

A safety culture that sticks - Making training fun at Alleghany Warehouse Company

THE CHALLENGE

As demand for just-in-time production and faster fulfillment adds time pressure in the logistics industry, the risk of warehouse safety incidents is high for all but the most experienced forklift operators.

At Alleghany, three or four forklifts operate in a tightly confined space, each picking around 2,000lb (907kg) of product at any one time. Safety is critical. This is why, when Alleghany's most experienced staff leave the workforce, it's difficult to fill the gap.

The company's average tenure is around 20 years; some employees have been with Alleghany for 30, 40, or even 50 years. Preparing for staff retirements is a top priority. And finding high-skilled forklift operators to replace them, who have enough experience to pick safely, is a significant challenge.

ABOUT ALLEGHANY WAREHOUSE COMPANY

Alleghany Warehouse Company is a family-run 3PL provider with a headcount of around 50. The business handles shipping and receiving, inventory and auditing, as well as value-added services such as labeling and packaging.

In total, Alleghany has 39 Counterbalance & clamp forklifts with around 40 staff certified to operate them, including all supervisors.

THE SOLUTION

At the heart of Alleghany's operations is a deeply rooted culture of safety above all else. Aside from the obvious need to prevent accidents, it makes clear business sense; operators who can safely, and accurately pick products more quickly are improving overall efficiency.

Alleghany, though, approaches safety differently from most warehouses. There isn't a single coordinator or committee; there are no incentive programs. Instead, every team member is an ambassador for safety.

Everyone is responsible and accountable.

Behaviors are taught in a training academy and encouraged through continuous positive reinforcement. And a forklift simulator - on which employees can practice in a fun, controlled environment - fits that culture perfectly.

After careful consideration, Brian acquired a Sit-Down Counterbalance Simulator from Forklift Simulator. It lets Alleghany screen, train, and retrain employees without the need to take a real forklift off the warehouse floor for high-risk maneuvering.

“When safety is strong, quality is strong, so efficiency naturally comes into play.”

- Brian Parrish, General Manager - Alleghany Warehouse Company -

BRIAN'S TESTIMONIAL

We had two other new team members back in 2023. Over the course of three months, they'd had a couple of minor incidents each. That's normal - if you look at the National Safety Council stats, the chances are pretty significant that someone is going to have an incident in the early years of coming on board.

Then we put them on the simulator for refresher training, tailored to the specific incidents they'd had. Since November 2023 [7 months prior to the time of writing], neither of them has had another incident.



At Alleghany's training center

THE RESULTS

On both an individual and an organizational level, the simulator has given Alleghany a way to make training more engaging, empowering employees and improving efficiency in the process. The results speak for themselves.

Apart from targeted training programs, Alleghany has found creative ways to make development on the simulator more engaging. On 2024's National Forklift Safety Day, for example, employees will compete in teams and individually on the simulator, timed and scored for safety on a bespoke course. There'll also be a BBQ and 'Forklift Bingo'.

Making training feel more fun helps, as Brian puts it, to boost morale and create a family atmosphere. It's the positive reinforcement at the heart of Alleghany's safety culture. Ultimately, though, does it move the needle on safety, quality, and efficiency?

CONCLUSIONS

In Brian's own words:

"I feel companies often don't invest enough time in training. If you invest a little bit upfront and strengthen your training program, your return on the investment will far outweigh the cost in the long run when you've got no incidents, no waste, and no worker compensation claims."

"We've already reduced man hours & training costs by 20% and reduced incidents by around 50%."



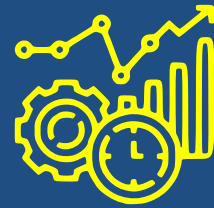
GROUND-UP SAFETY CULTURE

Every individual is responsible for the safety culture of the company



ENGAGEMENT RETAINS SAFETY

When safety becomes fun, people adhere to safe practices



EFFICIENCY GROWS WITH SAFETY

Safety through engagement leads to a happier workforce, less incidents, and increased efficiency