

Anchored in trust

by Devon Van de Kletersteeg, *Ports and Industrial Product Growth Manager, CM Labs*

Across industries all over the world, trust is an essential part of operations and leads to a wide range of benefits. These, according to a study published in the Harvard Business Review, include a 40% decrease in burnout, a 50% boost in productivity, and 13% fewer sick days among employees. But knowing that trust is important is one thing; building it is quite another.

In our recent webinar, *Bridging Gaps in Training: Workforce Engagement, Safety, and Technology*, the CM Labs team spoke with industry veteran Capt. Richard WA Brough, OBE, BA, for his insights on how to foster trust, enhance workforce engagement, and improve safety in a port industry environment. “My experience over many, many years – and it hasn’t changed in the 50+ years I’ve been working in the industry – is that there is a lot of mistrust,” says Brough. “Not just in our industry, the ports industry, but in every sector. The managers don’t trust the supervisors, the supervisors don’t trust the workforce, and the workforce doesn’t trust either the managers or the supervisors.”

So, what concrete actions can a port take to build trust? Here is a look at how to earn – and maintain – trust among all levels of port operations.

Engaging every level

According to the landmark *Experiences of arrangements for health, safety and welfare in the global container terminal industry study* by Cardiff University, safety incident rates increase alongside worker disengagement. Improving employee engagement is an important first step to building trust. Because when employees feel heard and understood, trust follows. “You need to engage every level of the organization in what you’re planning to do,” points out Capt. Brough, “be that a simple operation or introducing new technology or a new training program.”

Take, for example, overhauling a training program. Involving operators and trainers from the very beginning ensures that their perspectives are heard and accounted for. What challenges

do trainers face? What concerns do operators have? What approach would best address each group’s goals? Engaging all levels of the organization helps ensure changes made will have a meaningful impact on training outcomes. “Everybody needs to understand what their part in that program is and what they will get out of it because everybody’s mindsets are totally different,” underlines Brough. “The manager and the supervisor and the guy driving – or the lady driving – the forklift truck are thinking about totally different things.”

To foster engagement, ports can use transparent and open communication that encourages the exchange of different perspectives. When overhauling a training program, for example, it’s important to include everyone in the decision about bringing in new technology, such as training simulators. This can be as simple as having operators test different simulators ahead of procurement or meeting with trainers to see which training management features they would use most. Listening to each of these perspectives helps find a solution that will work for all while also fostering buy-in.

“Trying to break down those barriers and help people understand what’s going on in the other person’s mind can help them to engage,” notes Capt. Brough. If trainers feel sceptical about a novelty, their involvement in the procurement process can help address concerns and ensure adoption. Because without their involvement and endorsement, there’s a real risk that a new approach or tool will go unused. He adds, “If you can’t get every level of an organization that’s going to use the technology – or the equipment or the training – to understand why they’re doing that and what its usefulness is to them and not just the company, then it will fail.”



Photos: CM Labs Simulations



Whole-of-life package

Trust and safety also go hand in hand, and building one is an important step to building the other. After all, if a worker can't trust that their employer values their safety, why would they trust them in any other capacity? To improve safety and build trust, ports need to take a careful look at their training programs. "You can't separate training from safety," stresses Capt. Brough. "They're an integral part of each other. If you want to have safety in the port, people have to be well-trained."

In fact, according to the [Engineering Safer Workplaces: Global trends in occupational safety and health](#) report by Lloyd's Register Foundation, "The more recently people have had training, the more likely they are to report workplace harm if they experience it." The report even found that, "Individuals who had received workplace safety training in the last two years are 3.3 times more likely to report harm, compared to those who had never received any."

But what does stellar safety training look like? For one thing, it should be continuous. "Training has to be a package, a whole-of-life package that works from induction all the way through to senior levels," says Capt. Brough. "And some companies tend to forget that. You cannot stop training. You've got to keep it going. It's a continuous process."

Many ports have also begun to use simulation as a part of that process. Why? Because with a simulator, operators can practice and prepare for dangerous scenarios that would be too hazardous or difficult to practice on real equipment. "With simulation training, you can create infinite scenarios," highlights Brough. "You can suddenly change the weather, or you can do something else, which makes it difficult for the operator." Trainers can introduce a sudden twistlock failure, among others, or a container snag into a simulated exercise, giving operators exposure

to these problems and preparing them to respond appropriately when faced with these situations in the real world.

Simulation training also supports continuous training efforts. An operator can hop on a simulator during downtime and run through exercises to improve their skills on their own, with or without the supervision of a trainer. Simulation training also provides detailed data on operator performance, which helps identify weaknesses. "Simulation makes targeted practice easy to do," notes Yannick Lefebvre, Technical Sales Manager and my colleague here at CM Labs. "You can practice the same exercise over and over to get it right and track how performance evolves over time."

Culture of trust and collaboration

Trust is deeply intertwined with employee engagement and safety, with each aspect influencing the other. Breaking down barriers to open communication can take time, especially when they are ingrained in the work culture. However, by fostering open communication and promoting engagement at all levels, ports can begin to build a culture of trust and collaboration. Enhancing safety training further bolsters that trust, leading to a work environment where employees feel motivated to do their best. ■



Devon Van de Kleetersteeg is a Product Growth Manager at **CM Labs** who leverages his engineering background to drive market expansion and product alignment. He focuses on addressing real-world training needs with simulation technology, ensuring CM Labs' solutions continue to evolve and drive measurable results across industries.