



## Daily Toolbox Talk: Strengthen Our Culture Thursday, May 9, 2024

Having an effective safety culture is an important component of our successes. The schools we build, the stadiums we erect, the high rises and shopping malls; the playgrounds and hospitals and the infrastructure projects we work on are a part of our legacy. They're a sum of work greater than all of us, and for most of us, they are projects we can be proud of. The rewarding "I built that" message we give to our friends and families is bound by the culture we establish and the safe work habits we engage in.

As we reflect on the discussions we've had this week so far, "Value Every Voice" permeates through each day's activities and messages. As you know, culture exists in every corner of our lives, and our work culture echoes our own, both at and away from our project sites.

Communication is the key – trust is the cornerstone. We must listen to each other, and respect each other. To assure that we demonstrate a culture where all our workers are heard when they speak out is by encouragement and empowerment. In an industry where speaking up has been historically discouraged, it may be tough; but once it is allowed, the floodgates often open. Some things to consider as we build a strong safe work culture:

- Everyone has a voice and a message to share. No matter whether we are a veteran of the industry or just getting started, if we have a suggestion, a comment, a safety share, a way to get things done more efficiently, we need to be able to speak up – and our leaders need to listen and acknowledge the message. Just because we've always done it a certain way doesn't mean there isn't a better, easier, or safer way to do it.
- Open meetings with a "Make it Personal" moment. Let someone share an event that was personally impactful to them and how it has influenced their way of life and work. We may never know exactly how it is received, but you can be sure that it will touch someone in a personal manner.
- We can build on this. Not just through daily safety meetings, but by holding small group discussions – maybe 4 to 6 workers and a member of management to talk. The talk can be about issues on the project, or it can be about baseball or fishing. It's a way to build our teams and to get to know each other on a personal level.
- Remember - communication is key. For some companies, the simple action of putting people's preferred (as well as their given) names on their helmets is a way to start to get comfortable with each other, talking to each other and getting to know one another.
  - Here's something that happened on a project – A worker had written "Tuna" on his helmet. When we had an opportunity to sit at a break table with "Charles" we learned that he had the nickname "Charlie" as a child, and that evolved into Tuna by his co-workers when he was an apprentice 18 years prior (for those of you who may not recall, Charlie Tuna is the mascot for Starkist). It was a great icebreaker and a way to get to know each other and enjoy their company, and there were others who shared how they got their nicknames as well.
- Recognize our safety champions. There are a lot of workers whose job title does not include the word "safety," but who make an impact through their dedication to safe work. These informal leaders can and should be given recognition for their contributions.
- When we make safety and work personal and build on our relationships, it's easy for us to say "I care about you." It's part of our culture that says we have a personal responsibility and an obligation to one

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another. We're part of the same (work) family. When we can do this, we often can recognize those times when physical or mental struggles make it challenging to work.

In the end, our cultures within our organizations and on our projects should be all about making safety personal. Whether it's the relationship bonds we build with our co-workers with whom we spend more time with than our own families or knowing that looking out for one another and having a responsibility and obligation to our fellow workers is as important as getting the job done, let's make safety our way of life.

