

## **Safety: Motivation**

Businesses attract and retain the best Human Resources when there is motivation for them in the company. Job motivating factors tend to be things like interesting work, appreciation for work done, promotion and growth opportunities, feeling of being in on things, and good working conditions.

Interests that lead to job motivation change over time. Think of how someone in the “Millennial” generation differs from someone in the “Baby Boomer” generation. What motivates the former (i.e., choose work for satisfaction and lifestyle support it offers) differs from what motivates the latter (i.e., dedication to getting the job well done at “any” cost).

So, what does this have to do with safety and the success of my safety process? Let's answer that by looking at the number one injury type on the job: back strain / sprain (not so coincidentally, it is also the most expensive type of workers' compensation injury). A study that was conducted in California sought to identify the drivers of back injuries. The idea is once this is determined, then we can address the issues to prevent this type of injury. The results were far different than expected: back injuries are more likely to occur when the following factors are present:

- Increasing work pressure (doing more with less)
- Surges in workload
- Lack of job diversity
- Limited decision-making opportunities
- Uncertainty of job future
- Fear of being replaced, and
- Poor supervisor and co-worker support.

The study reported that when one or more of these factors are present in a work environment, workers are 2 ½ times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim for a back injury.

So what does this mean for safety? As much as we would like to believe that costs and regulations are the factors that drive safety success, it turns out that when safety is interesting and inclusive, appreciating the efforts people make, the lower the number of back injuries experienced. This doesn't mean all of our efforts are not fruitful; rather, it means there's more to safety than costs and compliance.