

# Health, Safety and the Art of War

A personal view

Nigel Heaton

CEO

*Human*

APPLICATIONS

# About Human Applications

- We design and deliver IOSH CPD training world-wide
- IOSH and IRM Courses include:
  - Business Risk Management
  - Risk Management and Control
  - Undertaking & managing Dynamic Risk Assessments
  - Risk communication (under development)
  - Skills in manual handling
  - Conducting general risk assessments
  - Ergonomics in practice
  - Managing musculoskeletal disorders
  - Conducting DSE risk assessments
  - Conducting manual handling risk assessments
  - Training trainers in manual handling

# The Art of War

- Sun Tzu's how to manual
- Largely unchanged since 6th C BC
- Widely used in different contexts - marketing, management, etc.
- 13 chapters to act as a manual with military strategies and tactics

# Basic themes

- Don't wage war
- Minimise loss to both your army and the enemy
- In Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) terms:
  - Don't have accidents, incidents, suffer loss
  - If you do, reduce how bad the event is

# Themes

- Explore a small number of themes from Art
- Challenge you to deploy some
- Provide examples of how relevant Art is today to the OSH practitioner

# Laying plans

- Planning is the key to avoiding and winning wars
  - The way
  - Leadership
  - Discipline
  - Deception
  - Don't do it!

# The way

- A common view
- From the top to the bottom
- The way tells you how to behave in any situation

# Du Pont

- All injuries and occupational illnesses are preventable
- Everyone's responsible for safety. Everyone!
- Safety is a condition of employment
- It's no use hoping. Safety needs training
- Never stop checking what you're doing
- Everyone has the right to challenge anyone - and expect action
- There are no minor injuries
- Safety on the job's only half the story
- All staff members are vital to success
- Never feel like you've cracked it



# Challenges

- Needs to be taught
- Needs to be enforced
- Is quite complex

# Another way



- We may risk our lives a lot, in a highly calculated manner, to protect saveable lives
- We may risk our lives a little, in a highly controlled manner, to protect saveable property
- We will not risk our lives at all for lives or property that are already lost

*Source: UK Home Office Guidance*

## We believe

- Nothing we do is worth dying for
- Everyone has the right to go home at the end of a shift in the same physical, mental, emotional state (just a bit tired)
- Everyone has the right to challenge and the expectation to be challenged on their OSH behaviour

# Action

- These are core values for OSH
- Determine a small number
- Practice them from Board to the shop floor

# Leadership

- Generals need to practice the 5 virtues:
  - Intelligence
  - Trustworthiness
  - Humaneness
  - Courage
  - Sternness
- If you don't lead, they sure as heck won't follow

# Senior managers behaviours

- If your senior team don't buy in to OSH, no one will
- If production is more important than safety, then people will be hurt
- Consider BP Texas City

# What do you believe?

## BP 'ignored safety risks over refinery disaster'

By Russell Hotten, Industry Editor

Last Updated: 1:11am GMT 31/10/2006

An interim report into a fatal oil refinery explosion accuses BP of ignoring "catastrophic safety risks" and of knowing about "significant safety problems" at another 34 facilities around the world.

The US Chemical Safety Board (CSB), which publishes the damning findings today, believes that BP may have been aware for years of major problems at its Texas City refinery, which exploded in March last year killing 15 workers and injuring 180.

The report will add weight to demands by a US judge that Lord Browne, the BP chief executive, testify in a Texas court, as the company has denied knowing of critical safety concerns before the blast.



Lord Browne: facing demands to testify in a Texas court

BP now accepts that there were failings at the Texas facility, and has set aside \$1.6bn (£840m) to compensate victims of what was America's worst industrial accident for a decade. While BP has settled with many families of victims, Eva Rowe, whose parents died, is determined to take BP to court to avoid aspects of the case being kept secret.

# Trust

- Trust is important - how much do you value OSH?
- Does your workforce trust you?
- Do you encourage reporting of incidents, accidents, near misses?
- Are you trusted excessively?
  - Are you the 'expert' and everything becomes your problem?
  - Do managers rely on you and assume no responsibility?



# Humane

- It's not just the law
- It's not just good business
- There is a moral case
  - Killing people in preventable accidents is wrong
  - Managers need to sleep at night

# Courage

- How far will you go to protect a worker?
- How will you balance life against productivity?
- How do you communicate OSH messages that might have financial implications?

# Sternness

- Do we follow OSH guidance?
- Do we work safely?
- Do we intervene?

# Just culture

- Move away from “blame” and “no blame” approach
- Hold people to account
- Start at the top and work down (NOT the other way round)

## If an accident occurs

- The worker was not wearing PPE
- Why did the supervisor allow this?
- What did the manager do to manage?
- How did the senior executive show commitment?
- What did the organisation do to prevent the accident?

# An avoidable tragedy?



# Actions

- Brief Boards in OSH
- Implement a “just” culture or similar approach
- Hold everyone to account

# Discipline

- Define clear accountabilities
- Train and practice them
- Audit and improve



# Accountabilities



Local risk awareness drives all of the above. Without it how can the organisation be sure that policy and procedures reflect the reality of what actually happens?

# Win by deception

- The best way to win - CHEAT!
- Link OSH improvements to Corporate Governance
- Use the business case - we can be better (and a side effect is safer)

## Doing battle

- Don't fight battles you can't win
- The longer the fight, the more likely you will lose
- Go for quick wins
- Measure success and report on it
- Be prepared to change strategies and re-invent

# Conclusions

- There is a philosophical underpinning to OSH
- OSH is about what we value; how we measure success; how we achieve buy-in
- Effective OSH is about a effective management
- If you don't lead - they won't follow

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