



# Improve Safety by (sort of) Eliminating Safety Rewards

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*“There are two things people want more than sex and money... recognition and praise.”*

- MARY KAY ASH

# What's the Point?

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IMPROVE SAFETY BY (SORT OF) ELIMINATING SAFETY REWARDS

# What is the point of safety rewards?

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- To reinforce specific behaviours that are thought to contribute to overall health and safety in a workplace
- To demonstrate an organization's positive expectations connected to those reinforced behaviours

# How do we do it?

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IMPROVE SAFETY BY (SORT OF) ELIMINATING SAFETY REWARDS

# Extrinsic Motivation

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- Monetary bonuses
- Swag for hitting a target (zero injuries)
- Pizza “parties” for hitting goal
- Entered into lottery for a “safety prize”
- Earn points / tokens to spend at rewards “store”



# Assumptions

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- People are more likely to engage in the desired behaviour if they can expect explicit rewards for exhibiting that behaviour
- People will not engage in the behaviour unless the reward is available and tied to the behaviour



# How do we do it?

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- Reward hitting targets / goals – 2 HazIDs a week
- Use simple, basic metrics – 0 Recordables
- Earn points / tokens for the rewards “store”
  - 500 pts for a backpack, 6000 pts for a BBQ

# What do we get?

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- Play the numbers game – quantity over quality
- Underreporting of incidents
- Sometimes negative competition if the reward is winner-take-all

# Intrinsic Motivation

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- Supervisor praise during meeting / toolbox
- “Thank you” notes for safe work
- Public recognition for hitting targets from senior management
- Private recognition for introverted people



# Assumptions

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- We like to be “in control” of our decisions and actions – not forced to comply
- We are more likely to follow internally defined priorities than those imposed upon us

# How do we do it?

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- Overall, generally poorly
- We emphasize – and talk about – other things that sometimes conflict with safety efforts
  - Production goals, importance of deadlines, etc.

# What are we trying to achieve?

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IMPROVE SAFETY BY (SORT OF) ELIMINATING SAFETY REWARDS

# Behaviour

# Action

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“Behavior can be observed and measured over time, revealing patterns and tendencies,...

...whereas actions are individual, discrete events that may or may not be part of a larger pattern.”



# In Essence, We Really Want

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- Behaviours that drive the desired actions, not just actions in themselves
- Do “the right thing”, even when nobody is watching
- Activities done without the need of an external reason for doing them

# Intrinsic Motivation

Specific to the individual

Includes sense of  
personal autonomy

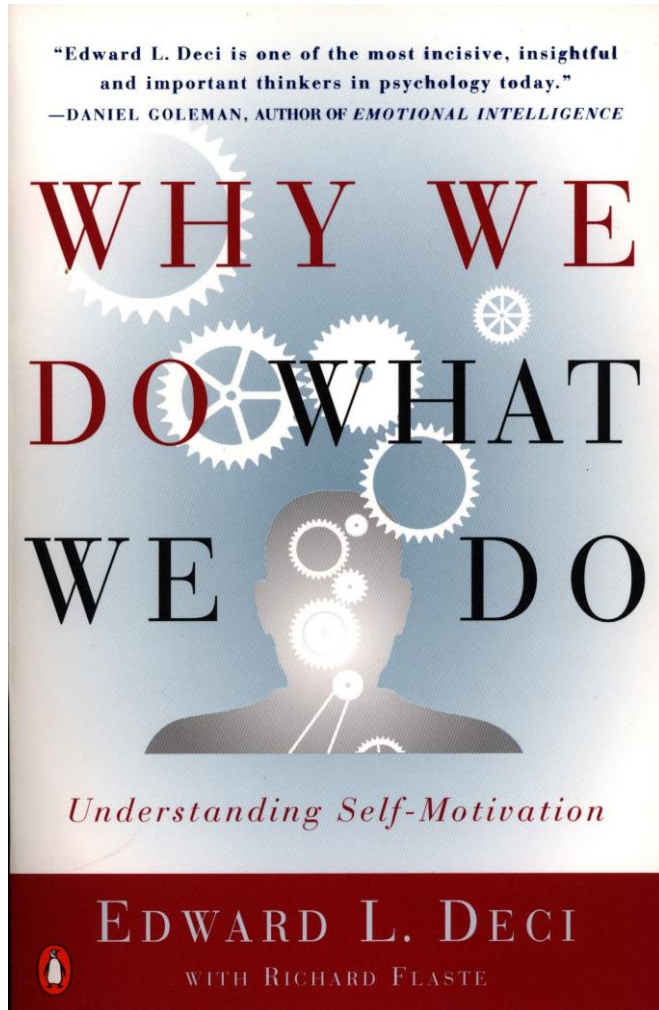
Consistent with image of  
“self”



Our character is what we do  
when we think no one is looking.

# Psycho Moment

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“The proper question is not “how can I motivate others?” but rather “**how can people create the conditions within which others can motivate themselves?**”

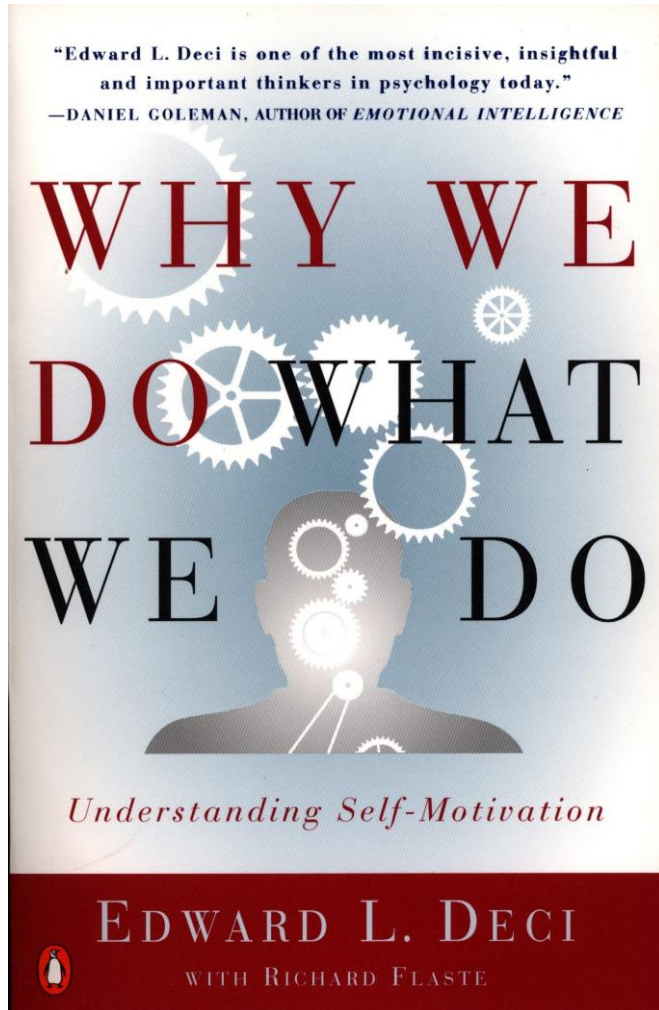
# Decoupled Motivations

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- Extrinsic rewards can significantly suppress or eliminate intrinsic motivation
- Take away a “reward” – take away the motivation
- Can also make reward synonymous with “motivation”

# Psycho Moment

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- People who are paid to play will later only likely play if paid
- People want to feel autonomous
- They want to be recognized for “who they are”

MONEYWATCH >

# MillerKnoll CEO sparks backlash after telling employees to "leave Pity City" over lack of bonuses

**MONEY  
WATCH**

BY AIMEE PICCHI

UPDATED ON: APRIL 19, 2023 / 11:23 AM / MONEYWATCH



# Don't Live in 'Pity City,' Office Chair Magnate Tells Employees Who Want Money

MillerKnoll says a video of CEO Andi Owen telling employees to stop "thinking about what you're going to do if you don't get a bonus" was taken "out of context."

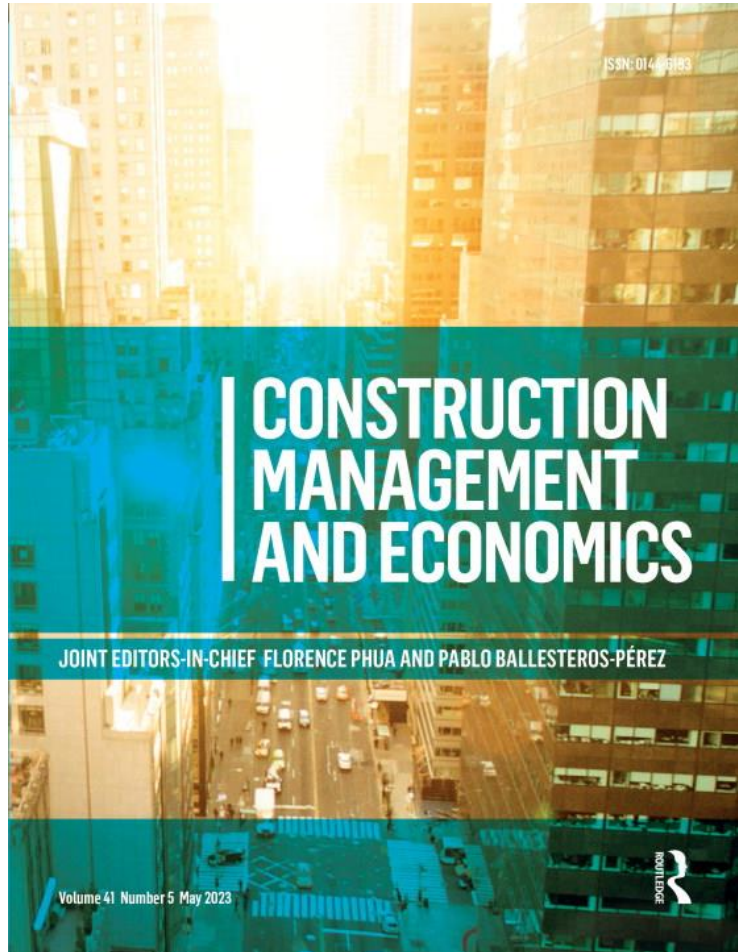
"Don't ask about: What are we going to do if we don't get a bonus?" she asked. "Get the damn \$26 million. Spend your time and your effort thinking about the \$26 million we need and not thinking about what you're going to do if you don't get a bonus. Alright? Can I get some commitment for that?"

Then, she whispered for emphasis: "I would appreciate that." (The \$26 million is an internal metric that the company was unwilling to discuss publicly.)



# A critical review of safety initiatives using goal setting and feedback - Iain Cameron & Roy Duff

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“Researchers have overwhelmingly favoured initiatives based on goals and performance feedback **without material reward.**”



# Dump the Backpacks?

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- No – but consider it, sort of
- People are motivated by both extrinsic and intrinsic factors – why not exploit both?
- Try focusing – in larger part – on intrinsic motivation techniques
- Make an effort to avoid connecting “reward” to motivation

# Psycho Moment

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**The *New York Times* Bestseller**

— REVISED and UPDATED SECOND EDITION —  
NEW CASE STUDIES • APPLICATIONS • RESEARCH



Joseph Grenny • Kerry Patterson  
David Maxfield • Ron McMillan • Al Switzler

From the bestselling authors of  
**crucial conversations**

- Make Extrinsic Rewards Third
- “Influencers first ensure that the vital behaviors connect to intrinsic satisfaction.”

# The “No Program” Program

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IMPROVE SAFETY BY (SORT OF) ELIMINATING SAFETY REWARDS

# The “No Program”

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1. Form a committee / group / team
2. Identify key behaviours you want to reinforce
3. Create information channels on targeted and desired behaviours
4. Identify individuals / groups to reward
5. Have line supervision deliver the reward

# The Central Committee

HR, Management, OHS

This is an internal management initiative

Don't announce it unless absolutely necessary – and then only minimally



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# The Central Committee



- Meet on an ad-hoc schedule, at least quarterly
- Should be quick meetings after the start
- OHS function should front-load operations as much as possible

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# What to Reward?

- Identify – in detail – what behaviours you want to reward
- Identify – clearly – how that behaviour will be identified or measured



# Psycho Moment

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## Influencer



Joseph Grenny • Kerry Patterson  
David Maxfield • Ron McMillan • Al Switzler

From the bestselling authors of  
**crucial conversations**

- Find the vital 2 or 3 key behaviours that drive results
- 80 / 20 Rule – Pareto principle
- Start with personal motivation
- Make the Undesirable Desirable



# Go to the root



**Quality over quantity** – avoid numbers games with reporting

**Compliance vs. targets** – don't incentivize hiding things

**The difficult things**, not the easy things



- Employee with a PPE “problem” is observed wearing PPE as required on 2 occasions
- Employee stops unsafe work, contrary to pressure to continue
- Supervisor’s crew starts submitting Near Misses that are actually Near Misses

# Who & What to Reward?

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FOCUS ON  
IMPROVED OR  
EXEMPLARY  
BEHAVIOUR



POOR-  
PERFORMING  
EMPLOYEE FOR  
LITTLE  
IMPROVEMENTS



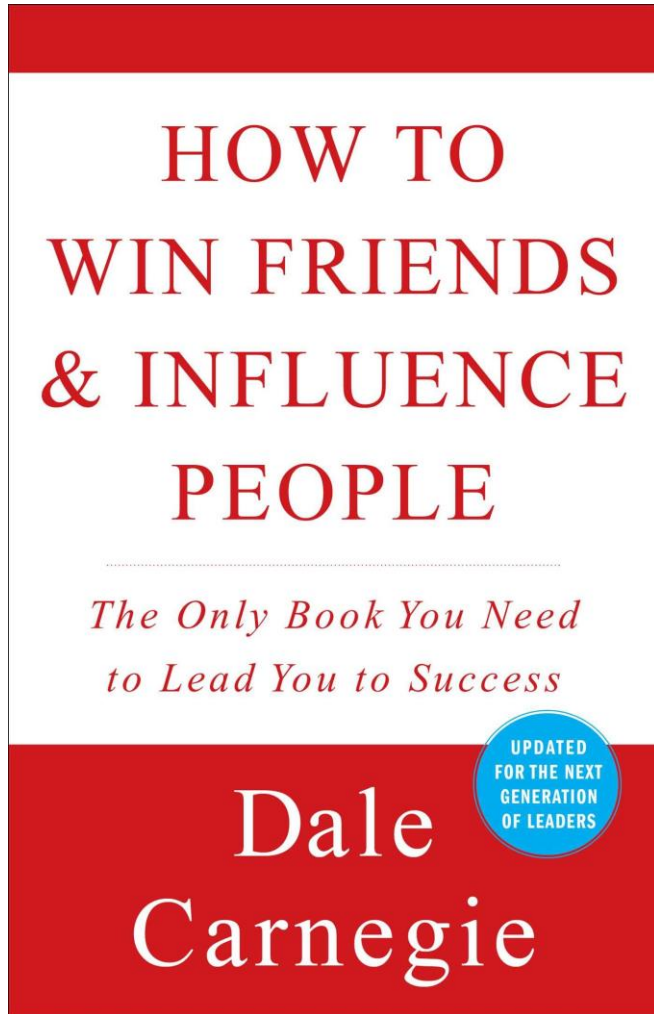
REWARD THE  
BEHAVIOUR AND  
UNDERLYING  
EFFORT, NOT JUST  
THE “SUCCESS”



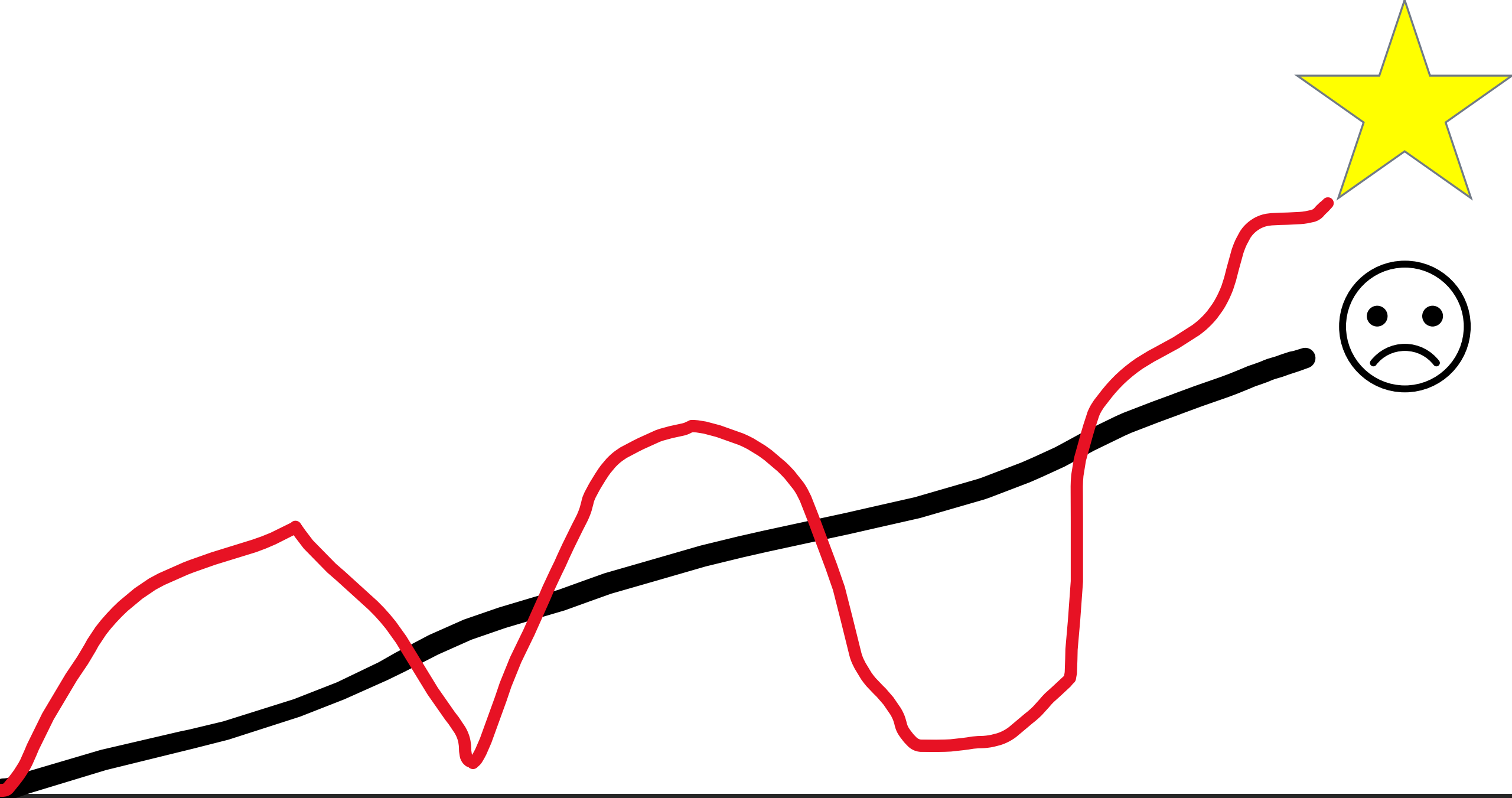
INCLUDE FRONT-  
LINE  
SUPERVISORS &  
MANAGERS

# Psycho Moment

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- Give a bad dog a good name
- Focus on improvement, not success
- Lavish genuine praise and approval on effort, not just performance



*“Safety” is not defined as everything being perfect. But it does call us to be persistent and consistent in doing the right things.*

- MIKE FEARS, RIPPING OFF MOTHER TERESA

# Collect Intelligence

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- Collect the good, bad & ugly
  - The bad and ugly are your future targets
- Include the reliable, consistent people – they need hugs too

# Create Spy Networks

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Get eyes and ears on what is working well in the OHS system



Supervisor / OHS Behaviour Based Safety observations is a good place to start



Set up tracking mechanisms if possible (HSEMS tools)



# Selection

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- The committee meets and determines candidates for rewards
- Don't limit to a specific number per month / quarter / year – let it fly
- **OHS should have a veto to ensure compliance with legislation, clients, and other obligations**

# First Reward without Reward

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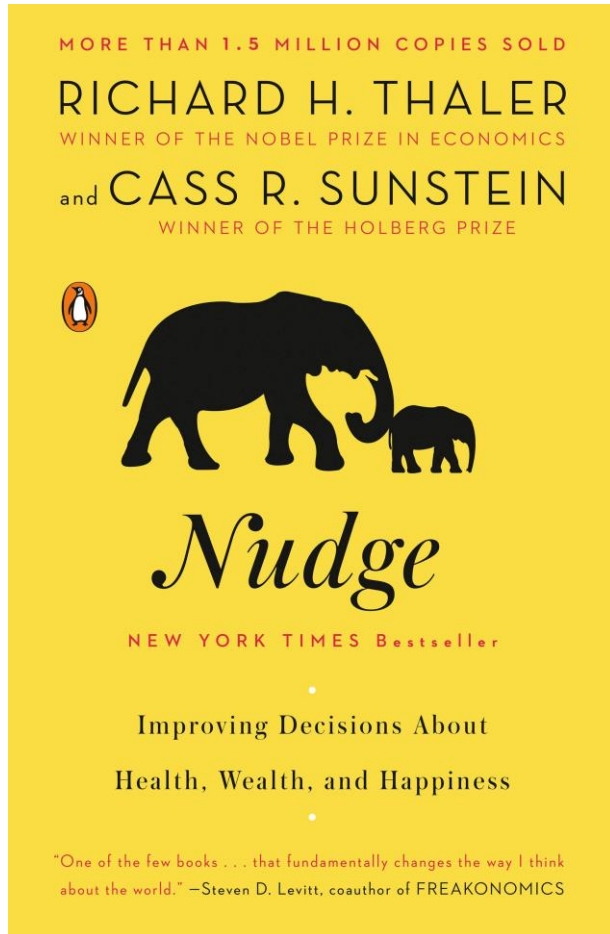
- A committee member goes to recipient's immediate supervisor
- Asks the supervisor to praise the recipient in public (preferred) or in private (introverted person or negative peer pressure)
- Observe results, if improved go to next step...

“Bob, I’ve noticed you were wearing your goggles last week. I appreciate your commitment to doing what’s right. Keep it up.”



# Psycho Moment

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“The best way to help Humans improve performance is to provide feedback.”

# Psycho Moment

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# The Setup

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- A committee member goes to recipient's immediate supervisor
- Determines what the recipient would value
- Get that reward for the recipient



# Psycho Moment

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"This book ranks in the top 10 business books that I've ever read." —Guy Kawasaki, author of *The Art of the Start*



50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive

Over 250,000 copies sold worldwide

Noah J. Goldstein, Steve J. Martin, and **Robert B. Cialdini**  
Bestselling Author of *Pre-Suasion*

- Rewards should be significant (to the recipient), unexpected, and personalized
- People respond to scarce or unique items with greater interest

# The Delivery

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- The recipient's immediate supervisor gives the reward to the recipient in a public setting
- Best if at the start of a regular meeting / toolbox
- Quick and to the point



“Bob, I’ve noticed you were wearing your goggles more often. You’re the kind of person that does what’s right, and I appreciate that. Here is a (*preferred reward*) as a thanks from me. Keep it up.”



# What is not there

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- Safety never mentioned
- Comes from the person delivering the reward – not the organization or rewards program
- Does not highlight “improvement” directly

# Psycho Moment

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Bestselling Author of *Pre-Suasion*

- Labelling someone as “doing the right thing” can create an internal push to be consistent with that label
- “...people generally prefer their behaviour to be **consistent with their pre-existing attitudes, statements, values, and actions.**”

# The Virtue of Cognitive Dissonance

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- When supervisors / managers are rewarding their staff for safety efforts, it becomes mentally and emotionally difficult for those people to later contradict themselves
- Doesn't mean that they will change overnight
- *Don't tell supervisors / managers the above part*

# Psycho Moment

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Noah J. Goldstein, Steve J. Martin,  
and **Robert B. Cialdini**  
Bestselling Author of *Pre-Suasion*

“...people are strongly motivated to change their attitudes in ways **that are consistent with their behaviour.**”

# Things to Think About

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- Are we rewarding “safety behaviours” differently from other activities?
- Do rewards programs encourage a safety as part of normal operations – or tell workers it’s something different?
- How well are we recognizing the supervisors / managers that we say make all the difference?

# Key Notes about Preferred Rewards

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- Customize if possible – something nobody has or very few people have
- Best if something they will regularly use or see
- Best if it also something others in the workplace may see
- Don't recommend things that staff could potentially get through other channels (swag)

# The Pink Cadillac

You get the vehicle

Everybody knows why you  
got it

You remember why you got  
it every time you drive it



Carroll, L. (2022, April 4). *Ellwood resident earns pink Cadillac through Mary Kay company*. Ellwood City Ledger. <https://www.ellwoodcityledger.com/story/lifestyle/achievements/2022/04/04/ellwood-resident-earns-pink-cadillac-through-mary-kay-company/65347630007/>





**JHSC Co-Chair**

because

**OVERWORKED**

harassed & confused

**SAFETY GURU**

isn't an official

**JOB TITLE**

# Variations on a theme

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- Keep current program with tokens, targets, etc.
- Piggy-back on existing recognition programs if possible
- Scale up and down as it fits your organization
- Local, regional, corporate operations – make sure coordinated with same structure

# Recap

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- If you can, have a “no program” program
- Work the intrinsic motivation first, extrinsic later
- Make it personal, not mechanical
- Give it time – change is never as fast as we want

# Sources & Recommended Reading

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