



Feedback is all too often, a neglected component of a SMS. The days of *“their paycheck is all the feedback they need”* is long gone. Feedback can be a powerful form of communication that often goes well beyond the words spoken in delivering a message. For example, when doing training at a college in Singapore, we would often meet a little old Chinese woman cleaning the hallways. She would look down and stand out of our way as we approached. One day I stopped and told her she was doing a very good job. After that it was as if we became best friends and every morning she would say good morning from half way down the hall and be smiling from ear to ear. That little feedback had a lot more meaning than just the words.

We are asked for feedback all the time. When buying a simple hamburger from a fast food outlet, you’ll often find on the receipt a request to fill out a short survey and as a token of appreciation, they will give you a code that entitles you to a free hamburger the next time you visit their store. You have just given them feedback that is so valuable to them that they will reward you with a free hamburger. Your important little survey goes into a data base of surveys and if one particular point keeps coming up then a risk assessment will be taken to determine if an improvement needs to take place. If McDonald’s had only done this with their 700 complaints of too hot coffee causing serious burns, they could have saved themselves \$2.9 million (1992 dollars) and Stella would not have had to have numerous surgeries for her third degree burns. (Article #49, DOM February 2020 Edition) So, feedback is important not only for what it says, but often even more important for the hidden message it sends. When a person sends in a hazard report for the first time they will quite possibly wonder if it is going to be taken seriously or is it just another “flavor of the month” stunt to please the regulator. A prompt feedback thanking them for the report and promising them a response within a certain time frame sends the hidden message that “they do care about Safety and I AM a somebody for helping them.”

When we first started doing Human Factors training, many of the participants believed that all of the problems within the company were management’s fault and this HF training was just a “flavor of the month” venture that would be a waste of

time for everyone. After all, we (AME/AMT) hadn't kill anyone YET. (Remember that YET stands for You're Eligible Too) So, we put an extra flip chart stand on the side of the class with the words "Parking Lot" across the top. As soon as someone complained about the company, we stopped the class and asked if everyone agreed with the complaint. If the majority did, it was written on the Parking Lot flip paper. We had discussed this beforehand with the DOM and he had agreed to come and discuss the items at the end of the class. We arranged for a high stool to be at the front of the class and gave him a heads up as to what was on the board. Imagine the class's surprise (and ours) when the VP Maintenance walked in, sat on the stool as if he was one of them and began going down the list. One valid complaint was that no management were taking the classes. He said that they were too busy, but that was about to change as of now and he himself said that he was human and would be in the next class. (He was, and I still remember how the outside of the classroom door would be covered in sticky notes every break for him to phone someone or there were urgent papers to be signed, etc.) As to commitment, he gave the pig and the chicken's contribution to breakfast parable. The hen contributes, but the pig gives his all. When it came to HF training for maintenance, he said that he was the pig. The morale, and with it productivity, shot up and theirs was to be a very successful SMS. See the attached Notice to Employees three years later. It was called "Maintenance Resource Management Program" back then as "Big Picture" just didn't sound important enough and SMS hadn't been invented yet in 1995.

An audit or Safety review is an excellent form of feedback as stated in the attached Notice to Employees.

The difference between an audit and a Safety review is, the audit works to ensure that you are conforming to existing regulations while the Safety review works to ensure that ALARP (As Low As Reasonably Practical). I have always preferred the Safety review as it involves talking to as many of the employees as possible and obtaining a perspective of the company Safety Culture through their eyes. Questions like, "Where do you see the next accident happening?" can bring about some interesting responses. For example, we kept getting the response that

Notice to Employees

National Transport Canada Audit

A Measure of Success

As many of you know, Transport Canada has just completed a full technical and operational audit. I am pleased to pass along their thanks to all employees who have been involved, for your hospitality, openness and positive attitude towards the audit and the Audit Team. They were impressed with response to questions and recommendations.

They have never seen morale so high

The Maintenance Audit Team remarked that they have never seen morale so high on a maintenance floor, and they are very encouraged by Maintenance Resource Management Program.

SMS

The Team also commended our airline for the professionalism displayed by flight crews they have met while in the field.

The audit provides us with a great opportunity to improve our processes and to identify areas of focus for our 1999 Operating Plan.

Thank you, again, for your cooperation and professionalism during the audit. Your attention to safety, every day, makes an audit a welcome event.

= Improved Productivity

President and Chief Executive Officer

the Chief Pilot was pushing new pilots to take unwarranted risks in order to carry out a flight. One example given, that was verified by several young pilots was the “trick” in fog to take off towards the sun and fly through the fog to the clear air above the fog while looking at the sun for reference. It would appear that he had been doing this for years. Fortunately, a new pilot just missed a fishing boat while trying the same stunt. The Chief Pilot may have known when the boats left the harbor while the young pilot lacked that knowledge. An unofficial chat with the Chief Pilot, who denied ever suggesting such a thing, resulted in a notice to all pilots by the Chief Pilot that stated that such behaviour would not be tolerated and could lead to dismissal. A successful SMS reporting system may have picked this up before someone got killed. I recall another Safety review where we suggested the company hold a Christmas party. We had noted that there was a fair amount of antagonism between the pilots and maintenance. I believe it had started when a pilot stole a maintenance person’s girlfriend. The Christmas party served for them all to come together and discover that they all are human. The feedback to the upper management helped them to solve a problem they never even knew they had. What may appear to be “small stuff” certainly had the potential to become “big stuff”, so don’t just ever ignore it. **Safety is everyone’s business.**

Feedback can also become all important data.

So you now have a SMS in place, but how do you know if it’s working? Realistic goals have to be set and you need a means of determining if they are being met. Audits and Safety reviews can help provide a picture of what is occurring, but you need Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to guide you toward the ideal goal of a Safety culture.

The KPIs:

- a) must be reasonable. (I.e.) A KPI of zero errors is not a practical indicator.
- b) are part of the goals you set.
- c) are the bases for any internal review carried out.
- d) must be measurable. (E.g.) Will have trained all employees on their role in SMS by Sept. 2021. Will have received at least 25 Hazard Reports by September 2021.
- e) progress should be communicated to all “stakeholders”.
- f) need to be updated as required.

g) should be an integral part of any computer program you may have.

Depending on the size of the company, an employee newsletter that keeps the employees informed of successes and where we can do better along with employee length of service awards, as well as even birthdays, goes a long way in maintaining a high level of morale. A company with high morale is a Safer company, as employees feel freer to speak up on Safety issues and it's been proven to increase productivity. Put it all together and you have a Safety culture that will result in less errors, which translates into greater profit. That is a win-win we should all be striving for.

We have come full circle on our 1995 “Big Picture” model of today’s SMS. The last phase on the model was Emergency Response Plan, which we covered earlier in Article #51 DOM Issue May 2020. The arrows go around with no end, as a SMS must not be a forgotten book on a shelf, but a living document that is constantly being improved.

