

# The Biggest Mistake Safety Teams Make in Choosing a Safety Speaker

If you want to have the most impactful and effective safety event you have ever had, reading this report will be the most valuable information on the subject ever. This covers the topic in great detail. If you're not willing to invest a few minutes to read what will help you prevent more injuries then please STOP HERE.

Thanks for caring enough about your people to keep reading. I promise you some valuable information you can use for years to come. What you are about to learn has been compiled by me for over 28 years as a safety professional.

Most safety teams or committees skip the most important, critical step in choosing who they should have speak at their safety event. Whether it's an annual safety kickoff, quarterly all-hands safety meeting, safety celebration, safety stand-down or any other employee event they need to make a critical decision before they even begin the speaker selection process.

## Determine The Presentation Type or Category First

What do I mean by presentation type? Most people don't realize there are actual differences in the type of presentations used in safety meetings.

Before you can select the best safety speaker for your event, you need to select the presentation type first. Without this step, it's just luck if your event will improve your safety performance. It is also vital to make that distinction. It is possible to have a great safety event and still not get the performance improvement you are looking for. Cosmetics aren't important - results are. If you select the wrong type of presentation you will often choose the wrong speaker.

As a professional safety speaker, I get frustrated when I hear people who are disappointed by another speaker who I know always delivers a great talk professionally. Too often, people on committees even question the effectiveness of a motivational safety speaker. This is most commonly because of this error.

The problem wasn't the speaker's effectiveness but their presentation didn't fit your meeting's needs because they fit best with a different presentation type.

### Step One - What Is Your Outcome?

What do you want to happen as a result of having a safety speaker at your event? My experience over the past 28 years is organizations want to bring in a speaker who will motivate leaders and employees to work safer and decrease injuries. Another popular outcome is a reward and a thank you for great safety performance and commitment.

If a reward is our only outcome then you could bring in any entertainer as a treat at a safety awards event. In fact, back in 1990 that's how my career began. (To read about that story in my online biography please **CLICK HERE**. Or go to: <https://drebinger.com/how-it-all-began-from-magician-to-safety-professional/>)

Maybe you want to convey some information to your employees. You may have a new safety program or initiative, which you want to launch. There are many possible outcomes: motivation, education, training, launching a program, information, celebration and on and on.

The more you understand your outcome, the more likely you will achieve your desired result. After all, it's hard to hit a target when you don't even know what it is.

## **What Are The Five Major Presentation Types or Categories?**

There are five major categories of safety talks or presentations. Choosing the right one for your outcome will ensure the success of your event. These types are:

1. Safety Program-Based;
2. Corporate Leader Talks;
3. Consequence-Based;
4. Entertainment; and
5. Outcome-Based.

Each of these categories has its own set of characteristics. As you read about the five types, ask yourself which one fits the outcomes you have chosen for your event.

### **Category One - Safety Program-Based**

Many companies will develop or adopt a new and specific safety program. Typically, the safety team develops the new program or purchases one from a consulting company. The first step in launching a new program is to train the safety team and corporate leaders in the new program. Often, a small group of employees are trained in the new system or program. Once you are ready to launch, usually all the employees attend one large meeting in an auditorium or you have a series of meetings to cover all shifts and days off. Most consulting firms will provide a speaker for this type of launch to explain the new program. If you have developed your own program one or all of your team members can do the launch presentation.

If this is what you are doing, I can help you by coming to your site and teaching your team the presentation and communication skills they need to be effective. My seminar, **"Mastering Safety Communication"** is perfect for this. I can also help individuals on your team eliminate their fear of speaking in public with a special 90 minute online course.

## **Category Two - Corporate Leader Talks**

Many CEO's and presidents who are based in a headquarters office like to give a safety talk for all employees at least once a year. I have seen this done effectively and also very poorly. A favorite method is to use a short video, which is either live-streamed or sent to each site to show at a convenient time. Employees can be shown this at a meeting or even in a conference room or break room. For the video message to be effective there must be a belief by the workforce and the majority of employees the corporate leadership truly holds safety as a value. The more the employees believe the leadership actually cares about them the better. You, as with most safety professionals, have a good enough connection with your employees to know if this is the case.

If it isn't, I can also be of help to you. There is a special program I developed entitled, **"Safety As A Value"** which motivates leaders from the first-line supervisor to the head of your corporation to embrace safety as a personal and corporate value. I also show them how to congruently convey their commitment to safety so that all their employees understand they do care.

If you are going the video route, it is worth hiring a professional video company to do the production for you. Many major corporations have their own in-house video team.

The other option is a live talk given on site. This is most common when a company has a small enough number of sites to make personal visits practical. There are a few secrets you need to know to make these most effective. The most important factor is the leader stays at the meeting the same amount of time as the employees. If it's a one-hour kickoff they stay the entire hour. If it's a full-day kickoff, whoever the corporate representative is stays the entire day. This is important because if safety is important for the employees to invest the entire day focused on safety, their leaders need to do the same. If a leader comes in gives their short talk and leaves, it sends the subliminal message, "I've got more important things to do." When they stay, it tells employees the leadership truly values safety. It's hard to believe safety is a core value when they watch the CEO leave the room.

At one headquarters meeting of a major oil company where I was speaking, something great happened. It was one of several meetings that day to cover all the shifts and schedules in the building. During one of the meetings, I noticed the president of the company was in the audience. He has a great commitment to safety. He wasn't on the program but as he said to me, "This is a safety meeting for people who work in this building and I work in this building so here I am."

The significance of this event was after my talk, no less than five people came over to ask me if I knew the president of the company was in the audience. Even though he wasn't introduced, they knew he was there and that was a great testimonial for how important safety is to him.

Because these leadership talks are often brief there is time to bring in a motivational safety speaker to reinforce the message of the day.

One of the benefits I provide for my clients is I arrive early and hear the leaders' talks. I then weave their points into my speech. Once, as a CEO and I were being driven from the hotel where we had both spoken, he said to me, "I can't believe how well your talk fit with mine. If I didn't know better I'd have thought you had an advance copy of my speech." I thanked him for the compliment.

Having a leader and a safety motivational speaker present at the same meeting allows you to accomplish two outcomes at once. First, your leader gets to share their safety values and secondly, the employees hear powerful action-getting safety motivation from a speaking pro.

### **Category Three - Consequence-Based Safety Talks**

These presentations focus on the consequences to people when they violate a safety rule or are injured on the job. There are a few sub-categories to these. First, is "Scare Tactics". These are videos or demonstrations, which show what happens in certain incidents. Some of the violent accident videos shown in driver training courses are a good example. There are many graphic photos and videos on the internet, which some safety speakers use to "scare" their audience into working safely. The problem with these and all consequence-based talks is the almost universal belief that, "It won't happen to me." If you believe you will avoid the injury in spite of violating a safety procedure then the consequences are irrelevant.

Virtually everyone ever arrested for a DUI knew they shouldn't drive intoxicated. They and those who have a crash all believe, "I won't get caught, I'll be extra careful," are all phrases they said to themselves.

The company policy of "obey or be fired" also falls into this category. Some companies have a policy that violation of a safety rule is grounds for termination. Their talk to employees is you better follow the safety rules or you'll lose your job. Once again, the problem is they don't believe they will ever be caught. If they don't catch me, then I don't have to worry about the consequence of losing my job. The, "It won't happen to me," is a huge motivation killer.

An unintended consequence of the obey or be fired rule is a false reporting or non-reporting of an injury. If I get my hand crushed because I didn't follow a safety rule I could just say I hurt it some other way. I was closing the truck door and accidentally slammed the door on it. The reported incident isn't even what really happened. If you don't know how an injury occurred you can't come up with a solution.

The other symptom of people violating safety rules is you failed to give them the best motivation for working safely and following procedures. For 28 years, I've created "self-motivation" for my audience members causing them to WANT to work safely. When you give people a good enough positive reason why they should follow procedures they will, even when no one is watching.

The challenge is negative motivators are easily brushed aside in the minds of your employees because of the human belief that, “It won’t happen to me.”

The third sub-category is the Injured Worker talk. There are many powerful speakers out there who talk about how they were injured and how it has impacted their life and the lives of those in their family and friends. This is the “Do As I Say, Not As I Did” motivational talk. It suffers the same as any consequence-based talk. The audience may be brought to tears, faint, or have a profoundly emotional experience. The challenge is they aren’t moved to safer behavior because it just won’t happen to them. By the way, the speaker believed it wouldn’t happen to them and that’s why they got hurt. If it didn’t prevent the speaker from doing something unsafe, why would you expect that result from their audience?

### **Famous Last Words**

Many people who have been injured, including most, if not all, injured safety speakers have violated a safety rule, procedure or policy. This is definitely not the best example to put in front of an audience. You want positive safety motivations for your employees. Here are some phrases injured people have said to themselves right before they sustained an injury.

“It won’t happen to me.”

“I know this isn’t the way I’m supposed to do this, but I’ll be careful.”

“I’m smarter than that guy telling his story.”

“I’m more experienced than him so I’m ok taking chances.

“I would have noticed that thing that caught him.”

“I would never let what happened to him happen to me”

“That guy was stupid and I’m not.” (I’ve even heard injured speakers say this line themselves.)

### **Emotional Reactions Are Not Actions!**

It’s easy to mistake audience reaction and emotional impact with a change in behavior. People need a good reason for them personally to change the way they do their job.

As popular as talks that tell about the horrors an injured person’s family has endured, it is once again negated by the, “It won’t happen to me” belief. If it isn’t going to happen to me, then it isn’t going to hurt my family and friends either.

When you give people a good enough reason why, they are more likely to change. Outcome-based talks, which I will discuss last do this best of all. In my talk, “Would You Watch Out For My Safety?®” I use the opposite but highly-held belief, “It could and probably will happen to the other guy.” Because of shifting the focus to someone they believe could actually get hurt, they are willing to change their safety behavior.

### **Negative Examples vs. Positive Outcomes**

If you have ever studied self-improvement experts or coaches of any sort you will have discovered they always focus on the desired action or behavior. They don’t use

negative examples to get a positive result. A great business success coach doesn't tell you to study case studies of failures. No, they have you study successes.

I recorded the final game of the Little League World Series to show my grandson. I want him to see how the best batters hit the ball.

True, sometimes you video a person's performance so you can see and evaluate their technique. You can look at what they need to improve. The secret is you only show them once and then you only show them video footage of the correct move. Also, they aren't studying someone else's bad form; they are getting feedback on their own performance.

Now, with feedback and instruction, they can improve. I don't watch bad speaker's speeches to find out how to be a better speaker. I watch as many great speakers as I can in person and on video. I learn best from watching great speakers and motivators. There is no exception for safety. Having someone who failed in safety doesn't give people the positive behavior to move towards. Not to mention the mixed message of having a person who had a boring job, then gets injured and now travels the world telling their story. What safety message does that send?

The flaw with the, "This is what I did wrong and how it impacted everyone's life." is it's studying how not to do it.

### **People Move Towards Their Predominate Thought**

In the 1970's, Denis Waitley, who studied excellence and success, interviewed many of the POW's returning from Vietnam. He studied their mental strategies that helped them to survive. One mental phenomenon he found was people move towards their predominate thought. That's a big problem for us in the safety field. When you constantly put an injury story in front of an audience it becomes the predominate thought. Did you hear that? The injury and what caused it are the predominate thought, not the desired behavior, which would have prevented it. That means the audience is hearing a moving emotional story that places in their mind how someone was injured.

Denis, in a speech I heard in 1976, told the story of a baseball pitching coach who walked out to the mound to tell the pitcher, "Don't throw this guy 'high and inside'" because he'll hit it out of the park." The pitcher later shared he wondered why he put it that way. His predominate thought was, "high and inside." You guessed it, that's exactly where the pitch was thrown and it was a home run.

Better to have a presentation, which is outcome-based. That way, the desired behavior is the predominate thought. Now, you have people moving in the right direction.

### **Category Four - Entertainment or Celebrity Talk**

Entertainment is used at safety awards dinners, safety celebrations and picnics, family safety days or similar events. Entertainment may be a nice reward for great safety

commitment. Notice I didn't say safety record. You want to reward positive leading activities, which will lead to safe behavior and performance.

The great news is you can have both entertainment and a great safety message. That's what caused my career to take off nationally and then, internationally.

## **Category Five - Outcome-Based Talks**

Now for the fifth and most powerful category! Outcome-based talks begin with knowing where and what you want the employees to do. These talks positively motivate people to do what you wish they would by teaching techniques and methods they can put to use.

If your outcome is one of the following then outcome-based talks are what you want.

- Improve your safety performance
- Employees working safer even when no one is watching
- Eliminating shortcuts

Outcome-based presentations are exactly that, a talk focused on achieving a specific action, change in belief or thinking, or behavior by members of the audience.

If you are looking to motivate an audience to action you must give them more than emotional stories or examples of safety failures. You must give them skills, techniques and methods they can use immediately to take the action you want them to take.

A great safety speaker begins with your outcome and then builds a presentation, which will give the audience a good enough reason "why" for them to fulfill that outcome.

Remember the why must overcome the, "It won't happen to me." belief. All of my presentations are designed to cause people to take a positive action because they want to not because they are required, forced or scared into it. When people want to work safely they will do so even when no one is watching.

Outcome-based talks are aimed at getting people to do those activities, which will result in them and those around them to work safely. This type of presentation has a positive focus rather than negative.

Outcome-based presentations move people toward the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, which will keep them and others safe.

Because these talks focus on the positive reasons someone would wish to embrace safety they don't have to deal with the old, "It won't happen to me." belief. As mentioned earlier, in this report, negative scare tactics or consequence-driven presentations are stopped dead in their tracks because if it won't happen to me, I don't have to change.

## **Study Success You'll Succeed - Study Failures You'll Fail**

### **Scared Straight TV Shows - Focus On Failure**

Did you know the scared straight television shows and the police departments that were using the program all stopped? Why? Simple - bad results. You would think juveniles who were exposed to the violence and scariness of jail (negative consequences) would be less likely to commit crimes. It turns out as they kept track of the participants, they discovered the truth. The results were the opposite of the prediction. Youth who were put through the scared straight program had a higher arrest rate than similar at-risk youth who did not do the program. One possible reason is the kids figured they wouldn't get caught like the guys they met in jail. The reality is they assumed, "It wouldn't happen to them." Just as in safety, when people think it won't happen to them the consequence is irrelevant and doesn't matter.

Secondly, they were using a negative example and the predominate thought is crime rather than exposing them to positive mentors.

It is important to realize the same principle holds true for safety.

### **Focus on Success**

Outcome-based presentations teach positive principles. They follow the formula used by success coaches, which is to study those who are excellent at something, discover the key elements of that excellent behavior, and then learn and implement those keys to success.

Instead of studying failures, outcome-based speakers study best practices, thoughts, attitudes, and actions of safety champions. The safety champions they study could be leaders or companies.

You will see a more significant result with an outcome-based presentation.

Who better to share with you the strategies of the best in safety worldwide than a safety professional who has worked internationally for over 28 years? I can share with you what the best in safety do to achieve a safer workplace and maintain it.

Another big advantage of outcome-based presentations is they are not limited to a person's single story. My clients who are thrilled with the results as well as the positive audience feedback are overjoyed when my meeting planner explains they can have me back again for an entirely different presentation. All versions of the injured worker talk are going to be essentially the same.



## Meet Two Core Human Needs At Once

One of my mentors pointed out two core human needs are certainty and variety. How could you fulfill both of these from one safety speaker? First, when you have a safety speaker at your site that is a success you know you can count on them to consistently produce the same result. The challenge is you also want to meet the second core need of your audience, variety. Traditionally, that meant bringing in an entirely different speaker and you won't know until they speak if you'll get the result and the feedback you want. Bringing in a different speaker every year means you will have to do a lot of research finding the next speaker. After all, no matter how good someone's talk is you don't want the same thing year after year.

An experienced outcome-based safety speaker can have many quality talks, which are entirely different. They meet the audience need for variety, being different, being surprising, being exciting and challenging them with new ways to improve their safety.

Our clients have the advantage of knowing they will get a great presentation and can have me back over and over again with an entirely different talk and outcome.

What a relief it is to the person responsible for bringing in a safety speaker to know it will be as good or better than the last meeting. In fact, when it is announced I am returning, employees look forward to the upcoming meeting.

We can provide you with poster content to promote the meeting.

## I provide several Outcome-Based Talks

**Ensure Your Safety** - Instills personal responsibility, teaches why to avoid shortcuts and third, give your employees a powerful way to refocus when they are distracted on the job.

**Would You Watch Out For My Safety?®** - Give people five reasons they would want to watch out for the safety of those people around them. It overcomes the, "It won't happen to me." syndrome.

**Safety As a Value** - Instills safety as a value for leaders and employees. This is a great talk for your leadership team the day before John speaks to their employees.

**Safety For Leaders** - Causes them to adopt safety as a value if they haven't already.

**Mastering Safety Communication** - Teaches communication skills to your team.

**Dynamic Safety Meetings Institute** - Three days of professional speaking tips and secrets.

## Characteristics of All Effective Safety Presentations

There are important elements every safety motivational speaker needs to have in their presentation no matter what type it is. In order to be effective you must have or be:

- Memorable;
- Attention-Getting;
- Audience Involvement;
- Humor;
- Stories;
- Relevant;
- Appeals to a diverse audience of different ages and diversity; and
- Is 100% Appropriate in a business setting.

For over 28 years I have been providing this to my clients and would love the opportunity to do the same for you.

## What's Next?

### Share With Others

Now that you have this knowledge please share it with your safety teams, company leaders, and any fellow safety professionals you think would find it useful. We have made this easy to do. You can forward this newsletter to them or you can send them to: <https://tinyurl.com/y9eczm9n>

Or the full URL: <https://drebinger.com/the-biggest-mistake-safety-teams-make-in-choosing-a-safety-speaker-special-report-01/>

**[For a downloadable PDF You can CLICK HERE](#)**

### Plan An Event

Ask yourself when is the next event we could bring the best outcome-based speaker, John Drebinger to our site?

### Contact The Best Safety Meeting Planner

Diane Weiss has been helping my clients achieve their safety results for over 28 years. She can help you make your event a success and her advice is included in John's fee.

Call or email Diane today so she can help you select which of John's outcome-based presentations you want him to do on his first visit to your site.

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