

Safety Celebrations and Events: How Useful in Building Culture?

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Abstract

Do safety celebrations really help the companies, contractors or employees while the world focuses on vision zero, zero harm, zero tolerance, and so many new ways and means to exercise ones right to live a safe work life. What parameters we need to have for discerning whether safety celebrations are helpful, in which ways? There are a variety of occasional and periodical celebrations like safety week, national safety day, fire week, national burn awareness week, employees reward events, and so on. But the critical questions are whether do these events strengthen safety culture of the company? What are the cost and man-days that go into these weekly, monthly and annual activities? Professionals insights and literature critically analyse and reveal whether corporate safety celebrations really make sense to strengthen safety culture for achieving zero-harm at sites for employees and associates. HSE Professionals, though about 20% denied the positive impact of safety celebrations, nearly 80% revealed positive confirmations with a purpose. Daily small and regular HSE events are as relevant as big celebrations to achieve missions vision zero, zero harm, zero tolerance and lessen costs on medical, insurance, property losses, and save human lives. But most corporates focus on periodical safety events rather concentrating on daily safety culture. Basic safety systems must work for celebrations to go on.

Key Words: Safety, Celebrations, Events, Culture

Introduction

Safety celebration events are good times giving positive reinforcement at work and recognising individuals, departments, leaders and sites that have demonstrated exceptional performance as motivation and encouraging all employees. Changing focus to being more positive can have an effect on people's performance, and those organisations and safety professionals that have already embraced this are reaping the rewards through more sustainable advances to their safety performance and culture (Byrne, 2015). While planning an HSE event, and preparation are absolutely vital to ensure you have the right health and safety procedures in place. If there's an increased risk of injury or accident at your event, you'll need to do extra planning to minimise it. In the worst case, you may also face criminal charges (Law, 2019).

HSE national, international summits provide participants with a platform for information exchange and networking with experts across the world on the current issues and trends including behavioural safety and engagement, mental health activities, how to attract the next generation, use of modern technologies (HSE360, 2022). HSE symposium is held to discuss a culture of care for enabling safety leadership in everyone (University of Alberta, 2022).

The annual World Day for Safety and Health at Work on 28 April promotes the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases globally. A virtual high level round table brought together government leaders, employer and worker representatives and experts to share their experiences and practices from around the world and emphasised that act together to build a positive safety and health culture (ILO, 2022).

Relive the experience. Management's primary role in a safety celebration should be to facilitate discussions of activities that led to success. Workers morale is a top concern in many organizations. Apathy and less willingness are reasons not to look out for the safety and health of others. Giving and receiving quality recognition, are prime ways to boost morale. Celebrating safety accomplishments can be an antidote for sagging morale, motivate teamwork, build a sense of belonging, and boost our desire to actively care for others (Geller, 2022).

The HSE event organisers, as an early priority, should establish that they can manage a crowd safely for the type of event and at the venue chosen. Even if the event is free or takes place on urban streets or open spaces, you should still apply the same crowd management principles to help make it as safe as possible (Health and Safety Executive, 2022). This is crucial, as at many events across the world, there have been serious fatal incidents, while the measures were not taken seriously for crowd safety management.

In a personal communication (2023), KK Gupta ex-executive director of IOCL stated that actually the usefulness of celebrating HSE events depends upon certain factors? On the Vishwakarma day, we advised every department to display SOP manuals with 4-5 critical SOPs/HIRA performed routinely to be explained by a worker (picked up randomly) to a group of 2-3 officers nominated for Vishwakarma Puja that area, charts showing total HIRA of that area. Also, critical tools and tackles were placed. We gave 200 relevant safety related questions with answers to the workers during the safety week celebrations, asked questions in the gathering and rewarded the randomly

picked workers if the answer was correct. This created good awareness. The concerned persons and organization can work out what would suit them for those HSE celebrations. It serves as reminder and reinforcement for building safety culture.

Safety Celebrations: are they relevant or useful? What do professionals' insights reveal?

Table 1 describes as to how the safety celebrations and events are they really useful in building safety culture. Do these HSE celebrations build the safety mindset of the workforce? Or is it a one-day stand-alone event? And safety culture is behaviour-based which is a daily reinforcement of corrections of at-risk behaviours and barriers to sustain the businesses. It is something that people talk about day in and out. Let the workmen talk about incidents and understand that it is okay to report freely so that a mindset of solutions evolves at workplaces, as opined by a corporate safety head of Thermax India.

Do celebrations serve the same purpose what the safety conferences do? Conferences are organized by the professionals and for the professionals for learning and understanding the research insights and findings. Whereas the HSE celebrations are to promote the environment, safety and health messages across the workplaces to trigger minds, but it is not clear how far they are imbibed to the daily working procedures? All it depends upon how the safety celebrations are organised, to fulfil set goals, involving the specific subject and the experts, to link it further to daily routines.

Private companies and government organizations conduct HSE events regularly for a high amount of fee as well as involving high profile speakers, attracting huge number of industry participation. The efficacy of these events are debatable as methodologies of HSE implementation are quite long-term, but it is sure that people take ideas from these celebrations but how far they are in a position and power to decide and implement the shared ideas, are questionable. Hence, the concern is who is coming to these events to attend and what is being discussed, and which experts are making their views clear for achieving positive HSE outcomes. However, it is also clear that large numbers of these events are commercially driven, not so professional, and the exercises for waste of time, effort and money. But these Health & Safety events claim to improving workplace safety standards (NEBOSH, 2023).

The Journal of Public Policy & Marketing finds that celebrations with social gathering, eating or drinking, and intentionally marking a positive life event, will increase perceived social support. Perceived social support, according to previous research, is the belief you have a social network that will be there for you in case of future, negative life events. That belief is associated with health and well-being outcomes, including increased life-span and decreased anxiety and depression. Hosting celebrations that increase perceived social support can be especially beneficial at places serving populations more at-risk of loneliness and isolation, like nursing homes or community centres (Indiana University, 2022).

Table 1: Safety Celebrations and events: are they really useful in building safety culture?

HSE Professionals though about 20% denied the positive impact of safety celebrations, yet about 80% revealed positive confirmations with certain conditions as described below:

1. They act as reminders and keep the topic alive.
2. It is very helpful, when we conduct any safety programme/event for celebration of safe man hours or project completion without any injury/incident, then workers can understand their roles towards safety. And they really feel worthy for site or project.
3. Absolutely it is utmost important to build safety culture by nurturing the mindset of individuals through visuals, statistics and to know the root cause of incident. It promotes, inspires to think, behave and work safely.
4. Like our Indian festivals which bonds total family and relatives interact with joy, enjoyment, satisfaction and peacefulness. Same is the Safety celebrations and events.
5. Probably not useful to the great extent.
6. Only a very little extent. It creates some awareness on safety.
7. Yes but should be done through involvement and participation and in a planned manner.
8. Always to be conducted and updated.
9. They need to be designed in way to drive home the message.
10. Provided there is a participation from every level.
11. Practicing events like a vacation of the buildings and training for the fire safety and handling emergency situation, are useful.

Safety celebrations do not exist in isolation and are part of the entire HSE systems. Celebrations project the success of these systems, procedures, standards and the safety culture in overall. Hence the celebration must meet the honest criteria in coherence with safety of manpower. It must not be fake, or exist only in documents, as some celebrations lack safety measures and incidents happen during the celebration itself, or later, which projects the flakiness of systems.

Conclusions

Any event, social or corporate, whatsoever, would need a serious thought on HSE action plan. Like Indian festivals which bonds total family and relatives to interact with joy, enjoyment, satisfaction and peacefulness. Same is the safety celebrations and events. But India's biggest Diwali festival is really bad for its health and safety. Fire hazards and burn injuries during festival celebrations are common. And according to the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a policy research organization, standards for what goes into fireworks are either non-existent or not imposed, allowing firecrackers to emit abundant toxic fumes into the environment (Jaiswal, 2015). However, safety celebrations should be conducted with safety measures and updated through involvement and participation from every level and in a planned manner. They need to be designed in way to drive home the message. About one in every five safety professionals believed that safety celebrations are probably not useful to the great extent, or only a very little extent, as it creates some awareness on safety. The safety professionals, though about 20% denied the positive impact of safety celebrations, nearly 80% revealed clear confirmations with certain conditions as follows. The safety celebrations act as reminders to the employees. Safety event for celebration of safe man hours or project completion without any injury/incident, help the workers understand their roles

towards safety, and they feel worthy for site or project. Safety celebration builds safety culture by nurturing the mindset of individuals through visuals, statistics and to know the root cause of incident. It promotes, inspires to think, behave and work safely. In overall, HSE events are useful for organizations and employees when fully focused for the purpose and involvement of all (Figures 1-2).

Do safety celebrations and events really help the companies, contractors or employees while the world focuses on vision zero, zero harm, zero tolerance, and so many new ways and means to exercise ones right to live a safe work life. What parameters we need to have for discerning whether safety celebrations are helpful, in which ways? There are a variety of occasional and periodical celebrations like safety awareness week, national safety day, fire week, employees reward events. But the critical questions are whether do these events strengthen safety culture of the company? What are cost and man-days that go into these weekly, monthly and annual activities? Professionals insights and literature reveal whether corporate safety celebrations really make sense for strengthen safety culture for achieving zero-harm at sites for employees and associates.

Before and beside celebrations, companies need to ascertain that their safety systems are sufficiently working as per the number of workforces. Many companies conduct safety day celebrations, while their systems are insufficient, and safety culture is reactive and dependent. Celebrations and strong safety culture must go together, not merely celebrations while incidents and accidents are not being under control. Mostly celebrations are just a show-off, or to convince the client or customers. Basic safety systems have to work for celebrations to go on. If you put good people in bad systems, you get bad results (Safety Culture Team, 2021). For safety of people, we have to change our attitude towards the life first, as we need each other for safety culture. Safety decisions are meant to do it and do it fast to implement to correct the risks. Safe workplace is a safe business.

Employees who feel they are part of a group, working toward shared goals, report increased motivation, positivity. Life events are joyous occasions in the personal lives of the work community. They can include birthdays, engagements, marriages, births, anniversaries, graduations, a new home, Social Recognition platform, Gratitude, even retirement. The best places to work provide people with life satisfaction, as opposed to job satisfaction alone. Make life events a cornerstone of your workplace culture to impact the bottom line (Kinne, 2020). It is an awareness-raising campaign intended to focus international attention on the magnitude of the problem and promoting and creating a positive safety and health culture mindset (United Nations, 2022). Celebrating World Mental Health Day on 10th October every year believes that supporting staff must be a priority for employers (Health and Safety Executive, 2022). Corporate India with companies celebrating festivals including Diwali in physical mode with their employees after two lacklustre years of exchanging festival greetings virtually. EY, Myntra, The Good Glamm, Zepto, Cars24, BankSathi, upGrad, and NoBroker, among others, are in a celebratory mode and are planning to distribute gifts centred on wellness and flexibility including time-off and leaves besides organising events and decorating offices (Verma and Sarkar, 2022). For monthly or annual events, the risk assessments should be reviewed before as well as after the event at a debriefing meeting and amended accordingly, ready for the following year, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees,

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volunteers, contractors, participants and the public (East Lothian Council, 2023).



Figures 1-2: Involvement of all in safety celebrations at sites (source: author)

Besides usual weekly or annual celebrations, certain innovation with HSE practices are important to evolve. Once companies give freedom to employees and workmen to conduct 5-minute safety event daily at the site or office, it may be, displaying a safety banner, having conversation with colleagues who was at-risk, attending a safety meeting, cleaning an untidy area, giving a safety talk, conducting mass communications with associates, and so on. This would engage everyone in HSE events, small or big, in a variety of ways to contribute to an overall safety culture of the corporates. Daily small and regular HSE events are as relevant as big celebrations to achieve the missions of vision zero, zero harm, zero tolerance and lessen costs significantly on medical, insurance, property losses, and save human lives. However, most corporates focus on periodical safety events rather concentrating on daily safety culture. Our emphasis is to make every individual a good corporate citizen with an aim on people empowerment in HSE and get the behaviours, barriers and basics of safety, health and environment right and active. Safety means, think of all aspects, but keep it simple for execution. However, precautions are essential to be observed and ensure that if daily safety practices, in general, are not visible in the culture amongst particular regions and behaviours of people of company employees, it is to be strictly advised by the authorities involved to assess the risks and that the public celebrations are to be avoided, or taken up with utmost care, not risking lives of people. Many companies or authorities conduct safety events merely as ritual or business tactics, whereas the events are meant to be associated with open and honest communication, organisational learning/continuous improvement and cross-unit teamwork (Mrayyan, 2022). Weak safety culture is defined by the reactive and dependent safety cultures, whereas strong culture is defined by the independent and interdependent safety cultures. So accordingly the safety events in the organization can be celebrated.

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