

HINDSIGHT AND LESSONS FROM THE BLIND SCHOOL



The Ken Woodward Story Background

Introduction

The videos cover an accident that occurred in the United Kingdom in 1990. The accident victim, Ken Woodward, was an operator in a Coca Cola plant when he was at the centre of a large chemical explosion.

How and why the explosion occurred is explained. It looks at what effect it had on the people involved, and how the company turned around what was a poor safety record into one worth matching.

Aftermath of the Accident

The accident had the most immediate impact on Ken and his family.

The physical pain and suffering was extreme. The psychological pain continues. There was the loss of his family life as he knew it. The accident led to the ongoing trauma of not seeing his mother again before her death, not seeing his children's faces as they grow up, and never ever seeing his grand-children.

Factors that would have Prevented the Accident

There were many factors that contributed to the accident. If only any one factor had been dealt with correctly, the accident would not have occurred.

IF ONLY...

- When a previous worker was injured it was not put down to "operator error", but had been properly investigated (Accident Investigation)
- The engineer who noticed pipes overheating had reported it and investigated the abnormality (Incident Reporting)
- The equipment that mixed the bleach had been repaired in a timely fashion (Proper Maintenance)
- Ken had not been on holidays he would have known of the earlier accident (Communication)
- His manager and supervisor had stopped him doing a process in which he hadn't been trained (Supervision)
- The new office clerk had been trained to hand deliver the urgent warning not to mix such chemicals (Training)

Ken Woodward was able to survive the accident. But he was left blind, and lost two other senses - the sense of taste and the sense of smell. In Ken words, "I was only making coloured water".

Two of his workmates saved his life.

Although this happened to be in a soft-drink business, the factors that caused this accident and the effects an accident can have on one's family and workmates, apply to any company.

His workmate, Lee, saved his life by getting him to a safety shower. But he was also affected. Lee was never able to return to work at Coca Cola, as he was a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder. He underwent 10 years of counselling.

The plant closed for two days, over 30 other people received counselling. The loss to the company was \$8 million.

If Only any one of these were different, the accident would not have happened.

But still outstanding was one very significant factor.

Ken chose not to wear his safety glasses.

His Brothers' Keeper

We all have a moral and legal obligation to work safely - to ensure our own safety and the health and safety of those we work with.

Lee certainly lived up to his duty of care by getting Ken to the safety shower quickly.

But another workmate, John Carey, was the second person to save his life.

John saw a forklift incident in which the safety shower was broken. He put in a requisition for it to be repaired. He felt uneasy because he knew the company might take weeks to fix the shower - and it is a life-saving device!

So he came in the next day - which was Saturday - his day off! He fixed the safety shower.

John worked day shifts and had never met Ken who worked nights. But he saved Ken's life. The next safety shower was far away- so far Ken most likely would not have survived.

John's comments were: "We have a duty to one another," and "You have to follow things through - yourself".

Notes on the Aftermath

After five months in hospital, Ken spent 48 weeks in a rehabilitation institute for the blind. He returned to Coca Cola as a data analyst. But when he raised concerns at the continuing safety situation, he was appointed to the safety department.

Then followed a slow but continuing turnaround in the company's safety program. With a work force of 4,200 the changeover time was from 14

recordable injuries in a year, to only 13 Lost time Injuries.

The savings to the company amounted to many millions.

These savings were invested into state-of-the-art production lines where all risks have been engineered away. And productivity has increased over 17%.

Good safety is good business!

Kens' Vision on Safety

During his rehabilitation year, Ken had an awakening- for him "the coin dropped". Part of his training at the rehabilitation institute was for teams of blind residents to walk to the local pub, over three miles away, across busy roads and up and down steep stairs- and safely return.

He realised that the four principles followed in training a person without sight, to be able to travel anywhere in the world safely, were exactly the same needed to make a safe workplace. These are:

- **COMMUNICATE** - talk to one another, offer assistance and mention incidents
- **LISTEN** - to concerns, safety warnings, and ideas to improve safety
- **TEAMS** - cooperate with others; help others in your team and other teams
- **FOLLOW PROCEDURES** - short cuts lead to accidents, improve procedures

When all four are followed, a powerful sense of **TRUST** emerges!

Trust that as you will be caring for your own safety and the safety of your workmates, you know they will also be caring for your safety.

Contact us:

Level 3, 75 King St
Sydney NSW 2000
Australia
A.B.N. 91 002 025 050

t. 61 2 9279 4499
f. 61 2 9279 4488
info@futuremedia.com.au
www.futuremedia.com.au

