







The science behind how threat and discipline work helps us to understand why employees sometimes appear to push back against safety policies that are in their best interest, hide risky behaviors, take shortcuts, and pencil whip checklists. Discipline and threat seem like intuitive solutions to problem behaviors, but behavioral science demonstrates over and over that discipline and threat are one of the **worst** ways to get safe behavior and one of the easiest ways to damage engagement.

THE MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH THREATS & DISCIPLINE IN SAFETY

-  **Problem 1: Lack of Consistency** – Simply having rules and procedures in place doesn't mean they're followed 100% of the time, meaning that sometimes risky behaviors occur without negative consequences. (i.e. Worker takes a shortcut and isn't caught or hurt, but does save time.) This sets up a situation where people either have to be policed (very damaging to engagement) or where people are only punished when they're unlucky enough to get caught or get hurt.
-  **Problem 2: Unwanted Behaviors** – When threat is used to manage safety, people inevitably just get better at hiding the risky behaviors and/or faking the right ones to avoid punishment. This means the environment may appear to be safe, but dangerous things are going unaddressed because of the lack of willingness to be transparent and honest.
-  **Problem 3: The Fundamental Attribution Error** – This is our tendency as humans to attribute behaviors to people's inner qualities (they're lazy, dumb, etc.) rather than to their environment (everyone does it that way, boss has put time pressure on them, etc.). By committing this error and using threat/discipline to try to change one person's behavior we rob ourselves of the opportunity to change the environment and make it safer for everyone there.
-  **Problem 4: Impact on Engagement** – Behavioral science tells us that managing behavior by threat gets us only the minimum effort from people around us – meaning that we lose the opportunity to get discretionary effort from our people. It has a massive impact on motivation, job satisfaction, and happiness at work as well.



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