should all be developing programs that include craft labor involvement with audits, inspections and safety tours.

Analysis of data can also provide insight on how safety performance affects other dimensions of your business such as adherence to schedules, productivity, quality and personnel turnover, all of which have a direct impact on the bottom line.

In the construction industry, technology and business intelligence are changing the way companies work. While at AltairStrickland, safety is everyone's job; our safety professionals also have the responsibility to educate themselves about innovations that can provide information for analysis and feedback for critical portions of each project's scope. The mandate to be open to improvement must start at the top.

Our industry has some of the most innovative and brilliant minds in the world to help us raise the safety bar. Some advancement will come by way of vision and others through hindsight, learning and experience. Companies that look at technology as a tool to help bridge the way to a safer industry will lead the way.

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