Case Study 21: Industry Group – Other Organizations

Keywords: Program Design / Metrics / In-vehicle Monitoring / Safety Culture / Wellness / Other Organizations

Overview of Category Characteristics: By design, this group is diverse. However, for discussion purposes, this group can be separated into four sub-categories. Some share operating environments. Others representing safety program practice, while another represents an entirely different category of organization.

- Hazardous Environment: There are four who operate in hazardous environments (business services, toll road authorities, oil & gas field services, and construction advisors). Although all four of these operate in hazardous environments, the actual environments are different and each addresses the situation in ways suited to their individual industries.
- University Shuttle: Two university shuttles were interviewed. Both share the same unique university campus environment, but one shuttle system is very large, operating 550 vehicles, while the other is very small, operating 27 vehicles.
- Limo/Tour Bus: There is an example of a very public business, a private tour and limo service), for whom public perception, as well as actual safety is critical.
- Small Employer: Another (small trucking company consultant) represents an entire group (small employers, specializing in small "family owned" trucking companies) each of which would be unlikely to participate in the study individually, and whose situation is very different from the large corporate fleets.

Each category is discussed separately in the context of key interview topics.

Traffic Safety Programs: Safety programs are a reflection of an array of factors, including organization culture, industry practice, and the physical and regulatory operating environment. Our typology here focuses on the latter, but not to the exclusion of any of the other factors.

- Hazardous Environment: The four examples in this group all operate in obviously hazardous environments. One renders assistance to motorists on busy freeways. The other three frequent and do business in industrial environments, construction sites, and drilling sties. (EMS providers also fit this description, but are covered by related safety organizations due to the structure of the industry and other reasons noted.)

As diverse as the individual operating environments are, they all have one thing in common. They are dynamic and fraught with emergent properties. They are chaotic. Construction sites require attention at night and in inclement weather, as do industrial facilities, oil drilling operations and motorist aid. Driver safety programs for this group deal with atypical non-standard conditions. (For example, making a U turn on a freeway or using a ramp in the wrong

direction, or being in the middle of a construction incident in the middle of the night.) The standard driver safety programs or defensive driving curriculum is inadequate. Instead, all these programs have a more general approach for some elements and a more specific approach for others.

Examples may help illustrate this point. Situational awareness complements and supplements specific admonishments (like following too closely). The sharing of specific tactical information, as well as generalizing that information for application elsewhere supplements standard defensive driving tactics. For example, one company developed their own version of defensive driving. The concept of "defense" in defensive driving was carried to a higher level through supplemental modules to their basic Smith System program. A module evolved on how to drive in environments with distracted drivers, rather than the standard how to not be a distracted driver.

- University Shuttle: In some ways, campus shuttles are similar to mainstream transit operations. (The mission mantra "Safety – Schedule – Service" remains applicable.) However, in other ways they are very different (demand and workforce). Both involve students. The buses are driven by students and they are driven among communities of students. Consequently safety programs cover everything that typical transit authority programs do (see the previous section on transit), but also modify their safety programs and initial training to accommodate that constituency and workforce. The safety programs/training is shorter and driver recruitment is virtually constant. Similarly, there are peaks of demand almost hourly (class changes) rather than the typical AM and PM peaks of conventional urban transit systems. This changes the style and tone of the safety programs, rather than their basic content.

- Limo/Tour Bus: The example here is a tour bus, airport shuttle, and limo company. Their safety program content is relatively typical, however their application is not. At least two elements are exceptional, the use of peer groups as a metric for safety performance and the pervasive safety culture. These support the central role that safety plays in the business model, including the role in image and marketing. These are discussed in the relevant sections below.

- Small Employer: The challenges for safety programs for this group are organizational and resource-based. They lack the "economies of scale" available to lager trucking companies to develop elaborate safety programs. However, they report recognizing the importance of safety and by extension adequate safety programs. They explicitly recognize the need to adhere to the formal regulations, often via "roadside education," meaning they failed a roadside inspection. Safety programs for this group are focused on meeting the basic regulatory requirements. In other words, these programs typically include all aspects of regulatory compliance, including but not necessarily primarily safety. The safety elements are basic "driver awareness." The program is a targeted refresher course designed to address specific concerns or problem areas.

Program Evaluation/Metrics: The situation with evaluation and associated metrics is more straight- forward for all the groups in this category, though different between groups. The hazardous environment group monitors everything (weather, time of day, site conditions, driver schedules, driver response, etc.), primarily for internal dissemination and tactical level response. The university shuttle and limo/tour bus groups monitor the more common parameters (driver behavior, vehicle conditions, braking, sharp turns, skipped stops, etc.) to document their performance, as well as for internal (remedial and corrective) use.

The limo/tour bus example incorporates an aggressive peer group review as well. The peer group functions as one of the safety program metrics, used as an assessment to indicate needed improvements and refinements. (Metrics are typically crashes per mileage or calendar period. Some of these companies are very small and serious incidents are rare, so the mere occurrence is the metric.) Industry group peers provide the basis for program assessment and evaluation. However, programs and program elements are assessed and adjusted based on trends and history (self-referential) and on peer group statistics (group/practice referential).

The small employer truckers do what is required by regulations. For all four groups, there is no explicit decision to retain or terminate the safety program. The existence of "the safety program" is a given. Evaluation decisions involve refinements or modifications to the program.

Safety Culture: Safety culture dominates three of the four groups, although for slightly different reasons. All four of the hazardous groups have highly proactive safety cultures. There are typically multi-faceted formal program elements, such as explicit training consistent with the various operating environments, as well as some form of informal networking relating to safety (either facilitated by the company or spontaneously arising, or both). The university shuttle and limo/tour bus groups both have highly visible safety cultures, aggressively supported and promoted by the organization at all levels.

In the case of the limo/tour bus example, this is recognized as a critical element in the promotion of the business and is directly used as a marketing tool. Safety culture is stated by name and by example, and actively practiced throughout the organization. (Their safety culture ethos even extends to the mechanics and physical facility.) An operational example is switching drivers out for over-night runs, even though the hours of operation had not been exceeded. Emphasis is on correction rather than discipline. Consequently, reinforcement is constant via reminders, individual monitoring/feedback, and targeted retraining. There are also monthly safety "quizzes" and reminders. The goal is to eventually replace regular periodic "broadcast" training with individually-targeted training.

The outlier is small employer trucking companies who of necessity are focused on the day-to-day running of the business. ("Chasing the dollar," as one interviewee put it.)

Wellness Linkage: For all four groups, the linkage between wellness and the various safety programs is more implicit than direct, but for different reasons. For the four hazardous environment examples, the stress of working in overtly hazardous environments is the

"wellness" element that connects to the safety program. This is especially true for Pillar where the impromptu monitoring and dissemination of descriptions of incidents and issues reinforces the elaborate safety program. The associated stress is recognized both anecdotally and by the configuration of the safety program.

For the two university shuttles, on the other hand, there is little overt discussion or consideration of stress or other health matters, although concern with safety dominates their operations. In this latter feature, they resemble public transit authorities. Another factor may be that their drivers are all students, a workforce category typically underserved by employer health programs.

The other two groups (Limo/Tour Bus and Small Employer) responded consistent with what would be expected from a small employer and the associated limited resources. In other words, the wellness linkage is only recognized and acknowledged.

Key Points for Other Organizations:

- Other Organizations are by definition of the category very diverse.
- As illustrated by the narrative above, program evaluation is determined by the nature of the business and the environment that the organization operates in.
- Similarly, program assessment metrics are driven by the individual organization's situation.
- Some of the most creative and proactive safety programs come from the most specialized organizations in this group.