**HART** 2 Heart

**Safety Leadership Conference**

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***Safety is Mutual***

Begin:

Hello everyone, Welcome!, My name is Kina Hart, I am the owner of Hart 2 Heart Consulting, and I am **genuinely** pleased to be able to **talk to** you today.

**Slide #1**

There is nothing with more priority than safety, and the leadership therein. No department, no division, no mission statement, no mantra, nothing supersedes safety. We are **not** here today as leaders in marketing, technology, or research. We are responsible for leadership that keeps people whole and keeps people **alive**.Safety is the essence of how we as living creatures survive, yes, **survive**,……….and how we attempt to insure that we, and those we are guiding, *GO HOME AT NIGHT*. To that end, safety is a collaboration, wellbeing is a consensus, ***Safety-Is……..Mutual****.*

Safety, and safety leadership is a way of life. Safety is not a vocation, it is not a hobby, it is not a hat you put on in the morning and take off ten hours later. It is practiced and lived 24/7, it is repetition, muscle memory, redundancy, cross-checks, and more. Yet, **none** of those can exist without the human factor, the human element to genuinely comprehend, execute, and want to be involved. The stage for safety is not a boardroom table, it is a round table with a chair for each and every individual. Our challenge as leaders in safety then becomes duel fold: We must keep our own skills and knowledge at peak performance levels, as well as to convince

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those who are in harm’s way to not hold back for fear of retribution, criticism, or job stability. We must genuinely convey that we are not lecturing from a pulpit, rather we are asking and inviting them to be part of our entire practice and lifestyle of safety and wellbeing. They must know without turning around that we have their backs, not only in the execution of their work, but when they also need to be candid. Leadership in safety is to protect, guard, and teach the practice of safety, and part of all of those is welcoming mutual conversations and communication.

**Slide #2**

We need to convey a work place environment where they know **enough**,……..to recognize when they **don’t know** enough, and not to be in fear of raising those concerns. A comprehensive, effective, program of safety, comes not as a decree, rather it comes from **an agreement of** **purpose,** in which leaders and workers truly feel comfortable expressing ideas and opinions.

So, how is that accomplished? Our first step is to recognize the existence of a combatant culture in business and industry. Safety is not a competition, not an adversarial relationship, not *us* versus *them*. We can not go forward if we as safety managers, and our fellow employees, are tugging on the rope in completely opposite directions. That stifles any type of forward progress, as well as fostering ill will and across the board tension. Distrust, cynicism, and suspicion, in any daily business activity can lead to low morale and a poor bottom line. Transfer those same negative practices over into safety, and the effects can be dangerous and even fatal.

**Slide #5**

It is now more than ever our job to foster an atmosphere of trust and compassion in the workplace. If we expect a *commitment of service* from our employees, we must demonstrate *a commitment of service to them*. Without those elements, our people will be reluctant to communicate what

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we need, and what we must know, to keep them, as well as those around them, safe.

**Slide #3**

So now let’s look at how this honesty in expression not only benefits the ongoing work environment, but how it sets the stage from the beginning. If a business demonstrates through their public actions that they embrace honesty without automatic rejection, then from day one if hired, people will be more inclined to go all in without fear of criticism, scorn, or even recrimination. This masthead of open dialogue can so often diagnose symptoms before they become debilitating or terminal. Some job seekers are so disparate, so determined, and under so much stress, that they drift into gray areas to coerce, or just outright lie, for fear of rejection.

None of that can be more evident than my actions, my immature approach, my mistake, that resulted in losing my arm. At that time so many of our current Human Resource policies and regulations were not in effect. At that time the reality of the consequences may not have been as daunting to those without proper Human Resource training. I talked my way into an environment, and a person allowed me into an environment, that had we both been candid, would never have happened. The result obviously changed my life significantly. It also had a debilitating effect on the gentleman who allowed me to work for his small operation, and he has, to some degree, lived with that since the day of the incident. Yet, had there been a culture that encouraged applicant and employer to speak more freely, and that their mutual honesty wouldn’t automatically end the conversation, it might not have happened. I am not standing here today playing the ‘WHAT-IF’ game to divert what happened to me. I am though discussing ‘what-if’ to suggest that if a business culture of ‘mutual’ communication had been more prevalent then, it might not have happened. But, let me make this perfectly clear, what happened to me was my own doing, regardless of how it is worded, regardless of how it might be rationalized, it happened, and it was my fault, mine.

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As far as the candid and forthright culture I am suggesting, please do not mistake this in any way as meaning to lower standards, or tailor hiring practices to accommodate personnel needs. But what this does mean is that by encouraging candid responses from day one, we may be fortunate to bring onboard more people who not only have workplace skills, but who see through our approach, that we encourage, (without consequence), mutual conversation, or in our field, *mutual safety*. I am not suggesting we swaddle them in a protective blanket, so their *feelings* don’t get hurt. But I am suggesting we create a two-way dialogue with everyone from day one, all the way through to the gold watch, so they understand that their input is welcome, encouraged, and genuine to us.

Clichés and buzzwords no longer have credibility to today’s workers. Hackney terms are no longer relevant. If we really want to retain quality individuals, folks who sincerely buy into a complete safety regimen, we cannot allow our meetings, our conferences, our round tables, to be considered a root canal by our workers. If we do our job correctly, then our people will enthusiastically want to get in their vehicle, come to their office, or that job site, and participate. So, it falls on us to make that arena, that venue, that workplace, that culture, not only a professional environment, but a *welcoming* environment. Not only a place for the skills we have helped them develop, but also a place *hospitable* to their personal opinions and human viewpoints, which in our case, is that of safety. Our approach to safety is critical, not just as tacticians, or logicians, but how we approach it as human beings. To be effective, to grow, we must engage that dimension, that human dimension, that personal dimension, in this industry of safety and of safety leadership. Yes, science and technology move us forward, but the fuel for that motor comes from within a person as well as from within groups of people.

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And those people must encompass not only the owners, managers, supervisors, and leaders, but those in the field, those who are *touching* the product, *touching* the service, and those who are so often, in *harm’s* way. *People*, all the people, are the critical factor, they are the essence of **mutual safety.** Every single aspect of safety, proven, new, or conceptual, with *total* human participation, adds more distance from harm, and that helps everyone, to go home at night.

So, expand your approach, create new areas of mutuality. When they’re new, hand them a hard hat, and ask them to jump in the pickup truck. Drive to another office for coffee. Drive to a new subdivision you’re developing and show them around. Drive to a job site, get out and kick some dirt. Assure them you’ll pay for the dry-cleaning. Walk, talk, and be vigilant as you do. Show them the hole dug for the cistern, show them the color-coded flags that represent various utilities, and especially the ones that bite. Explain what the French Drain is, or soil erosion mitigation. Get on a piece of machinery, let them take control, let them feel the power, and the possible danger. Emphasize this isn’t a field trip, it is real, and what they can expect. Let them know that you know the neighborhood, you have kicked the dirt, and you want them to share their experiences as the months and years go by. Let them know you’re invested, your fingernails had grit, and that you want them to not only like their job but be safe in those duties. Don’t explain empathy, show it in your actions. Show them you relate, not by cute phrases, but by turning a wrench, opening a valve, or sitting next to you as you run a grader. What I am telling you is to engage, to bring into the fold, to open the tent, to slide a stool over to everyone. Then watch as their shoulders relax, their eyes stop darting, a smile begins, and they genuinely know their total and candid contributions will benefit the safe passage and wellbeing of everyone.

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When I have the pleasure of giving these presentations, these talks, I always like to add a quiz. A quiz of safety. A quiz that can be fun and informative. And one that many times folks ace, and many times they are just a tad shy of that. The quiz will be two questions, and today’s quiz will be on law enforcement safety. No shouting out your answers, because both answers require a sentence or two. So if you know the answer raise your hand,…….please. And you ask what is the prize? The prize is knowing you know some critical safety points of law enforcement.

**READY?**

**Question 1**. What is the exact reason for an officer, or a deputy, or any armed law enforcement man or woman, to YELL “TASER-TASR-TASER” before they shoot the subject with the electrodes? And may I add, the answer is not to warn the subject, as the subject has already shown they are violent and not obeying lawful commands. And the officer may have already warned the subject that if they don’t comply, they will be Tasered.

The **answer** is*: that other law enforcement men or women may be trying to control the subject, and by yelling TASER-TASER-TASER” the officer with the Taser gun is warning his fellow officers to get their HANDS-OFF the guy right now, so they too don’t get lit up.*

**Question 2. on law enforcement safety.** If you look at any law enforcement person, and look at their duty belt, you will notice that their firearm and their Taser, are on completely different sides of their belt, on different sides of their torso. The question is, **why is that?**

The **answer** is:Law enforcement lethal force training involves among many, many, facets, a trained response called **muscle** memory. Muscle memory when used correctly is an instantaneous response to a training action that has been practiced over and over, thousands of times. That includes pulling you weapon or pulling your Taser. Both become second nature, both are muscle memory. So, if an officer goes for his Taser, he needs to make sure **it is** his Taser. It is obvious then that they should be separated, so the correct answer is so that his firearm is not mistakenly pulled and discharged, when he/she **meant to pull** their Taser.

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As you stand and gather your belongings, I hope you take away this thought; *“I have a better understanding of the human elements involved in safety policies and decisions, and I intend to utilize them as they apply to my specific responsibilities in safety leadership”.*

If you have any comments, or thoughts, I would be very pleased to talk to you individually or even in small groups. I have the time, so please don’t be shy.

**AND, Hey!** be **careful** out there,……and **thank you.**