

VitalSmarts' training improves oil rig safety by 55 percent in one year



INDUSTRY: OIL AND GAS

Headquartered in Houston, Texas, Pride International, Inc. is one of the world's largest offshore drilling contractors. Pride provides contract drilling and related services to oil and gas companies worldwide. With approximately 4,000 employees, Pride offers a multinational workforce with offices in the United States, Angola, Brazil, India, Mexico and Saudi Arabia.

THE CHALLENGE

Working an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico is physically demanding and potentially dangerous. Crews clock twelve-hour days for two weeks straight amid swinging iron equipment and heavy machinery. But the routine nature of the job can lull a worker into complacency to the point where he or she rests his or her fingers in the wrong place, or trips over a mislaid tool, or worse.

Chris Johnston, vice president and managing director, North America, for Pride International, is a fourth-generation oil field worker who has been on rigs since he was fifteen, and who understands first-hand what can happen when safety isn't everyone's top concern.

In addition to his concern for the wellbeing of his employees, Johnston understands the business consequences of a less-than-optimal safety record in a highly regulated industry. A key performance indicator for oil rigs is the Total Recordable Incident Rate, which measures how many accidents of a certain degree occur per 200,000 man hours. "For every contract you bid on, you get a request for your incident rate," Johnston said. "It has a direct impact on the commercial side of the business."

THE TRAINING COURSE

Although Pride employees are regularly put through a myriad of safety training such as Job Safety Environmental Analysis, the DuPont STOP process, Step Back 5x5, and others, Johnston is always looking for ways to improve safety at Pride.

In 2007, while serving as regional vice president, Gulf of Mexico, Johnston engaged a VitalSmarts associate to deliver training to all Gulf of Mexico managers and supervisors. At the time, Pride management didn't want an alternative



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safety program, but rather a course that would complement their existing protocol and empower supervisors to enforce instituted programs.

"I was looking for a particular type of training that combined managing for safety with managerial leadership training. This type of training has been lacking in our industry," Johnston said. "The VitalSmarts training programs were exactly what we were looking for."

Throughout 2007, Pride held 2.5-day courses for approximately 21 managers and supervisors at a time near its area headquarters in Houma, Louisiana. As the course gained popularity, supervisors from the company's international operations also began attending. Overall, approximately five hundred employees were trained that year.

RESULTS

In the beginning, Johnston asked participants to tell him afterward if the training was time well spent or if they "just wasted two and a half days of time off." If he heard that it was a waste, he planned to stop the training. But for participants, the experience was quite the opposite:

"The feedback from the guys was overwhelmingly positive," said Johnston. "They said this was one of the best things we ever did."

The average course evaluation was 9.1 out of 10.

More importantly, the employees not only liked the training, they actually implemented the skills on the job. After one year, Johnston saw positive results. In the year following training, turnover decreased by 40 percent and the company did not have a single accident that required employees to miss time on the job. Most impressive, the total incident rate at Pride improved by 55 percent.

Johnston knows safety records tend to be cyclical—improvements come with emphasis, and then decline when training ends. The sustained change they have experienced at Pride is what sets the VitalSmarts training apart, he said.

"You didn't come out of it feeling like you were just indoctrinated into a new program," Johnston said. "You felt like, 'Communication and giving feedback is something I do every day. Now I know how to do it better, and I understand that my frustration on not getting my message across is because I didn't have the tangible skills I needed in that area. This training taught me those skills.'"

Two years later, Johnston still hears the terminology from the course used on the rigs: "If they stop using it they get a reality check because other guys call them on it. Everybody is speaking the same language."

Looking back at his decision to choose VitalSmarts training to improve safety in his division, Johnston is confident in endorsing it.

"We did it the right way," Johnston said. "We were interested in making serious improvements, and our investment was money well spent."

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Total incident rate improved by 55 percent
- Turnover decreased by 40 percent
- Pride reported zero accidents that required employees to miss time on the job

About Crucial Conversations® Training—Whenever you're not getting the results you're looking for, it's likely that a crucial conversation is keeping you stuck. Whether it's a problem with poor quality, slow time-to-market, declining customer satisfaction, or a strained relationship, if you can't talk honestly, you can expect poor results.

This award-winning training infuses classroom time with original video clips and examples. Course pacing is active and engaging, with structured rehearsals and intense class participation. The Crucial Conversations course delivers a powerful set of influence tools that builds teams, enriches relationships, and improves end results. Participants acquire the skills that help them step up to and handle high-stakes issues.

About Crucial Confrontations® Training—Enhance Accountability, Improve Performance, and Ensure Execution with Crucial Confrontations Training. Equip participants with a straightforward, step-by-step process for identifying and resolving performance gaps—those unpleasant realities standing in the way of organizational success.

This training infuses classroom time with original video clips and examples. Course pacing is active and engaging with structured rehearsals and intense class participation. The Crucial Confrontations course delivers a hands-on problem-solving approach, participants learn to enhance accountability, improve performance, and ensure execution.

About VitalSmarts—VitalSmarts is an innovator in corporate training and organizational performance. The company is home to the award-winning Crucial Conversations® Training and Crucial Confrontations® Training as well as *New York Times* bestselling books of the same titles. Both trainings and books deliver powerful sets of influence tools that builds teams, enriches relationships and improves end results. VitalSmarts has been ranked five times by *Inc.* magazine as one of the fastest growing companies in America and has trained more than 500,000 people worldwide. www.vital-smarts.com