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Safety Leadership: Empowering Supervisors to Drive Change

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Before We Begin

All attendees are in “LISTEN ONLY” mode.

You can type in questions by clicking on the question box on the top right of your GoToWebinar panel.

Q&A at the end of the webinar.

Additional questions can be emailed to: SChristenson@smscsafety.com

A recorded copy of the webinar and slides will be made available to all attendees.



Today's Presenter



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Today's Agenda

1

Why Supervisors Matter

2

Principles of HOP

3

Supervisor's Role

4

Practical HOP Tools

5

Case Study

6

Action Plan



**“The best supervisors
don’t fix people-they fix
systems so people can
do their best work.”**



Why Supervisors Matter

Supervisors are the closest link to frontline work

They influence daily decisions, priorities, and risk tolerance

Workers model their behavior after supervisory responses

Supervisors detect operational drift earlier than leadership

They translate organizational goals into practical actions



What is HOP?

HOP is a systems-based approach that:

- Recognizes human fallibility and system complexity
- Focuses on understanding why people do what they do
- Seeks to build capacity for safe performance
- Prioritizes learning over punishment
- Helps organizations design work that supports success



The Five HOP Principles

Error is normal

Blame fixes nothing

Context drives behavior

Learning is vital

Response matters



Principle 1: Error is Normal

Human error is predictable and inevitable

Most errors arise from system design, not carelessness

Workers often create success despite system weaknesses

Organizations must build error tolerance and recovery capacity



Principle 2: Blame Fixes Nothing

Blame discourages reporting and hides valuable information

Workers rarely intend to cause harm

Blame focuses on symptoms, not causes

Learning requires psychological safety



Principle 3: Context Drives Behavior



People make decisions based on the information and pressures they face



Conditions such as time pressure, unclear procedures, or inadequate tools shape actions



Improving context improves performance more than disciplining individuals



Understanding context reveals system weaknesses



Principle 4: Learning Is Vital



LEARNING MUST BE
CONTINUOUS, NOT
EVENT-DRIVEN



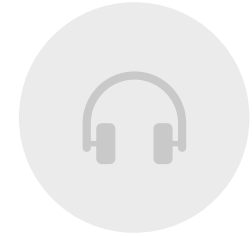
LEARNING TEAMS
UNCOVER HOW
WORK IS ACTUALLY
DONE



AFTER-ACTION
REVIEWS CAPTURE
INSIGHTS BEFORE
THEY FADE



ASKING BETTER
QUESTIONS LEADS TO
BETTER
UNDERSTANDING



LEARNING REQUIRES
LISTENING WITHOUT
JUDGMENT



Principle 5: Response Matters



The first response determines whether workers will share openly



Calm, curious reactions build trust



Emotional responses shut down learning



A supportive response encourages future reporting



Leaders' reactions shape organizational culture



The Supervisor's Role in Driving Change

Supervisors drive change by:

- Modeling HOP-aligned behaviors
- Encouraging open communication and reporting
- Identifying system constraints and operational drift
- Facilitating learning conversations
- Supporting workers in problem-solving
- Advocating for system improvements



Practical HOP Tools for Supervisors



Learning conversations (curiosity-driven discussions)



Pre-job briefs that explore risk and uncertainty



Post-job reflections to capture lessons learned



Asking “ What do you need to be successful?”



Observing work to understand real conditions



Spotting weak signals and early signs of drift



Shifting from Compliance to Learning

Traditional Compliance Approach:

- Focus on rule-following
- Investigate to find fault
- Assume deviations equal misconduct
- Emphasize discipline

HOP Learning Approach:

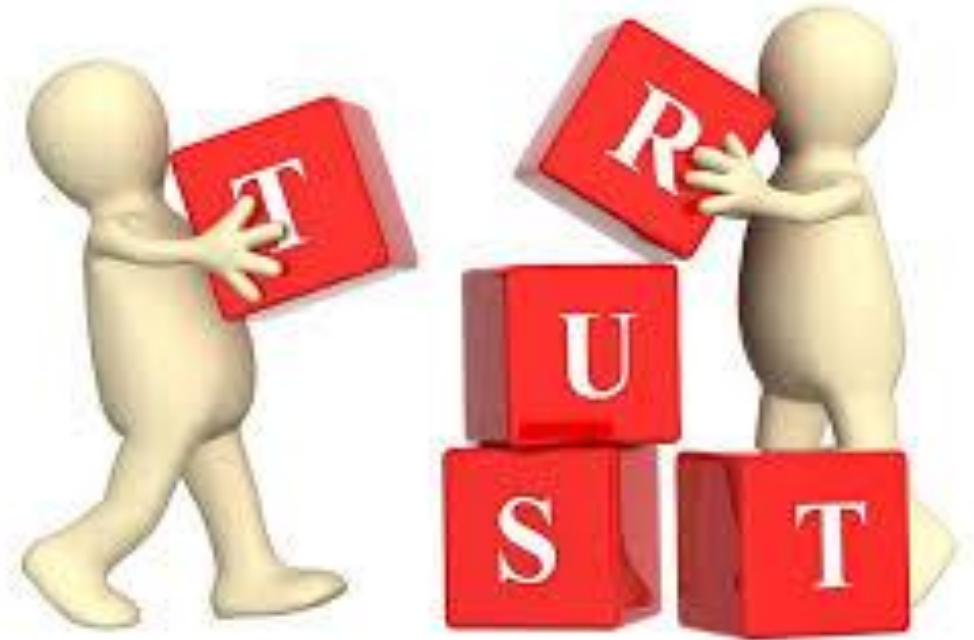
- Focus on system design and context
- Investigate to understand
- Recognize that deviations often reveal system gaps
- Emphasize improvement



Building Trust and Psychological Safety

Supervisors build trust by:

- Listening actively and without interruption
- Responding calmly to unexpected information
- Following up on concerns and closing the loop
- Being transparent about decisions and constraints
- Recognizing and appreciating reporting
- Avoiding punitive reactions



Case Study: Procedure Deviation



Scenario: A worker bypasses a step in a procedure

Traditional Response: “Why didn’t you follow the rule?”

HOP Response:


- “Walk me through what happened.”
- “What made skipping the step seem like the best option?”
- “What conditions influenced your decision?”


Outcome:

- Identified unclear instructions
- Found time pressure due to equipment delays
- Procedure improved and staffing adjusted



Empowering Supervisors: Key Behaviors

 Be curious, not judgmental

 Ask open-ended questions

 Look for system contributors, not individual faults

 Support workers' expertise and insights

 Reinforce learning and reporting

 Model calm, consistent leadership



Measuring Success

Indicators of progress include:

- Increased reporting of near misses and weak signals
- Higher-quality conversations about risk
- Fewer repeat events
- Improved worker engagement and morale
- Stronger cross-team collaboration
- More proactive identification of system issues



Action Plan for Supervisors



Choose one HOP tool to start using consistently



Practice learning conversations daily



Model calm, curious responses



Identify one system improvement opportunity



Share learnings with peers and leadership



Reinforce psychological safety in every interaction



Final Thoughts



Empowered supervisors create empowered teams



HOP gives supervisors the mindset and tools to drive meaningful lasting change



Small shifts in behavior can transform organizational culture

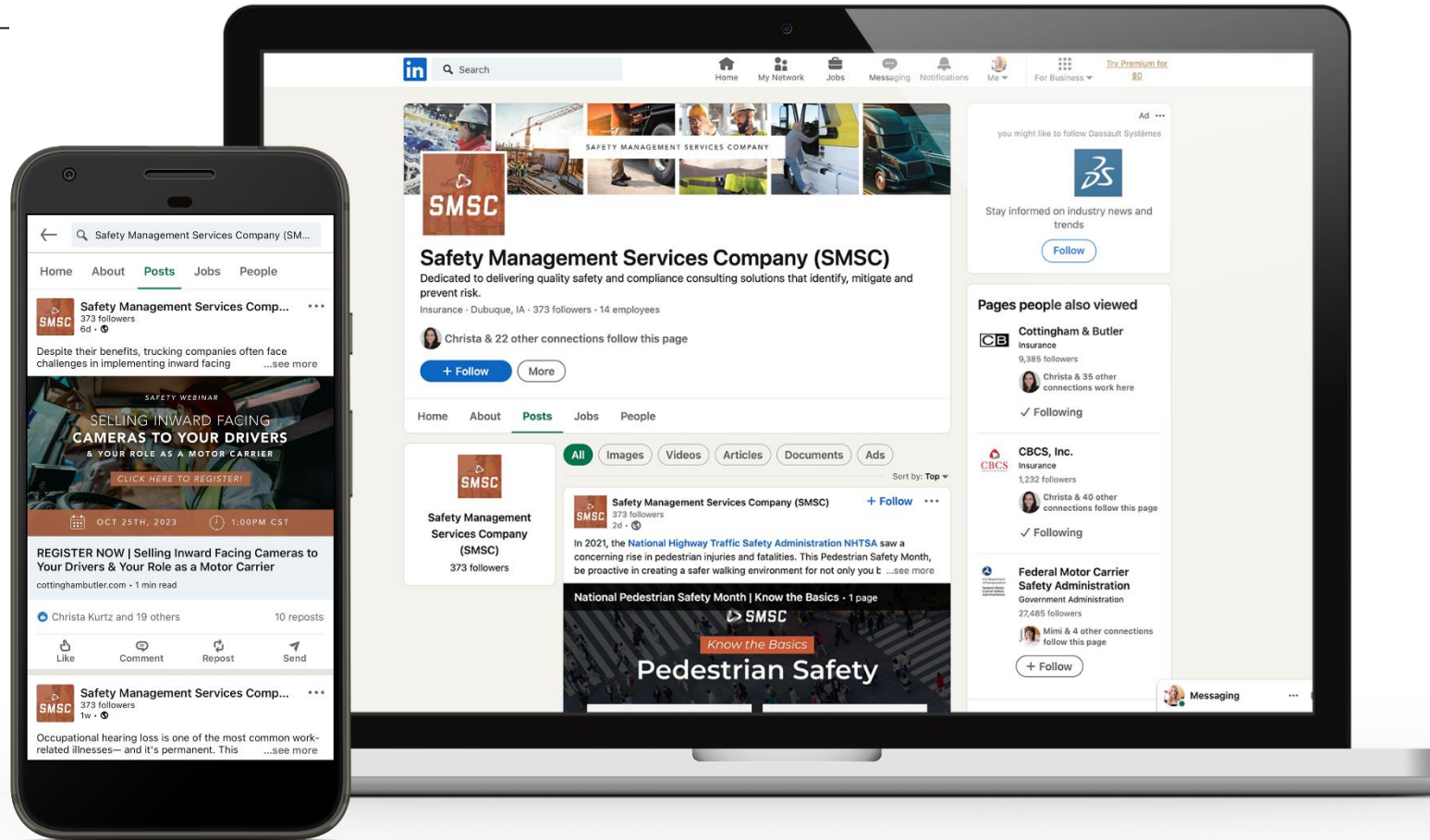




Questions



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