

One of The World's Leading Gold Mining Companies Revamps Safety Culture and Reduces Serious Injuries with Influencer Training®



GOLD FIELDS

INDUSTRY: MINING

About Gold Fields: *Gold Fields is one of the world's oldest and largest producers of gold, with eight operating mines in four geographically and culturally diverse countries. The company produces more than two million ounces of gold annually. It also sets one of the highest standards for safety in an industry known for hazardous working conditions. Gold Fields has outlined safety as one of its core values, boldly asserting that "If we cannot mine safely, we will not mine."*

THE CHALLENGE

When Gold Fields Australia acquired three operating gold mines in Western Australia, they faced the challenge of integrating those mines into their business by embedding their unique corporate culture. They also saw it as an opportunity to create a new regional safety-focused culture. To provide a change in safety performance, and to promote employee ownership of Gold Fields' safety vision, Gold Fields management recruited mining-safety veteran Bob Povey as its unit manager for occupational health and safety. Povey's main responsibility was to standardize safety systems at the company's five mines in Australia, including the three recently acquired sites.

After working with four major mining companies over a forty-two-year period, Povey was well versed in what needed to be done to improve safety; however, such change wasn't going to come easy as Gold Fields worked to streamline systems and processes while simultaneously promoting a "safety first" culture.

THE SOLUTION

In a previous role with a different organization, Povey had successfully implemented VitalSmarts Influencer Training in seven mines. He knew from that experience that Influencer was also the solution for Gold Fields.



influencer

Povey began by spending a week at each of the five sites to assess the situation. He identified problems pervasive across each site—problems that resulted in a total recordable injury rate (injuries that must be treated by a doctor and/or result in lost work time) that did not meet Gold Fields’ standards, and that under slightly different circumstances, may have resulted in more serious outcomes.

In nine months, Povey conducted more than three hundred workshops for approximately 2,000 employees and contractors, walking them through the Influencer model. The “light bulb sessions” created an awareness of the seriousness of the safety issues. He followed these sessions by collecting more than 1,600 stories—employees’ anonymous accounts of what was really going on behind the scenes regarding safety. Attendees voted for opinion leaders, who read the stories, then sorted them to identify common themes and behavior that inhibited a safe work environment.

It wasn’t until the opinion leaders read the employee stories—and realized there were likely many other incidents with worse outcomes that weren’t submitted—that they fully committed to the Influencer program.

“That’s when the light goes on and the opinion leaders become passionate,” said Povey. “These informal leaders are key to the program because if a manager says, ‘Do this because I care about you,’ the employees will generally say ‘no.’ but if this message is reinforced by opinion leaders, employees are far more likely to do it because they know and respect their peers.”

Povey helped participants identify four Vital Behaviors that would ensure Gold Fields maintained zero fatalities and eliminated serious injuries. The four Vital Behaviors were:

1. Follow procedures
2. Assess the risk
3. Speak up about safety
4. Manage fatigue

While these Vital Behaviors were the same across all five mines, each mine was able to incorporate customized personal, social, and structural strategies to promote adherence to the behaviors. For example, one site managed fatigue by reducing its workday from twelve hours to eleven, and switched its roster structure to avoid having workers returning from break also start work on the night shift. It also provided bus transportation to and from the mine, saving workers a two-hour round-trip daily commute.

Across all the mines, emphasis was placed on speaking up about safety. Previously, safety was sometimes glazed over in meetings, but now, meetings included rich discussion on safety such as the sharing of incidents from other sites and providing positive examples of those who demonstrated Vital Behaviors. In these meetings, “people began to feel they could speak up and someone was actually listening to them,” said Povey.

To date, more than five hundred supervisors have participated in training to learn how to encourage employees to speak up about safety, make it acceptable to stop work if unsafe, and support employees when they do speak up.

THE RESULTS

All this emphasis on safety has paid off. Surveys collected at the start of the program indicated that 90 percent of the workforce believed Gold Fields supervision was more interested in production than safety. Fifteen months later, 70 percent said that safety is now seen as more important than production.

And it isn’t just perceptions that have changed. Some sites saw reductions in total recordable injury frequency rate (TRIFR) by as much as 60 percent in sixteen months. Overall, the region’s TRIFR has decreased 33 percent, with recordable injuries decreasing from 115 to 90. This means 25 people were saved from sustaining injuries that would require treatment by a doctor or require time off work.

One of the biggest changes has been among supervisors, with 80 percent of employees saying Vital Behaviors have “somewhat” or “greatly” impacted the way their supervisors perform. Povey recalls multiple people saying, “I don’t know what you did with the supervisors for two days, but when they walked out of those workshops, they were completely different.”

Fatigue management is another area that has improved dramatically at Gold Fields. The baseline survey showed that workers “often” managed their fatigue only 48 percent of the time, while that number shot up to 82 percent in the follow-up survey. “People used to focus on performance over well-being,” said Povey. “But now, they are more likely to speak up when they’re tired.”

Povey is not surprised by these outstanding results. “I’ve seen significant change at the twelve mines I’ve led through the Influencer model. I’ve put six to seven thousand people through the program. I know it works.”

Part of the success can be attributed to how simple yet powerful Influencer is. “The Influencer program simplifies what I was striving to do anyway. People understand it.”

And they like being part of the solution.

“They like the fact that someone’s actually asking them what they can do for themselves to improve their safety, and that we’re listening to them.”

RESULTS AT A GLANCE:

- **60% reduction** in total recordable injury frequency rate (TRIFR) in some sites.
- **33% decrease** in regional TRIFR, equating to 25 people being saved from serious injury.
- After training, **60% more** employees believe Gold Fields supervision is more interested in safety than production.

About Influencer Training®—Create rapid and sustainable behavior change in your organization with Influencer Training. Equip participants with a step-by-step approach for becoming exponentially more successful at changing their own and others’ behavior.

This training infuses classroom time with original video clips of modern-day change agents who have solved some of the world’s most complex business and societal problems. The Influencer course delivers an award-winning, proven model for changing behavior by applying six sources of influence to solve your most persistent problems.

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