



Shovel Ready

As 2009 drew to a close, the wordsmiths at Lake Superior University issued their 35th annual list of words to be banned.

Top of the Michigan University's list of useless phrases was *shovel ready*, the term popularly used to describe infrastructure projects ready to break ground, fueled by stimulus funds. And speaking of *stimulus*, that word also made the over-used list.

vPSI Group proposes that *Lost Time* be added to the list. Since an outright ban on *Lost Time* is impractical, those who apply the term in the context of workplace injuries must take greater care in its use.

The origins of the phrase *Lost Time* are themselves lost in the mists of time. At the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards & Commissions (IAIABC) meeting in 1916, W.H. Burhop of Wisconsin presented the use of injury statistics as a means of accident prevention. It may have been one of the early safety societies, the American Standard Safety Code (one of the predecessors to ANSI) or the National Safety Council, that first used the phrase *Lost Time* in early publications concerning injuries in the workplace.

It is not clear why, in 1972, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) adopted the definition of *Lost Workday* as a Day Away From Work **and / or** A Day of Restricted Work in 29 CFR 1904. This is counter-intuitive to what a lay person would infer as a *Lost Workday*. A strict reading of the U.S. Federal OSHA ACT gives some guidance, but the term *Lost Workday* was an unfortunate choice. Even if a worker did not miss any days away from work but returned to work on some modified or restricted basis, those days where he was at work but restricted would have been considered *Lost Workdays* under 29 CFR 1904.

Misuse of the phrase *Lost Time* was so deeply embedded that, instead of their *Lost Workday* cases, many employers mistakenly reported "so called" *Lost Time* cases, which re-

present only a portion of the reporting intended by OSHA.

To further explore the inaccuracies caused by misuse of the terminology, consider musculoskeletal problems, which make up the majority of worker claims. Many of those affected return to work with restrictions, which technically are *Lost Workdays* under 29 CFR 1904. Woe to the rare company who reported accurately, as their frequency rate was likely higher than their industry peers. A worker who suffered an amputated finger offers a more severe example of misleading data. Patched up, he could return to work the next day with restrictions and not be a *Lost Time* case. The results were counter to the legislation's objectives, and worse, to describing the true safety character of the workplace.

In their revision of the Recordkeeping Rules effective January 1, 2002, OSHA acknowledged this confusion and began to use the new term *DART Case*, or *DART Rate*. *DART* stands for Days Away From Work or Days of Restricted or Transferred Work. So now we have *DART Rates* and *DAW Rates* (Days Away Rate).

A U.S. House Congressional Committee was formed and issued a headline grabbing report in 2008 on workplace injury underreporting. In response, OSHA issued the 2009 Record Keeping "National Emphasis Program" in an attempt to eliminate the problem.

Lost Time is still in common (mis)usage today. Visit the websites of many companies, associations, and other organizations to view their safety statistics and you are often confronted with *LTI Rate* (*Lost Time Incident Rate*). Elaborate tables and charts can be found illustrating worker injury experience using combinations of all of the available terms, compounding the confusion. One large OSHA VPP company's website includes a graph labeled *Lost Work Day Cases* (with *Days Away*), a message muddled somewhat by the accompanying explanation,

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which refers to *DART-L* (*Lost Work Days*) and *DART-R* (*Restricted Work Days*). Frankly, it is sometimes difficult to determine what an organization is trying to say.

Since *Lost Time* was never official terminology to begin with, it is shovel ready in a different sense: for burial. Unfortunately, we are probably stuck with it, at least in part because *Lost Time* rolls off the tongue much more easily than *Days Away From Work*. And if you operate in the insurance world, *Lost Time* still actually means something, but that's another article.



Accidents = Problems = Opportunities



In Korean, one word and symbol means both "Emergency" and "Opportunity". If this seems peculiar to you, consider this: everything about accidents and emergencies is bad, except that they tell you something you did not previously know about your operation, and present you with an opportunity for improvement.

This connection led to an article entitled "Accidents = Problems = Opportunities" written by Norman Ritchie of vPSI Group and published in both the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) Construction and Oil & Gas practice specialty newsletters "Blueprints" and "Well Informed". The full article can be read by downloading it from the ASSE website or by emailing a request to info@vpsigroup.com

V Activities Disguised as Corrective Actions

When something goes wrong, the primary objective of the investigation is to prevent the same thing from happening again. This is a vitally important objective, and getting there requires one or more corrective actions. A real corrective action will cause something to be different in the future that will be relevant and effective against a repeat of the unplanned event. At vPSI Group, we review large numbers of incident investigation reports from numerous companies. This insight enables us to identify activities typically presented as corrective actions that are not really corrective actions at all. It is worth noting that none of these activities are bad in and of themselves, they're just not corrective actions because they are unlikely to reduce the probability of a reoccurrence of whatever went wrong. Here are five of the most common:

I

SAFETY ALERTS While it is obviously a good idea to widely disseminate learnings via safety alerts, unless and until a recipient takes an alert and does something in their own operation as a result, the alert has had no real impact. For the recipient, a safety alert can be extremely powerful, since it allows them to grasp an improvement opportunity without suffering an unplanned event. However, this is only true if the alert contains new information and if the recipient can see how to apply that information to his or her work situation. With so many "ifs" involved, an issuer cannot assume that anything will change as a result of distributing these alerts. Therefore, this activity is not a corrective action.

II

RECOMMENDATIONS Recommendations and corrective actions are not the same. The operative word in the phrase "corrective action" is ACTION. Recommendations are suggestions, possibilities or ideas. They are an important step along the way to a corrective action, but until someone with appropriate authority signs off on a recommendation and it is implemented, it's just an idea, and ideas alone have never prevented injuries, damage, or spills.

III

HOLDING MEETINGS / SAFETY STAND-DOWNS Gathering everyone together after an unplanned event may make the team feel better, but it will rarely make any difference to the future behavior of the workforce. Generally, such meetings present no new information to participants, much the same as "reminders", and are just as unlikely to change behaviors. Both of these activities may play a role in long term cultural change but will not themselves prevent a reoccurrence.

IV

PPE Rather than preventing unplanned events from occurring, PPE works to minimize consequences after something has already gone wrong. In fact, reliance on PPE is actually planning for the next time the unplanned event happens, essentially accepting that no real corrective actions have been put in place.

V

CALLS FOR FURTHER STUDY Calls for further study are part of the investigative process to determine what went wrong and what to do about it. While such activities may be intermediate steps in coming up with a corrective action, they are not corrective actions themselves. Many other intermediate activities, such as form a team, design, assess, compare, evaluate, etc are frequently to be found masquerading as corrective actions.

Breaking Bad News

The foundation of the **vPSI System™** is the simple, but powerful, corrective action assessment process. As Uncle Ben lectured Peter Parker in the Spider-Man stories, we caution our trainees



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that with great power there must also come great responsibility. With several thousand vPSI trained people embedded in hundreds of companies, they will at times find themselves having to present negative vPSI analyses to their colleagues. When significant resources have been

expended or a senior figure is involved, the potential fallout can make it especially difficult to point out that the activity being pursued is not actually a corrective action at all or is of poor quality. The purpose of this article is to offer advice on how to break this news diplomatically.

PREPARATION Ask yourself if you are the right person to deliver the news. If it would be better accepted coming from someone else, try to engage appropriate assistance. Find out how much your colleague knows about vPSI. Even those who have been vPSI trained suffer from skill fade, particularly if they do not apply the tools frequently or have not had refresher training. Gather up all relevant information. Take your vPSI Type Examples pocket card with you and be ready to point out the one that corresponds most closely with the activity in question.

Combining Business with Pleasure

vPSI Group people spend a lot of time on the road and, wherever possible, we try to fit in some pleasure alongside our serious business. North Dakota is not a place that immediately springs to mind as a tourist destination, but our consultants found much to enjoy there.



The Enchanted Highway, pictured, claims the world's largest metal sculptures, produced by local artist Gary Greff over the last 20 years, to draw travelers to the small town of Regent, near Dickinson.

Custer passed through North Dakota's Valley of the Little Missouri in 1876 on his fatal march west to the Little Bighorn. Theodore Roosevelt found himself drawn to the area in 1883 to hunt buffalo. Roosevelt called his years in the Badlands the "romance of my life" and credited his Dakota experiences with enabling him to become President of the United States. He

TIMING The earlier the better. If you leave it too long, people will be more heavily invested in the activity and less inclined to modify their position. Avoid times where people are already stretched or stressed. If your colleagues are always harassed, you will have to interrupt. Make sure they understand that you have an urgent and important matter you must speak with them about that can't wait. Once you have their attention, don't beat about the bush. It will be much easier on the recipient if you come straight to the point.

VENUE The worst thing you can do is present your negative feedback in a big meeting. The venue should be private, with no distractions. Switch your cell phone off!

DELICACY People have been used to thinking about corrective actions in a particular way for many years and have never been challenged in this way before. It is important not to be confrontational. Be calm, dignified and professional. Allow the recipient to react and respond.

IMPROVEMENT Highlight the positive in the situation: you are looking at an opportunity to make a real improvement in how the organization works. Offer suggestions on how the activity on the table can be upgraded to a real corrective action, or improved to broaden its application and longevity. Again, your vPSI Type Examples pocket card can help by acting as a prompt, particularly in identifying existing business processes and management systems which can be used to capture Type 3 corrective actions. Allow your colleagues the opportunity to present the upgraded corrective action as their own.

eventually ended up owning two large ranches near Medora, now the scenic Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Our people have visited the park several times, encountering plenty of wildlife but few other humans there. Buffalo, deer, wild horses, porcupine and turkeys have all been sighted.

The Rough Rider Hotel in the town of Medora, west of Dickinson, founded in 1883, originally served a meat packing plant which was built in an unsuccessful attempt to revolutionize the ranching industry using refrigerated transport by rail. Recently refurbished, it is now a comfortable and modern hotel, with an excellent restaurant.

The World of Concrete 2010 and VPPAC.org Synergy II conferences will be held in Las Vegas 2nd to 5th February. To some people, a conference in Las Vegas provides the ultimate combination of business and pleasure! If you are attending, we recommend the Synergy II Thursday panel "Elements of a Safety & Health Process" at the Convention center, which will include vPSI Group Director Norman Ritchie.

More vPSI travel photos can be found on our Facebook page.



The vPSI System™

The vPSI System™ is a professional development program in addition to being a route to improved safety performance. Using vPSI measurements to manage an organization produces sharply improved problem-solving skills. Everyone performs more effectively when they understand a few simple vPSI concepts and methods and apply them to their jobs. Skills learned through the safety program can be applied to all areas of the organization, which will improve overall efficiency and boost the bottom line by reducing costs and business impact.

vPSI Training Menu

Applying vPSI Methods of Accident Prevention

This 8-hour class provides the fundamentals of vPSI methodology with an emphasis on rating and developing effective corrective actions to prevent recurrences of unplanned events.

JSA: Planning Jobs for Safety and Success; Hands On vPSI Online Tool Workshop

This 4-hour class followed by a 4-hour workshop provides users with skills to build effective JSAs specific to their work-sites.

Applying KUBO-TEPA™ Methods in Problem Solving

This 8-hour class provides users with KUBO-TEPA behavioral components of problems which aid in developing long term corrective actions applied broadly across organizations.

Executive Overview Presentation

This 2-hour presentation provides a high level overview of vPSI Implementation for busy executives.

Customized Training

Training can be designed and delivered to very particular customer specifications such as: vPSI Corrective Action Assessment integrated with TapRoot®, vPSI Corrective Action Assessment integrated with Cause Mapping, and integrating customer incidents into the Fundamental, Assessor, and the Pre-Task Planning classes. vPSI thinking has also been applied in developing custom training to address difficult issues such as DOT driver compliance and journey management.

vPSI Online Tool Portal

<http://vpsionline.com>



vPSI Online Tool Demo

This 1-hour demonstration gives users insight into the vPSI Methodology behind the online tools and guides them through the key functions to help them as they input incidents and corrective actions then review and rate their effectiveness or build Pre-Task Planning documents.

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