What is Behavior-Based Safety?
(Part 2 of a 3 part series)

We left off last quarter with an introduction to Behavior-Based Safety in general terms and the benefits of such a program. This quarter, we'll dive into the details a little more. You may remember the definition provided in the previous issue: **Behavior**-**Based Safety** (BBS) is the "application of the science of **behavior** change to real world problems" or "A process that creates a **safety** partnership between management and employees that continually focuses people's attentions and actions on theirs, and others, daily **safety behavior**." Simply put, behavior-based safety is the practice of determining actual safe behaviors and rewarding those behaviors. But here are the tools we use to facilitate continuous improvement in safety:

1. Identification of Critical Behaviors – Identify either the behavior you want to continue or discontinue.

2. Gather data on the behaviors – Observe whether the person(s) are performing the behavior or not.

3. Provision of Feedback – Communicate to the person(s) what behavior you want.

4. Utilization of Data to remove barriers – Find out from the data what behaviors occur, how frequently, where they occur and what you need to do to correct the behavior.

So, in practical terms, let's look at an example. One of my favorite pet peeves in a manufacturing environment is riding on the forks of a forklift. It seems to be one of the favorite shortcuts taken by employees and supervisors alike but if things go wrong, the consequences can be deadly. Here's a simple example of applying these tools:

1. Identification of Critical Behavior: I want to discontinue employees riding on the forks of a forklift.

2. Gather data on the behaviors: I observe Joe riding on the forks of a forklift.

3. Provision of feedback:
   Safety Manager: "Hey Joe, can I talk to you for a second?"
   Joe answers: "Sure, what's up?"
   Safety Manager: "I saw you riding on the forks of the forklift just now. Is that a common occurrence?"
   Joe: "Yeah, we do it all the time. It saves us time getting back to the warehouse for another load."
   Safety Manager: "Joe, you know, about 35,000 Americans a year are seriously injured in forklift accidents and about 85 of those people are killed. A lot of times it's from riding on the forks or being lifted on the forks. It's really unsafe. You have a wife and two kids at home and it would be a horrible thing for me to have to call them and tell them you were severely injured or killed in an accident here at work. Riding on the forks is a prohibited practice here and I would appreciate it if you would not do it. I'd also appreciate it if you'd spread the word to everyone else to not do it as well. Would you help me out with that?"

4. Utilization of Data to remove barriers – "Joe, while we're on the subject, can you gather some data for me? I'd like to know the travel distance and time it takes to get back and forth on these trips to the warehouse and how many trips are made per person per day. I think maybe if we can show management the time and labor savings, we might be able to move some inventory racks or figure out a new way to do this so that we're not putting people in an unsafe position to get their job done. Would you be able to help me get some numbers together?"

Here, in this conversation with Joe, you've given him the desired behavior and you've enlisted his help in being a part of the solution. Employees typically want to feel like they are doing something worthwhile at work and you've provided the opportunity for Joe to feel involved, get others involved and be part of solving a bigger problem for the company. You're providing an opportunity for engagement while building a culture of safety. This is not to say that Behavior-Based Safety is a total safety management system. You still need other systemic tools for safety such as required PPE, Safety Training and good engineering controls, among other things. It is important to note, however, that if you use Behavior-Based Safety as a disciplinary tool, people will stop telling you the truth about what's going on. The conversation described above illustrated the importance of enlisting your employee's help to solve a safety problem. Another approach that could've been taken at that time might've been, "Joe, I saw you riding on the forks of that forklift and if I see you do it again, you're fired." Now, maybe with that approach, you'll get compliance and maybe not. Fear typically achieves short-term results but engagement and positive reinforcement will provide much more sustainable safety actions.

As with any program, top management support is imperative. The role of top management is to provide the resources and support of the program and to integrate processes into management activities and decision-making. In the structuring of a program, it is helpful to have a Steering Team comprised of management, supervisors, hourly employees and safety team members. The Steering Team should represent a cross-section of your organization and its function is to ensure support for the core teams and ensure the quality of the process. Managers should be prepared to provide support to employees, encourage the right behaviors, provide resources as needed and remove road blocks where they occur. The function of each core team or department is to identify what behaviors to pinpoint, conduct the observations and gather data, promote behavior change and monitor the progress of the program. All too often, successes are not celebrated in organizations. It cannot be over-stated that when successes occur, the team should be rewarded with some sort of recognition for a job well done. Achieving safety goals is a cause for celebration and every manager needs to remember to pause for a moment and allow the team to be recognized for its accomplishments.
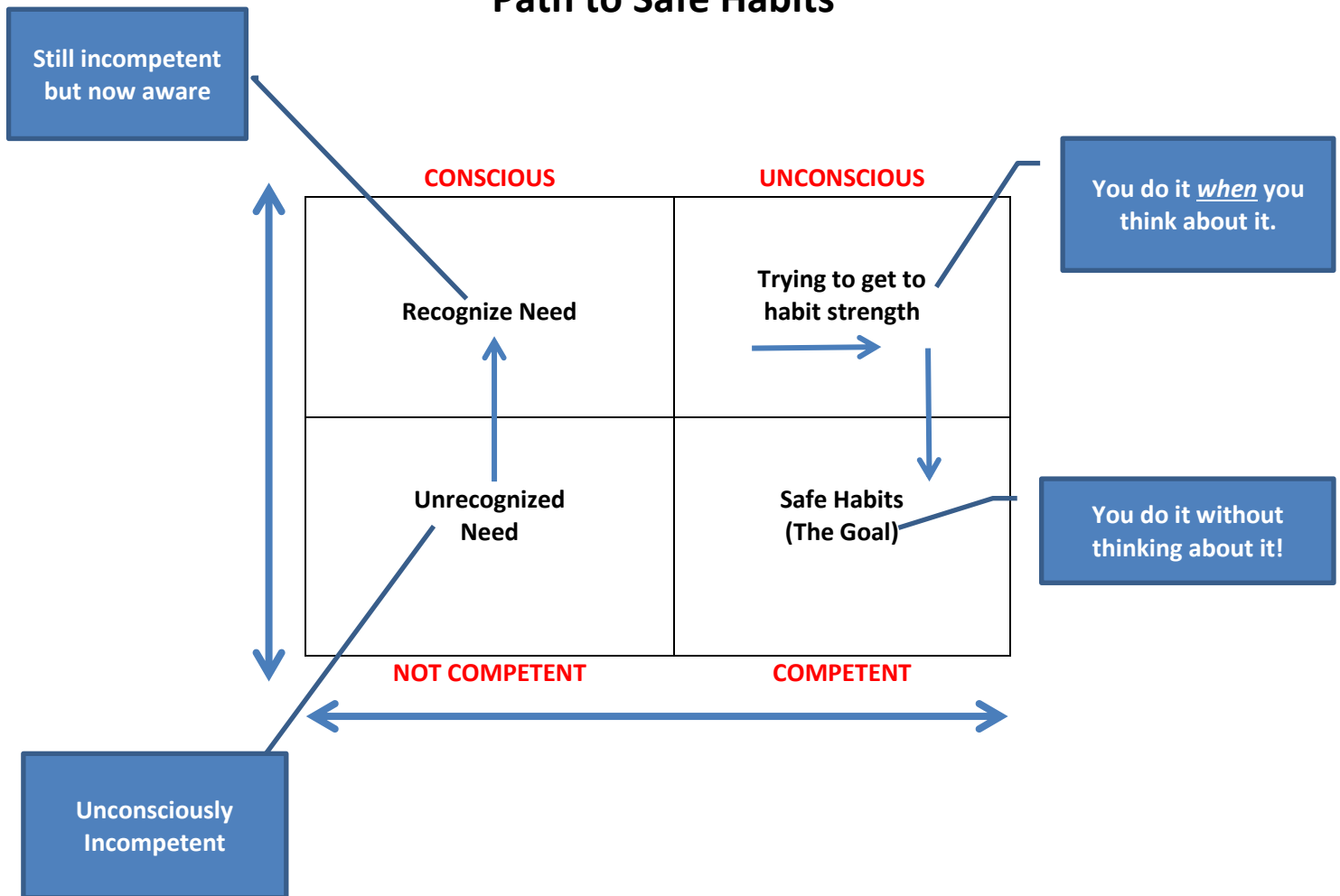
Primary Team Roles

Management	Core Team	Steering Team
• Provide Support • Remove road blocks • Monitor success • Encourage relevant behaviors • Provide resources	• Identify behaviors to pinpoint • Conduct Observations • Change behavior • Monitor progress • Celebrate success	• Monitor progress • Ensure that critical features of the process are in place • Assess management • Ensure relevant behaviors are targeted • Share best practices

Now that we've identified the responsibilities of all the players, we'll dive into more detail about building the program. One of the core features of Behavior-Based Safety is the development of habits.

The goal of a Behavior-Based Safety Process is to make desired behaviors reach habit strength. The Definition of a habit is "*A behavior we do consistently and automatically. Something we do so routinely we feel uncomfortable or funny if we don't do it.*" Habits serve a purpose for humans. They keep us safe when we are distracted, fatigued, angry or worried. That is to say, when our attention is elsewhere, habits, our built-in autopilot, keep us safe. In the arena of safety management, we want employees to automatically do things the safe way. We want them to feel funny without their PPE on or when not performing safety procedures. We want safe behaviors so ingrained into a person's work life that they automatically do the safe thing without having to think about it. Behavior-Based Safety supports this practice by helping reinforce safe work habits. Below in the graphic, the illustration describes the early stages of an employee's work life in which they are not conscious or competent in safe behaviors. Maybe they are a new person and they don't recognize the need for it. But the goal is to move the person around the box from being unaware and incompetent in safety behaviors to being so competent that they do the behaviors unconsciously.

With these things in mind, it is important to remember that often multiple reinforcers must be in place. Take for example the practice of wearing a seatbelt. If you don't put your seat belt on, you get an annoying bell or buzzer that won't stop until the seatbelt latch is engaged. But this was an evolutionary process in the automotive world. Many of us can remember when cars were built without seatbelts or when there was no buzzer or bell to annoy you into putting the seatbelt on. So what happened? Well, a lot happened. The government realized wearing seatbelts saved lives and started promoting seatbelt use. Legislation requiring that all vehicles be equipped with seatbelts was passed in 1968. There were public service announcements on television and radio. Then came the threat of penalty, "Click it or Ticket." Nowadays, most of us don't even think about it as we get in our cars and before we do anything else, the seatbelt goes on. We've been reinforced in multiple ways to develop this unconscious habit and we do it without thinking *and* we feel strange without it. Reinforcement works!

Path to Safe Habits

Still incompetent but now aware

CONSCIOUS   UNCONSCIOUS

You do it _when_ you think about it.

Recognize Need   **Trying to get to habit strength**

Unrecognized Need   **Safe Habits (The Goal)**

You do it without thinking about it!

NOT COMPETENT   COMPETENT

Unconsciously Incompetent

Join us next quarter for Part 3 "Fundamentals of Behavior-Based Safety."