

FALL ELECTRONIC EDITION

SEPT. 7 | 2017

THE **VEGETATION MANAGER** *magazine*

2017

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

FELLING STORM DAMAGED TREES

These trees should be tackled only by the most skilled and experienced tree cutters, for they are, in a word, unpredictable.

MENTORSHIP IS THE BRIDGE

As the men and women who helped build and grow this industry move into senior positions or retire there is a gap that needs to be filled and a field that needs to be replanted.

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APPLY FOR A PVMA MEMBERSHIP

WHAT PVMA DOES FOR ITS MEMBERS:

- Gives the general public a starting point for resolving plant-related concerns.
- Features a forum for sharing best practices in vegetation management.
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- Develops the curriculums used by colleges to certify competency in tree maintenance and vegetation management.
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Visit www.pvma.ca for more information.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



- BRANDON TUPPER -



The busy season is slowly wrapping up for most of our membership.

I hope that everyone had a busy, prosperous season and that it was done safely and professionally.

The summer at the PVMA tends to be quiet. We reduced the office hours for August to allow our staff some needed vacation time. However, June ended with some excitement.

In the early hours of June 21, 2017, the PVMA office was broken into. Most of the items taken were electronic in nature. Some cheques were also taken.

The RCMP were notified along with our landlord and bank. Our only loss was electronics (monitors, projector, web-cam, etc.) and damage to the door – all replaceable. No one was injured.

We have since replaced all necessary items and the office is back to functioning. Thanks to our

office staff for having to deal with all this!

As we consider the fall I see lots of committees firing back up. Planning for our 2019 seminar has begun! There is always opportunity to volunteer on a committee or if you have some ideas for the association I would like to hear about it.

BRANDON TUPPER

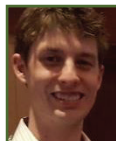
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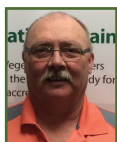
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Mission Statement

The PVMA Safety Committee was developed as a body to collect information from industry in regards to incidents and near-misses and develop trending reports from that information that will be sent out to industry.

Reporting Process

All information being shared with this committee is to be sent to:

safety@pvma.ca - this e-mail is only accessible to the PVMA Safety Committee. To get things started we would like to get the man hours worked from January up to now. We are looking for significant near misses you have had come in that you are willing to share. We would also like to get in some of the lessons learned from significant incident events that you can share with the industry. Along with that we would be happy to hear about Safety Positives that have occurred in our industry that we can share. From the mechanical side to our herbicide operations we value everyone's input.

Handling of Information

All committee members have signed a "Code of Ethics" to ensure appropriate and professional handling of information. All information sent in will be reviewed and any information on the report that identifies the company or employees will be removed. Information received will be summarized into trending reports that will be sent out to industry in a quarterly newsletter.

Significant Events

Any information sent in that the committee deems as a significant event either incident or near-miss and feels that the information needs to be sent out quicker will go out as an alert by e-mail instead of waiting for the quarterly report. The opportunity will be there for this committee to grow as this process moves forward and we will welcome participation from the entire Vegetation Management industry.

UNDERSTANDING THE HAZARDS OF FELLING STORM-DAMAGED TREES

- SUBMITTED - ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRYAN KOTWICA

THE METHODS FOR MAKING THESE CUTS, AND THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND THEM, ARE THE SAME AS THOSE FOR BUCKING LOGS..

Felling partially uprooted and/or tipped trees requires an understanding of the various stresses exerted on the trunk as well as the possible reactions of these stresses to an arborist's cutting technique. FIGURE 1

Perhaps the most difficult and dangerous trees to cut are ones that have been damaged by storms.

These trees should be tackled only by the most skilled and experienced tree cutters, for they are, in a word, unpredictable. This is primarily due to the tremendous compression and tension forces exerted on the parts of the tree under pressure.

It is critical that release cuts be made correctly in order to avoid injury. The methods for making these cuts, and the principles behind them, are the same as those for bucking logs. There are countless scenarios of storm damage to trees, but the ones my crew and I most frequently encounter are of two general types: trees that have been uprooted (partially or completely), or trees that have broken off but remain attached to the trunk.

Safety is important; never stand on or straddle the trunk of an uprooted tree while cutting to sever the root mass from the rest of the tree. FIGURE 2

UPROOTED TREES (OR WINDFALLS)

1. Strong winds often uproot trees, leaving them in one of three conditions: hung-up in another tree (or perhaps lying on a structure, such as a house)
2. Partially uprooted and severely
3. Uprooted and lying on the ground.

Hung up trees can be safely felled using various bucking methods, and the latter two conditions can be addressed using the following methods.

PARTIALLY UPROOTED AND SEVERELY TIPPED TREES

At first, felling partially uprooted and tipped trees appears simple until you consider, or experience, the dangers involving the tremendous pressure being exerted on the trunk, and what happens when the remaining root mass slams back down after the trunk is cut. To minimize some of the risk, do not attempt to make the following felling cuts above your shoulder height.

- Cut an open-face notch on the compression side of the tree (the bottom side of the trunk) to a depth of about one-quarter of the trunk diameter.
- Make the back cut on the tension, or top, side of the trunk. Be prepared for a potentially explosive response as the tree falls down and the root mass tips backward as pressure is released when the trunk is cut.
- When cutting larger-diameter trees, consider using the bore cut method that's used for trees with a heavy forward lean, or securing the trunk with a chain or strap to prevent the trunk from barber chairing.

To avoid being injured by the sudden upright shift of the root mass, remove sections of the trunk incrementally; this will allow the root mass to counterbalance the tree gradually. FIGURE 3

UPROOTED TREES LYING ON THE GROUND (OR SUPPORTED BY ANOTHER OBJECT)

There are two potentially dangerous circumstances that can occur when the trunk is cut free from the remaining root mass. First, the remaining root mass could fall forward and on top of the saw operator. The other potentially dangerous result is that the root mass and remaining trunk could whip upright and back into the ground after the bucking cut is made. For this reason, never stand on or straddle the trunk of an uprooted tree while

making these cuts. Trying to determine which of these two situations is likely to occur is a difficult assessment and only becomes easier after years of experience in working on these types of trees.

Fortunately, there are options for dealing with these types of trees.

OPTION 1: To avoid the threat of the remaining root mass falling toward you, cut the trunk at a distance that is beyond the reach of the highest part of the root mass. Remove any branches that are in the way or that could potentially strike you after the tree is cut free from the stump. After being cut, the root mass will fall forward only until it is stopped by the remaining trunk section striking the ground.

OPTION 2: This is a good method when you anticipate the root mass and remaining trunk will right itself after the bucking cuts are made. Start your cuts at the top of the tree, working toward the butt, cutting the trunk into short sections. This incremental removal of trunk sections allows the root mass to counterbalance the tree gradually, standing upright slowly and safely. At this point, fell the remaining upright trunk section using normal felling methods.

MAKING THE CUTS: If the tree appears to be under significant upward pressure from both ends, then make an open-face notch on the compression side of the tree followed by an undercut directly opposite the notch.

If it appears that the root mass is creating a significant back pull (indicating the root mass wants to fall back in the hole), the cuts should be reversed (notch the bottom, back cut from the top). In many instances it won't be necessary to make a notch or top cut; an undercut only will suffice.

When the top of the broken-but-connected tree is on the ground, it will help to (a) inspect the tree carefully and remove supporting limbs, and (b) observe the tree's lean characteristics and use appropriate felling techniques, like an open-face notch on the side of the tree where the lean is heaviest. FIGURE 4

BROKEN TREES

Another common type of storm damage includes trees that have broken off but still remain attached to the trunk. The upper portion may be hung up in another tree or resting on the ground.

These situations are extremely hazardous as they are difficult to assess. These trees will often respond unpredictably, even when a felling plan has been carefully considered and executed. The greatest risk of felling these trees is if the broken portion detaches unexpectedly. Other hazards arise from the broken portion of the tree exerting pressure against the tree trunk, which can cause the tree to barber chair or fall in the wrong direction when the felling cuts are made.

Assess the tree and site carefully before making any cuts. Try to visualize how the broken top will respond to the release cuts you intend to make. As these cuts are made, be prepared for the broken portion to detach at any time, and be ready to retreat along one of several preplanned and cleared escape routes. Finally, avoid working under the hung up or hanging portion of the tree.

Felling broken trees with a hung up top is one of the most difficult and dangerous circumstances. This example uses a winch and pulley system. FIGURE 5

BROKEN TREES WITH TOP ON THE GROUND

Carefully inspect and test the broken part of the tree to get a sense of how well attached it is to the trunk. Remove the limbs supporting the broken portion of the tree using limbing and bucking methods. Cut back as high as can safely be reached (below shoulder height). Cut slowly and watch how the tree responds as pressure is released from the wood. Keep cutting until the broken portion is free of ground support. Be ready to move if the trunk begins to shift or roll.

Make an open-face notch on the same side of the tree that the broken top is lying on, or where the lean of the tree is the heaviest.

Execute the back cut while standing on the good side of the tree. If necessary, use felling wedges to help support the tree and prevent a pinched saw bar while cutting and to force the tree into the lay. When using a pull line, secure the rope to the main trunk (not the broken portion) as close to the break as possible.

BROKEN TREES WITH HUNG UP TOP

If the broken portion is located high on the trunk and out of reach, I would recommend using the following method. Caution: Felling these trees puts the tree cutter at great risk since it usually requires working under the hung up top and involves outwitting and outrunning two separate falling tree sections: the trunk and the top of the tree.

Set a pull line around the hung up section of the tree close to where it broke off. Attach to the pull line a means of pulling the hung top free. A come-along or MA [mechanical advantage] pulley system is satisfactory in most instances with smaller trees, but I prefer using a portable winch instead (one that accommodates rope usage), because of the extra pulling force it offers. Securely anchor the pulling tool of choice in the direction you intend the trunk to fall (the lay).

Cut an open-face notch in the direction of the lay. Make the back cut, leaving an extra thick hinge so the tree will not fall before you can retreat from the work area. Retreat at a 90-degree angle from the trunk in either direction to a distance beyond the felling radius of the tree. Only when the tree cutter is at a safe distance away from the tree should pulling efforts begin.

Editor's Note:

This article is an excerpt from "To Fell a Tree: A Complete Guide to Successful Tree Felling and Woodcutting Methods" (2009), printed with the permission of Jeff Jepson.

For more information regarding methods and techniques for cutting large-diameter trees, rope installation methods, and more as they relate to working on hung up trees, Jepson's book provides many examples.

FIGURE 1

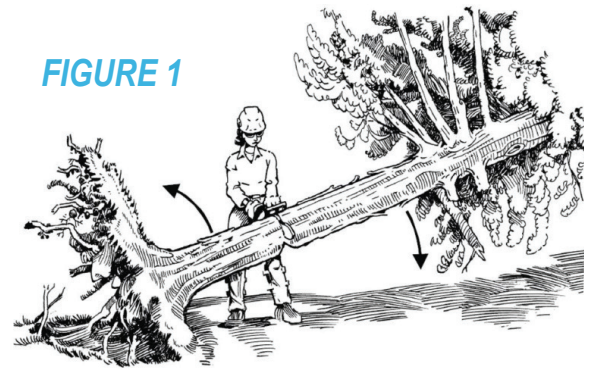


FIGURE 2



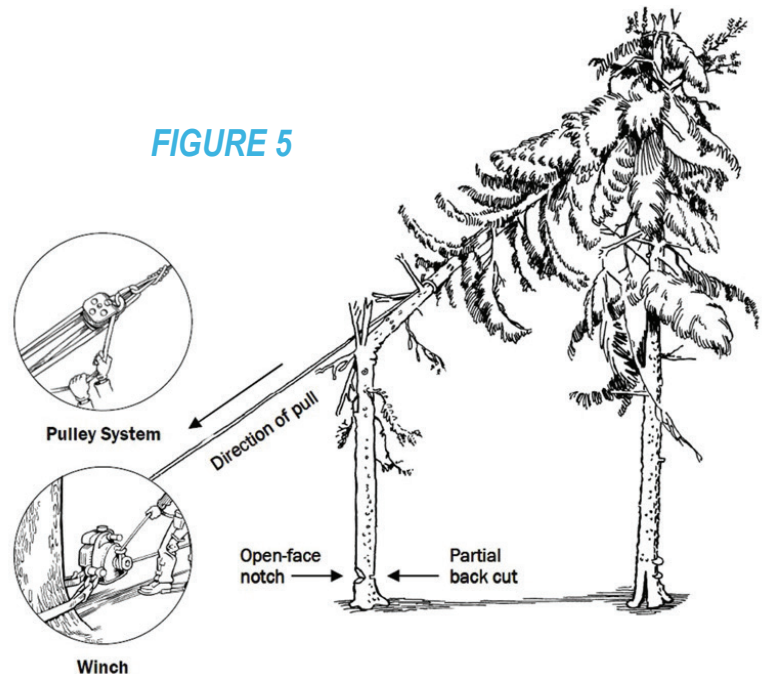
FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4



FIGURE 5



COMMUNITY SERVICE PROFILE

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR MEMBERS

- BY SARAH MCDONALD



volunteering from a young age with his first experiences coming through 4-H activities, scouts, and playing drums for a country band in high school. Fast forward to 2017 and he is currently involved with the Masonic Lodge, the local United Church, Alberta figure skating events, and tries to attend and help out with multiple community events and fundraisers each year.

Ian has also been heavily involved within the industry, participating at industry events, sitting on different boards as well as volunteering on them, and speaking at different conferences.

Ian joined the AISC a year after its conception and enjoyed his time helping to bring awareness to invasive species in Alberta.

When asked why volunteering was important to him, especially while running his business, Ian replied that he believes it is important to give back to the communities that you were raised in or are living in and to give back and to promote the things that you are involved in and care about. One of the best parts to Ian, about volunteering, is that you get to go and share your experiences with other people, learn from their own unique experiences, and get different perspectives and opinions that you may not get anywhere else.

For many of us working in the vegetation management field it can seem like the work never ends.

There are always a hundred things to deal with each day and taking time to volunteer can feel impossible when trying to balance work, family, and hopefully some fun. I would like to shed some light on our community members who volunteer in their communities, in their industries, and in other events.

The first member I spoke to is Ian McDonald, the vice-president of Ace Vegetation Control Service. Ian has been involved in

I asked Ian to provide insight for our members as to why volunteering within our organizations and our industry is so important, he replied that:

"We all want to keep on the leading edge of technologies, be involved in the research and new products being developed, and keep our knowledge up to date."

"Volunteering within our industry allows us to share experiences, learn from one another, and create innovation and development through new growth and ideas." - Ian McDonald, 2017

I hope that Ian's insights and positive experiences will inspire you to take any moments of time you have and use them to give back to the things that you believe in and care about in both your personal and professional lives.

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart” - Elizabeth Andrews



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MEMBER PROFILE

DUNC LAWRENCE

- BY BOB GORDON

It is not often you have the opportunity to write an article about someone who has been a friend for thirty years in this industry, but in this case not only has Dunc Lawrence been a friend, he has also been a mentor.

When I first approached Dunc about writing this article, his first question to me was: Why an article about him? Dunc has never been one to brag about what he has done, he has made a career of letting his work speak for itself. But after a little convincing Dunc agreed to share some highlights of his long career with me in order for me to put together this article.

Duncan Lawrence was born and raised in Clandonald, Alberta; he began his career in

the Vegetation Management Industry at the age of sixteen in December 1964.

He hired on with a company called Molsberry Chemical Spray Company. He turned 17 the month he hired on, as he began his career as a groundman chipping brush behind one of the two trim trucks that Molsberry operated through the winter to keep the men employed until the next spray season started.

In the spring of 1965, Dunc was sent to Grand Prairie to work on a Pole Treating project that was starting up. After a couple of weeks in Grand Prairie Dunc was brought back to become a Foreman for a two person crew operating a 1950 1-ton with a 250 gallon spray tank mounted on it. This began the start of

Dunc's career as a foreman running crews in the vegetation management industry.

Over the next twenty years, the company was sold a few times, with each sale seeing the equipment and the manpower grow as the demands of the customers were changing and the company was striving to meet those changes.

Asplundh Tree Expert purchased the company in the eighties and with that purchase Dunc saw major improvements in the equipment as well as substantial growth in manpower.

Dunc was one of the Foremen that I started with in 1985, There were years of running mechanical crews trimming trees or removing



hazard trees, and running the Nodwell crew in summer spraying in some remote areas. His favorite camp shack was loaded onto a flat deck Nodwell to follow him into the bush where many of his summers had been spent.

It was time for a change and he went onto patrolling and obtaining permission for the majority of the brushing work being done on the Transmission system in the province at the time. To this day Dunc speaks fondly of these times remembering taking his horse out to ride while patrolling some of the remote lines within the province.

With a General Foreman position opening up, Dunc was promoted. This job saw him in charge of up to 20 crews or more at any given time managing mechanical and spray crews in his areas. Dunc was always a “business was done face to face” kind of guy. If he told you that something would get done you could take it to the bank that Dunc would ensure that it got done.

After a few years and with a change in managers, Dunc was offered the Supervisor position. This put Dunc in charge of all operations in Alberta and Saskatchewan, answering directly to the manager and overseeing all mechanical operations within those two provinces.

The things I will always remember about Dunc is that he and technology were never on great terms with each other. He carried his Blackberry which he liked to refer to as his huckleberry when he became a supervisor, but there was always a certain amount of colorful banter if you teased him about sending an e-mail or receiving one.

Dunc built a reputation in the industry through his hard work and his integrity, because if he told you something would get done he always followed through and that is a motto he shared with every one of us that had the opportunity to work with him.

Working with Dunc on many remote projects taught me how stopping to throw quarters into a hat placed twenty feet away could create as much excitement as the Stanley Cup Play Offs when you have been away from home on a crew working on an extended shift.

Dunc knows the business better than anyone I have come across in my career and he always stood by the employee out there on the front line swinging the saw or spraying the tree. He always took the time to listen and make sure they knew their voice and their opinion was important not just to the company but that it was important to him and that they knew that they could contact him anytime they had a concern.

Dunc’s hobbies that he has shared with me over the years were of his fishing trips to some pretty remote areas. He always returned with plenty of stories from them. He loved competing at team penning events traveling around the province; he shared the stories and on occasion would show off a buckle that he had won for his efforts.

With his retirement he has had the opportunity to spend more time rounding up cattle on the pasture with his family which was always a task that brought a smile to Dunc’s face when he talked about it. He is still traveling to the team penning competitions he enjoys so much and getting out watching some of the big rodeo events that he always enjoyed.

I still talk to Dunc about once a month and even with retirement, the first thing Dunc wants to know when we talk is “how is everybody doing?” “He had made a career of keeping an eye out for us, hoping that we were all doing okay and this hasn’t changed in his retirement.

Dunc wanted to finish the article with a message to anyone looking at starting into this industry;

Overall this is a great way to make a living, good clean healthy work compared to a lot of other jobs. You get a chance to see a lot of the province, and if you are a hard working person who is responsible, there is lots of room to advance.



DO YOU KNOW OF A PVMA MEMBER WHO IS GIVING BACK TO HIS/HER COMMUNITY OR ARE YOU ONE? PLEASE EMAIL VAL@PVMA.CA AND LET US KNOW.

MENTORSHIP IS THE BRIDGE

- ORVILLE MCLEAN, ArborMetrics Solutions

We are in a time of transition. As the men and women who helped build and grow this industry move into senior positions or retire there is a gap that needs to be filled and a field that needs to be replanted.

WHAT DO WE VALUE IN OUR FUTURE LEADERS?

We have a new leadership team that will oversee the direction of our industry moving forward. Whether consciously or not the steering of this team happens every day through our actions, values and principles. The needs of our industry change, we see surges in certain skills, growth in one sector and deficiencies in another. I believe that we need to exert energy as a governing body to monitor health and direct growth to the mutual benefit of all.

HOW DO WE IDENTIFY CANDIDATES?

As members of the PVMA and leaders in our respective companies we have a unique vantage point to see the leaders pushing through our teams. We also have a responsibility to seek candidates that may not be so overt in their skills or ambition.

WHAT IS THE ACTUAL VALUE OF MENTORSHIP?

Every one of us has been exposed to mentorship in some form as we have grown in the industry. Mentorship is defined as "The guidance provided by a mentor, especially an experienced person in a company or educational institution." I want to focus on how to maximize the positive impact that the mentor/mentee relationship can have.

As a contractor, learning, support and process can often be sacrificed for production and other business needs.

This is a balancing act that we often face. There is no simple solution however we can tie this back to core values and candidate identification.

As mentors we have a responsibility to our teams, our customers, our families and our environment to ensure that what we have learned isn't lost or diminished.

The process of passing on information is one of our most humanizing traits and we have a duty to help keep our industry strong and moving forward with intention, not just inertia.

As a mentor, we focus on reflecting our values through our actions, empathy, development of skills needed in the field, business acumen, customer service, professionalism, communication, and innovation through responsible technology.

As a mentee, we focus on being present and open to new skills, driven to succeed, being a problem solver adept at using both conventional and unconventional methods, and always acting with integrity.

There are people within all of our teams that are able to strike this balance, accomplishing productive


quality work with character and an eye on the future.

In 2017, we need to drive our industry forward with technology and insight while maintaining respect for the environment and our shared history.

This is the value of mentorship. As the future surges forward it is imperative that we maintain a strong grasp on our past; that our ideas for progress are a logical extension of what was done before.

We need to dedicate planning and time to building a culture within the industry that is supported by all of our companies.

The direction for this culture is reinforced by the PVMA, the educational programs that support us and the men and women who work and live in the industry everyday.



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Neil Thiessen, Past President IVMAA

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A PVMA GUIDE FOR VIRTUAL COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- BY BRANDON TUPPER, President PVMA

- Over the next few issues I will be sharing excerpts from my PVMA Guide for Virtual Committee Chairs -

MOVING TOWARDS A VIRTUAL WORKPLACE

The Professional Vegetation Managers Association (PVMA) is a national not-for-profit group dedicated to educate and bring like minded individuals together to work on initiatives that will better our industry. The last couple years have been hard on private companies' bottom lines and this has been putting pressure to cut back expenses related to industry support and volunteerism. This has taken shape in many forms namely adding additional workload to surviving employees. Having the luxury of driving to meetings and attending conferences is becoming rare. Last year we starting conducting online meetings with volunteer committee members. Initially it is a great concept – maintain volunteers, web-cams make it feel personal, screen sharing and agendas. However, issues arise that are different from meeting face to face and without addressing some of these concerns will lead to a breakdown of the virtual meeting. I feel I need to reach out and give some guidance to our virtual committee chairs as

they manage the transition from face to face meetings to virtual online meeting rooms. The following document will provide some guidance and tools to become an effective virtual leader.

BEING AN EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL TEAM LEADER

As a leader for a virtual team one task that becomes difficult is to create the innovative spirit in each of your team members. Some of the entrepreneurial skills to consider are stamina, passion and perseverance, working to make the future a reality, view as a marathon and not a sprint, talent doesn't make you gritty, having the ability to learn is a growth mindset, use the best ideas – measure and fail together.

One of the ways discussed on encouraging innovation on your team is to always be generating ideas and work through a series of steps with these ideas. The first thing to do is to set a time to discuss and rank some of the ideas. Put the idea in an idea ranking matrix to determine how easy it is to implement and how important it is to the organization. You can quantitatively analyze the idea you want to implement. Have a strategic plan that outlines the intent, substance, scale, scope, speed, sequence



and style of the new idea. Next is to consider who do you need to help you get this new idea off the ground and can you build a coalition that already supports the idea. Following these steps will help your team continue to come up with new and innovative ideas.

BUILDING TRUST WHILE WORKING FROM A DISTANCE

Building and creating trust is difficult for any team. But this becomes more challenging as we are spread across multiple locations. The committee chair is required to deal with issues and interact with volunteers from a distance. In this section, we will examine some of the actions leaders will do to either build trust or erode it. It is a summary from Chapter 7 of - Manager's Guide to Virtual Teams by Fisher (2011) Building Trust from a distance.

To determine what trust means and why its important you must understand this definition: "Trust – The individual and organizational condition that fosters risk taking; encourages personal accountability, join problem solving, conflict resolution, and free expression of ideas; allows the giving and receiving of honest feedback; prevents blaming, gossiping, and inappropriate criticism. It is a function of effective social communication and experience, normally resulting from getting to know others in the organization not just as co-workers, but as fellow human beings with shared hopes, fears and commitment to accomplishing the purpose of the team" (Fisher 2015). Here are some tips for developing trust from a distance:

1. HONESTY.

This may be the most important component to trust. A sincere openness about actions and intentions will foster a great relationship with all members.

2. INITIAL ACTIONS.

Your very first interaction with your committee members will set the tone and pace for all future meetings. The very first written communication form sets precedent for all future interactions and contributes heavily to the team's perception of the leader. Provide an initial opportunity for team members to get acquainted prior to diving into the agenda.

3. TO GET TRUST IS TO GIVE TRUST.

To create an environment where everyone is trusting ensure that you lead the way by trusting others on the team. Leaders set the example.

4. COMMUNICATE OPENLY AND FREQUENTLY.

Distance volunteers assume that no news is good news. Make sure that the line of communication is open. More frequent

contact with your committee members will help alleviate any anxiety that they may be feeling towards working virtually.

5. DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU WILL DO AND MAKE YOUR ACTIONS VISIBLE.

Visibly keeping your promises helps to build trust. Distance magnifies the impact of a leaders perceived lack of commitment and action.

6. BE ACCESSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE.

Find ways to ensure that you have a good balance of accessibility. This may mean a regular meeting day each month to ensure that any issues get resolved quickly. It makes it more easy to schedule workloads and balance the personal and work life.

7. MAKE SURE THAT INTERACTIONS WITH THE TEAM ARE CONSISTENT AND PREDICTABLE.

Trust is a process and not a single event. Make sure you are consistent with your actions and emotions.

8. CREATE SOCIAL TIME.

Informal social meetings! Get the group together for an event it not possible schedule some agenda time for informal discussions.



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WHY WE DO COMPETENCY CHECKS

- WADE SMITH HSA Southbrook Safety and Consulting Ltd.

When there is an incident the questions asked are:
Was there a Safe work procedure written? Was there a hazard assessment?
What training has there been done? Does it meet OH&S requirements?
Was the worker competent to do the job? How the worker was deemed competent? When was the last competency done? Was there a change in procedure since the last competency check? Ultimately, we are judged compared to our peers.

We all know that legislation says that for the worker to work without direct and constant supervision they must be deemed competent to do the work by their employer.

To be honest this is one of the steps most often overlooked by a lot of employers. We look at our employee and when we feel that they are able to do the job without us we let them. Without documentation of competency. There are no standard forms and, given the economic times, there is not much time for individual companies to develop the forms. Some don't even know that the competency must be documented and that it needs to be kept current.

What is considered current? We all strive to keep our COR certification, without our COR or SECOR it would be hard to stay in business. To receive a high score, we need to have all our paperwork current and demonstrate that we are actively looking for opportunities to improve our safety culture. So, the maximum amount of time we have to do competencies is 36 months. But this should only be considered for full time employees that are doing the same task for 36 months. Does this really happen?

For example, what happens when the task for a brushing crew changes from summer work to winter work? There is enough change in our seasons to require another look at our employees. What about the spray crew who walks along a canal hand spraying using a truck for conveyance, and then switches over to an Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV), but then works from a rail truck broadcast spraying, are they not all different competencies?

Seasonal workers need even more attention, they may have been working at another vocation or attending school. Like it or not all of us may forget some things and we all know some things change. It is important that we do a reorientation with these individuals to ensure they are prepared with a good mindset.

But we must ask ourselves is that all we need to do? Can you say just because you have put them through an orientation that they are competent?

What if you are putting that individual into a supervisory position? How are you ensuring this person is meeting your expectations of a supervisor? If you have a program in place that is based around your supervisor completing competency checks and field task observations, you will in fact have something in place that can be measured.

We quite often get asked about competency checks and we discuss them inside the safety committee. We have even gone so far as to construct a few. We have the Level 3 Chainsaw felling and the Level 4 basic use of ropes from the Canadian Trainers Foundation and Husqvarna. There are the ones from PVMA members for Lift truck, Chipper operator, Climbing, OHV operator. As well there are many generic ones available through the Construction Safety Associations that can be developed to fit your needs. Always remember if your program can not be measured then it becomes very hard to determine where you need to improve and at that point the program loses its value.

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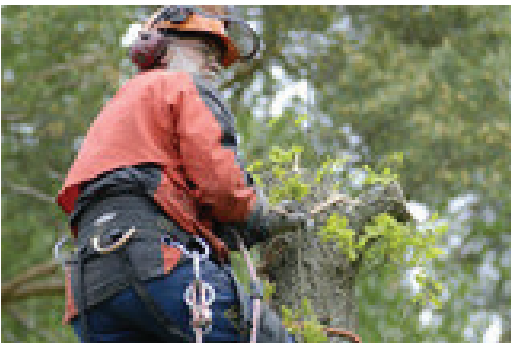
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