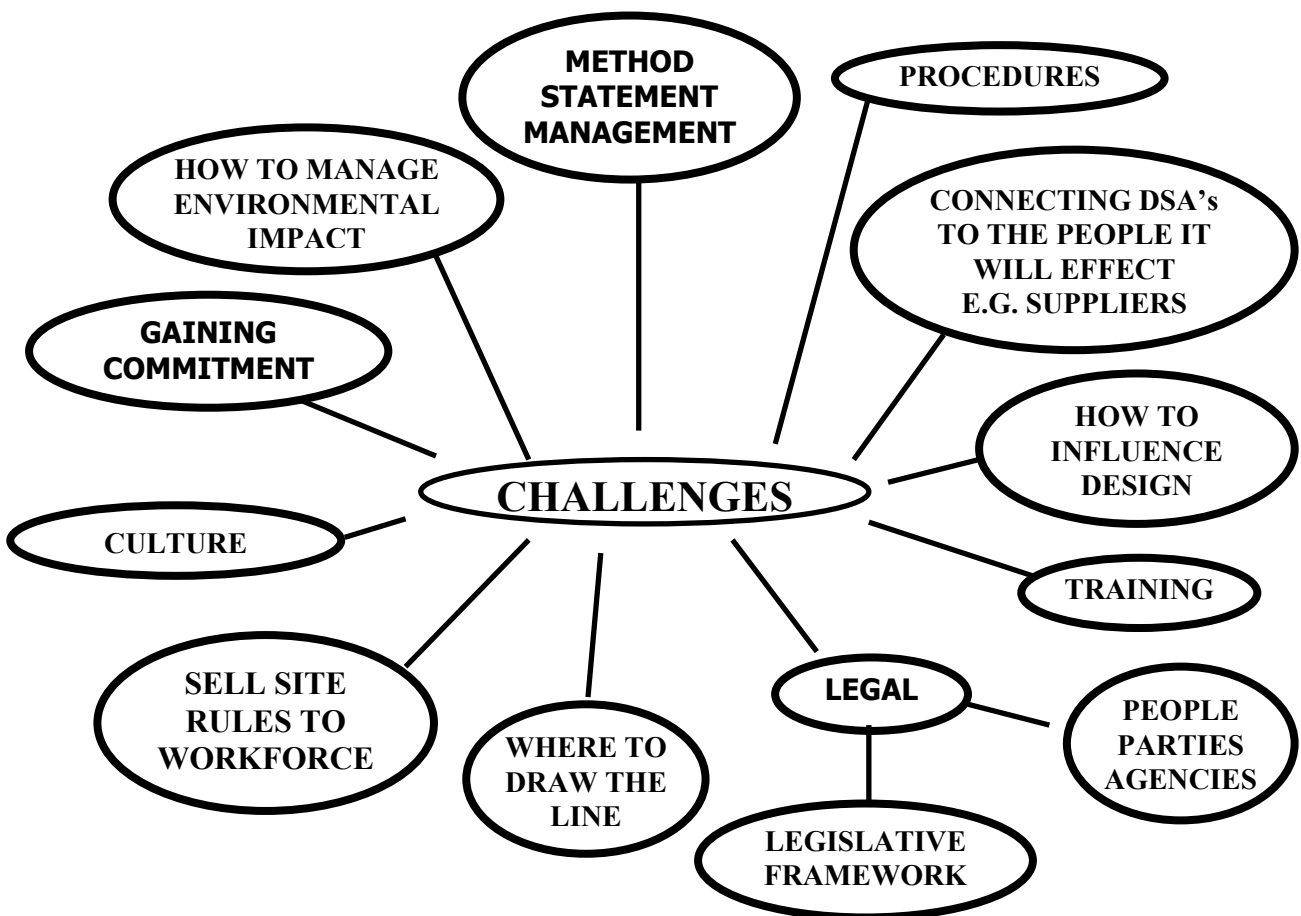


Presentation on "The Holistic Approach to Handling"

By Malcolm Copson, Geopost.

As he introduced his topic, Malcolm explained that when he started his job with Geopost a few years ago, he was then new to the industry and was on a steep learning curve to achieve what was expected of him. Getting to know the company with its 38 Parceline depots, 108 Interlink Express depots and the Linehaul Fleet with its 250 Tractors and 520 trailers was just the start of the development of a **proactive approach** to improving materials handling.

The company was very much "service motivated", with close control and performance driven. It was natural, therefore, that his strategy was based on the HSE's HSG 65, Successful Health and Safety Management, which used the '**management-speak**' used for many decades as the framework for management of any type of enterprise. This presented many challenges that had to be addressed to obtain a co-ordinated strategy.



The Health and Safety Strategy was designed to achieve the objectives laid down by the Managing Director and operated in the following way: -



In setting out the **Visions, Values and Philosophies** of its **Strategic Objectives**, the company placed the focus on the significant operating work groups throughout the organisation. Credibility was crucial and had to be demonstrated at **all levels of management**. The Managing Director delivered the objectives personally and the process was implemented with face-to-face briefings. This was supplemented with training for all nominated managers on the basis of "**No Training – No Manual**". This was a shock for some managers who delegated subordinates to attend training sessions and then found out they had to participate, personally, in setting business targets! The specific target areas were: -

- To eliminate handling (Note – NOT just **Manual Handling**) or reduce to practicable levels, recognising costs and operational limitations.
- To promote to all management levels, the benefits to the business of managing handling hazards and associated risk.
- To ensure the availability of competent staff to deliver effective solutions to training and development needs.
- To ensure an on-going commitment to the reduction of lost time injuries associated with handling within the network, through performance measurement and review.

Organising this ambitious programme to change behaviour was a sensitive issue calling for some sensitivity in the development of a culture of '**ownership**' by: -

- Training Managers in OH&S management systems incorporating standards to be achieved, working documents with time boundaries and a defined comprehensive audit trail.

- Developing a corporate approach to handling issues, including the development of training packages which are bespoke to the business, meet legal requirements AND can be readily understood.
- Developing front line Supervisors to provide them with the necessary skills to recognise where training, re-training or further development is required to mitigate against risk.
- To provide **On-Job Trainers (OJTs)** with the necessary **knowledge, skills, ability and training** to ensure consistency of approach across the the network.

Planning this initiative included the following elements: -

- Independent **Generic Risk Assessments**, considering existing operations and critically examining procedures, specifications, training and actions.
- Completion of detailed Risk Assessments by **Focus Groups**, with reference to **Generic R.A.s.** and made specific to the operating methods in each depot.
- Review existing procedures and confirm whether acceptable or not.
- Develop further procedures as necessary.

This process was aimed at producing safe operating methods, based on the hierarchy of risk control measures. Engineering Solutions for risk control were obviously high on the list of priorities and included the following for depot facilities: -

- Automatic Penetrators/Conveyors.
- Dock Levellers. These saved £1.5m.
- Roller track.
- Fork Lift Trucks.
- Pump trucks.
- Sack Barrows.
- Trolleys.
- Cages & Deckplates.

Some measures needed applied psychology to work successfully. Such as sack barrows on vehicles having the driver's name printed on them to prevent unauthorised removal and to encourage careful use and maintenance.

Most injuries were found to be caused by striking against fixed objects but falls were also a cause for concern. On Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), for instance, the engineering solutions included: -

- Access/Egress (Tractor Unit)
- Catwalks
- Air & Electric coupling process
- 5th wheel Trailer connections
- Connect/Disconnect trailers

Staff training was also an important issue, particularly for agency staff who had to be trained to an acceptable standard, agreed with their employers. For instance, great emphasis was placed on the cleaning of tractor catwalks that were vital for safe access over the high chassis of tractor units. On the subject of road safety, connection of brake hoses was very important, as there were at least eight different ways in which they could be connected. Even the long-serving staff were included, as there was no way their competence should be assumed to be acceptable without a check.

On trailers, engineering solutions included: -

- Access/Egress design
- Lightng
- Double Deck trailers
- Load Safety
- Breakdown/Emergencies

With lighter vehicles, there was a health and safety input into the design of vehicles. For instance, access from the side was banned and allowed only from the rear by means of footholds built in by the manufacturer.

The most important resource are the people at risk and their safety was protected by: -

- Systematic Process Procedures and risk Assessments.
- Training packages determined by the risk assessments produced by the focus groups
- Induction taining for new staff
- Basic training for existing staff } Pre-determined Time Intervals
- Updates }
- Refresher training } Practices NOT theory!

The Manual Handling Training package was carefully designed to the business requirements: -

- Professionally designed input, including an in-house training video.
- Support documentation
- Practical element
- "Real Life" situations
- Assessment process with working life measurement
- User friendly handout/brochure/information
- Delivered through qualified trainers
- Reviewed and update regularly (Annually)
- Supervisor assessment of performance

This programme was strongly orientated by business objectives and incorporated a **Performance Review** which included quantified activities: -

- Reduction in lost time injuries (cost benefit analysis)
- Reduction in E.L. claims

- Reduction in E.L. premiums
- Re-habilitation successes – Employee Care scheme, where an independent, external organisation contacts employees after 5 days absence to see if their recovery is progressing satisfactorily. There is a vigorous "**Return to Work Strategy**"
- The Three Cs of **Co-operation, Co-ordination and Communication.**

The Co-operation element includes: -

- H&S roles & definitions clearly defined
- Senior Managers } Allow time for handling
- Managers } to take place
- Supervisors - Support/Monitor/Deliver
- Staff - All levels trained

The Co-ordination element was developed and managed from the centre with a dedicated team, supported by senior management

The communication element was based on a fixed OH&S Management timetable, structured meetings, reports and targets. Handling processes are revisited annually and recorded.

The overall safety management system is audited annually and the **Numerical Audit Profile (NAP)** comprises: -

- Promotion through the business
- Management by **Regional Managers and/or co-opted trained auditors**
- All managers "singing from the same hymn sheet"
- A stand alone Audit of Auditors from the centre.

Members' Questions

Dick Bell asked what the Geopost training video cost. Malcolm said that he had recorded operations on a hand –held camera and arranged for it to be edited professionally at a cost of about £600.

Parveen Mehta, of Minor, Weir and Willis asked what assessments were made for agency staff who were employed for a short term. Malcolm replied that Geopost was selective and laid down minimum standards with the Agency. Staff were also given 30 minutes induction training before starting work and 99% of this was on manual handling. In addition, he added, they had a ruling that there was always a ratio of 1 Agency worker : 2 Employees, so that advice and monitoring was always close at hand. Previously, there might have been as many as three Agency staff together. He went on

to say that there had been a tendency for managers to acquiesce to untrained agency staff being allowed to work on site. Now, this was a disciplinary offence.

Dick Bell asked how the training programmes were devised. Malcolm said that operating methods had been standardised from the work done by the focus groups, which included members from the shop-floor. This ensured that formal procedures were based on practical systems.

As there were no more questions, the chairman closed the meeting and asked the members to thank Malcolm, in the traditional manner, for a most informative and stimulating presentation.